

Introducing the Data Policy Coalition – Strengthening social impact through access and use of administrative data for community benefit

Our coalition has set out to address a longstanding challenge in the nonprofit sector: **Currently, most social sector actors cannot access information that could help them address complex social problems and make evidence-based decisions. [Administrative data sharing](#) could transform the way our sector uses evidence to create impact.**

The Data Policy Coalition brings together nonprofit advocacy groups, service providers, and funders to develop and pursue a shared agenda for the social sector's access to and responsible use of government-held administrative data. This includes for purposes related to policy advocacy, integrated services, research, and impact evaluation.

Objectives

Together, the Data Policy Coalition will:

- Develop a policy agenda to pursue effective, ethical, and responsible rights-based administrative data sharing within the social sector and/or specific domains of the sector
- Explore projects to demonstrate the value and benefits of sharing administrative data while preventing harm through misuse and misrepresentation

Core hypotheses that drive our coalition

- Enabling reliable, accessible, and ethical access to administrative data could transform the way nonprofits (and other social mission groups) deliver services, evaluate their impact, advocate for policy change, and conduct social research
- There are significant technical, privacy, and policy barriers to enabling this access
- Potential misuse or breach of administrative data can cause undue surveillance, exposure, and harm to individuals and groups who face systemic barriers and discrimination - a rights-based approach is required to counter this risk
- Administrative datasets may not be complete or reliable with respect to populations who may be undercounted, misrepresented, or unfairly targeted for specific services
- Leaders within government understand the opportunity for effective sharing of administrative data, but there is a lack of political will to shift these policies - due to a limited understanding of the opportunity and a sensitivity to political risks
- A coalition of civil society groups advocating for access to administrative data has the power to build momentum to enable these changes, while also helping to set the right terms to mitigate social risks

Core Principles

- We are committed to both: developing potential applications to increase responsible and ethical use of administrative data for social good **and preventing and/or stopping misuse and harms caused through collection or sharing of administrative data**
- We are committed to acting collectively on behalf of the sector (as opposed to individual organizations)
- We are committed to building practices within the coalition and through data policy advocacy that enable the rights of all persons to participate fully and equitably in social, cultural, political, and economic life
- We are committed to fostering Indigenous leadership within the Coalition and in supporting Indigenous-led data sovereignty and governance priorities more broadly, including OCAP, OCAS, and Nation-to-Nation dialogue
- We are committed to engaging directly with communities most impacted by potential use and sharing of administrative data to incorporate their needs and preferences, prevent potential harm, and ensure protection of personal integrity, privacy, and consent
- We are committed to addressing power differentials within the coalition (e.g. between funders and other organizations; organizations with greater resources) by a) recognizing the power and resources we each hold within the sector b) actively creating space within full group meetings and through tailored consultations for diverse voices to be heard, especially those affected by data-sharing and those who are often marginalized in typical policy development processes c) enabling processes for those with interest but limited time/resource capacity to contribute meaningfully to discussion and direction
- We are committed to proactively address, mitigate, and resolve sources of conflict through confrontation of power dynamics and open dialogue
- We are committed to sharing our knowledge and networks to advance learning and priorities of the coalition

Powered by Data serves as the Secretariat for the Data Policy Coalition and co-convened the coalition with four co-convening partners who have helped shape this initiative: Philanthropic Foundations Canada, the Ontario Nonprofit Network, Colour of Poverty - Colour of Change, and Drs. Janet Smylie and Raglan Maddox of Well Living House.

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Powered by Data operates on [Tides Canada's shared platform](#), which supports on-the-ground efforts to create uncommon solutions for the common good. Tides Canada is a national Canadian charity dedicated to a healthy environment, social equity, and economic prosperity.