Unlocking New Opportunities for Baltimore's Youth

The Baltimore City Youth Data Hub

Annual Report 2023

BALTIMORE CITY
**Youth
Data
Hub**

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Every Child. Infinite Possibilities.

A New Way to Collect, Share, and Use Data to Support Baltimore City Youth

After years of planning and coordination, the Baltimore City Youth Data Hub is on its way to providing an exciting new way to measure and understand the needs and experiences of young people in Baltimore City. Established through state legislation in 2022, the Data Hub allows public and youth-serving nonprofits — including Baltimore City, Baltimore City Public Schools, and Baltimore's Promise — to share data for the first time through an inclusive, youth- and community-centered process that protects and secures data while ensuring it is accurate and accessible. Partners and policymakers will use this data to help identify the most pressing issues facing Baltimore youth, shine new light on youth outcomes, and inform decisions about policies and resources.

The Data Hub's Executive Committee, which includes the Mayor of Baltimore (or his designee) and the Chief Executive Officer of City Schools (or her designee), selected Baltimore's Promise as the Data Hub "Manager." As outlined in the Data Hub legislation, this role includes supporting partners to create an integrated data system that centers equity, transparency, and the input of community members, while protecting the privacy of young people.

Data Hub leaders understand that data isn't just about numbers and statistics. This integrated data system will provide significant insight on the conditions, challenges, and needs of Baltimore's young people — creating a powerful tool for policymakers, funders, and community leaders to use to support youth.

Doing Data Differently

The Data Hub brings communities, providers, policymakers, and researchers together to help guide decisions affecting youth, offering a secure and efficient way to share information that will shape policies and program design. Through the Data Hub, stakeholders can better understand communities' connected needs and compare services and outcomes across groups — by gender, race/ethnicity, place, and program-specific interests — because the data highlights inequities in resources and opportunities.

An understanding of historical inequities and a commitment to racial equity and inclusion (REI) guides the work of the Data Hub partners. We developed the Data Hub's REI Framework with community leaders and equity experts, learning from research and best practices, including AISP's Toolkit for Centering Racial Equity Throughout Data Integration. The framework embeds data-equity concerns throughout the data lifecycle. For example, it requires the establishment of transparent and equitable policies, processes, and decision-making practices, which may include drilling down on findings through participatory data walks and other means, and addressing data-quality issues that may result from biased collection processes.

▶ Watch video: The Data Hub's Focus   ▶ Watch video: The Importance of Data Interpretation

The Data Hub provides the framework to "do data differently." Too often, data about children and youth stays in isolated databases, preventing us from seeing the full picture of how our young people are doing. For the first time, Baltimore will have access to a rich collection of data about youth, generated by multiple partners. In addition, the REI commitments of Data Hub leaders will ensure the system serves as an essential tool to help combat systemic racism and counter false narratives about young people.
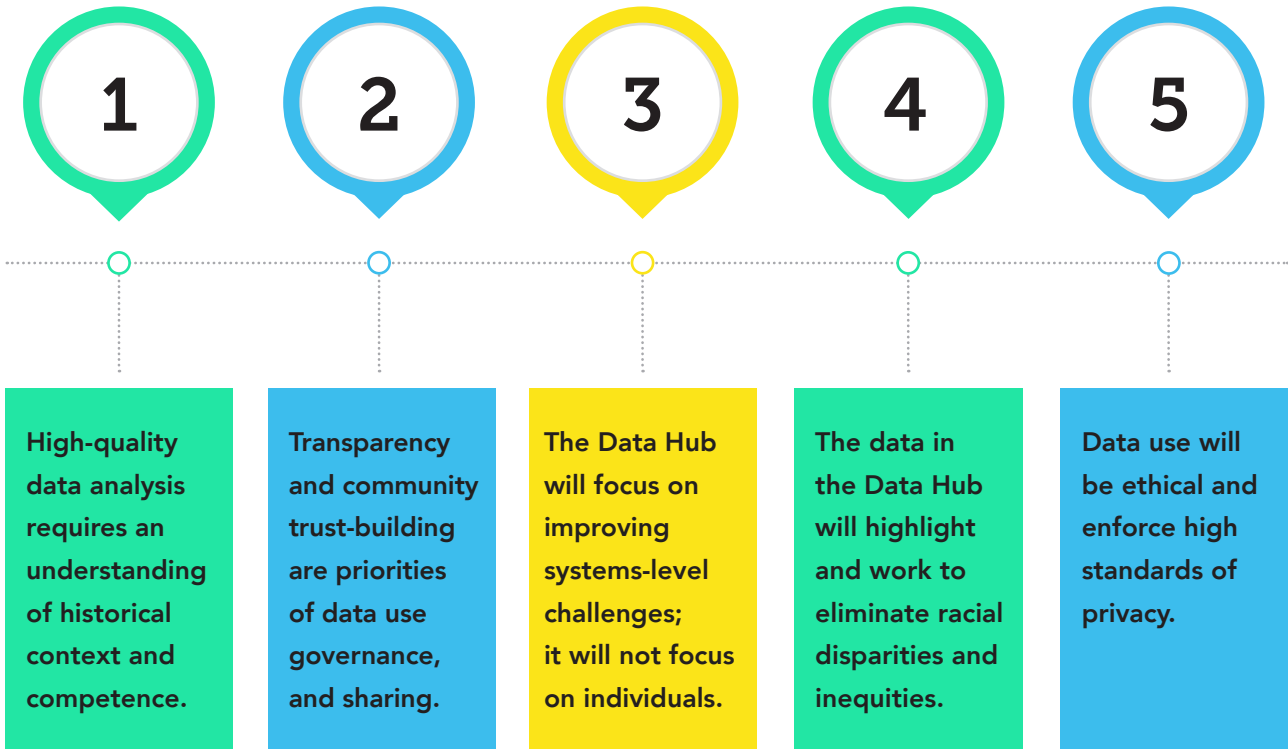
Over time, the Data Hub will produce user-friendly public data, including reports, interactive dashboards, and maps. Each will help community members, policymakers, and funders understand complex, interconnected issues facing children and families. For example, the Baltimore Summer Engagement Ecosystem (SEE) will integrate data from multiple partners to identify gaps in summer opportunities by location, age, gender, race, and ethnicity. That information will help plan for more equitable programs to serve Baltimore youth.

Guiding Principles

Baltimore's history of racial segregation and selective underinvestment shapes the city's geography and resources available in various communities. Our focus on using data is not just about metrics. It's also about discovering and exposing disparities in funding, services, and opportunities. By shining a light on these gaps, we have the opportunity to advance policy and resource decisions that make a more significant impact in Baltimore communities.

Baltimore's Promise and its partners recognize how data can be — and has been — used to exacerbate harms in historically disadvantaged communities, including within our own city. We took extra time to consider how to ensure we ethically collected the data in the Data Hub.

The following principles guide the Data Hub's implementation and operation:

1	2	3	4	5
High-quality data analysis requires an understanding of historical context and competence.	Transparency and community trust-building are priorities of data use governance, and sharing.	The Data Hub will focus on improving systems-level challenges; it will not focus on individuals.	The data in the Data Hub will highlight and work to eliminate racial disparities and inequities.	Data use will be ethical and enforce high standards of privacy.

As part of our commitment to equity, we are also focused on including our communities in decisions guiding the work. In addition to providing regular reports and information to our communities, we will engage with a cross-section of partners and recruit a Community Research and Action Committee (C-RAC). The C-RAC will support the vision of the Data Hub, help set its agenda, increase local awareness of its work, and generate community feedback. Members will participate in community-driven research projects and advance the changes that matter most to Baltimore communities. The Data Hub's Executive Committee will appoint members, including representatives of nonprofit organizations, faith-based institutions, community resident associations, and the broader community.

Building a Secure Framework

To best address concerns about data privacy and security, Data Hub partners carefully considered policies to protect the privacy of young people's data and sought the required state authorization. In 2022, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation to codify and establish parameters for the Data Hub, including how the data could be used and secured. Specifically, managers must protect the privacy, confidentiality, integrity, and availability of any data, in keeping with federal law and other relevant policies. The system will de-identify all data. It will not include names or personal information that could point to a specific person.

A Data Oversight Committee (DOC) will begin its work in Fall 2023. This group will oversee requests to use Data Hub information, from initial application to final publication, and recommend which requests to approve. The DOC will include data providers and others with technical expertise in content, methodology, and impact in greater Baltimore.

Other cities and states have implemented similar data systems and are using them to better inform policy decisions. For example, this data-driven report examines factors that can contribute to homelessness in New York City. But the Data Hub is breaking new ground both by being run by a collective impact nonprofit organization and by its focus on equity and inclusion of community members in governance. The unique aspects of this approach and our foundational commitment to equity, community voice, ethical use, and data privacy sets Baltimore's data system apart.

How We Got Here • Timeline: 2016-2022

2016 — **Exploring Possibilities**

- Baltimore's Promise and The Annie E. Casey Foundation convened local data stakeholders to help people understand what an integrated data system (IDS) could do for Baltimore and explore related questions around privacy.

2017 — **Entering an IDS Community**

- With an early commitment from City Schools, the Baltimore City Health Department, the Mayor's Office of Children & Family Success, and Baltimore's Promise, Baltimore joined an Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP) Learning Cohort, a network of other agencies doing similar work. AISP provided 18 months of technical assistance.

2018 — **Forming a Local Team**

- Baltimore City launched an IDS Site Team responsible for guiding the Data Hub's creation and setting policies related to cross-agency data management.

2019 — **Convening the Data Workgroup**

- Baltimore's Promise, City Schools, and the T. Rowe Price Foundation convened a citywide Data Workgroup to support the development and implementation of the IDS. The group established the mission, vision, and name of the IDS: the Baltimore Youth Data Hub. It also worked to identify key issues of community concern.

2020 — **Centering Race Equity and Inclusion**

- With a team from the W. Haywood Burns Institute, Baltimore's Promise developed the Race Equity and Inclusion (REI) Framework that centered equity at every stage of the Data Hub's development and throughout the data lifecycle. The last three stages of the REI Framework explicitly identify the community's role and ensure the data will be used to co-create community-driven solutions.

2021 — **Advancing the Data Hub through Legislation**

- The Site Team developed legal agreements and drafted legislation necessary to authorize the Data Hub.

2022 — **Enacting the Baltimore Youth Data Hub**

- On April 11, 2022, legislation authorizing the Data Hub passed the Maryland General Assembly, taking effect on June 1 of that year.

- Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy awarded the Data Hub $50,000 and the Data Hub joined their Equity in Practice Learning Community Cohort. This initiative is designed to help data-sharing efforts that incorporate the community's voice in decisions about cross-sector data use, with an emphasis on health equity and racial justice.

Timeline Continues

2023 ━━●━━ ## Getting to Work: Building Infrastructure & Sustainability

- The Data Hub Executive Committee convened on a quarterly basis, with Baltimore's Promise facilitating the committee's public meetings in September 2022, as well as in April and July 2023. Over the year, the Executive Committee made significant progress, including:

  ○ Publicly affirming the data agenda for the Data Hub.
  ○ Selecting a Data Equity Consultant.
  ○ Approving a comprehensive procurement policy to provide guidance for the acquisition of goods and services necessary for operations.

- Through an RFP process, the Data Hub selected Two Gems Consulting Services as its data equity consultant. Two Gems is a locally based data and evaluation consulting firm that has experiences working with small and large local nonprofit organizations and public agencies. Two Gems, which began work in September, is committed to supporting the equitable practice of data sharing in the context of racial equity, justice, and healing. Two Gems will work with the Data Hub governance committee to support the development of a city-wide data sharing infrastructure that centers on principles of anti-racism, equity, and community power. They will collaborate with the Executive Committee to create a process to select and onboard community members to the Community Research and Action Committee (C-RAC).

- Through a multi-round national competition, the Data Hub received a three-year, $1.2 million grant from MADE for Health Justice. (This video about the Data Hub was instrumental in obtaining the grant.) Modernized Anti-Racist Data Ecosystems (MADE) for Health Justice is a new initiative supported through a partnership between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the de Beaumont Foundation. It seeks to accelerate the development of health-focused local data ecosystems that center principles of anti-racism, equity, justice, and community power. MADE funds were directly awarded to Baltimore's Promise on behalf of the Data Hub.

  MADE funding will play a pivotal role in advancing the next phase of the Data Hub. Over the next three years, these funds will support several key areas, including hiring staff to operate the Data Hub, communications support, engaging a data-equity consultant, and collaborating with a technology vendor. We will also use some funds to compensate community members who actively participate in the C-RAC, ensuring that the community's lived experience is included and valued, and that community-identified needs are addressed.

- As this year's work focused on creating the Data Hub infrastructure and building a strong foundation, no data was shared this year.

Timeline Continues ⟶

Timeline: 2024 and Beyond

2024 — Looking Ahead

- Key events in 2024

  - Executive Committee Meetings: January, April, July, October 2024

  - The Executive Committee and the data equity consultant will design a process to select a 10-member Community Research and Action Committee. They will use best practices and input from the community to develop the selection process.

- Reports to come in 2024

  The 2024 Summer Engagement Ecosystem (SEE) Report and supporting data resources will help family members and partners better understand the impact of the summer enrichment programs and will be a valuable resource to policymakers working to strengthen summer programming.

More to Come!

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the key partners that have worked to make the Baltimore Youth Data Hub a reality.