Webinar: Using Data for Strategic Consultation and Community Connectedness

September 5, 2024, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

Transcript

Introduction

Rob Callus: All right. Hello, and welcome to today's training, today's webinar from Switchboard. Switchboard is a one-stop resource hub for refugee service providers. Today's webinar is entitled Using Data for Strategic Consultation and Community Connectedness.

Today's Speakers

RC: We have a couple of great speakers today, myself included, I guess. I'd like to introduce our speakers. First and foremost, my name is Rob Callus. I'm a Switchboard training officer with a focus on community integration. My career experience has been across many places and spaces, including education, instructional design, global health, and refugee resettlement, of course. Before joining Switchboard, I managed school impact and youth mentoring programs at a local resettlement agency in Durham, North Carolina. I speak Swahili and Spanish. I'm ESL certified for adults and youth, and I'm currently pursuing my master's in social work at UNC-Chapel Hill. Go Tar Heels.

RC: I'd like to also introduce two great guest speakers from the Migration Policy Institute. First, we have Lillie Hinkle. They are an associate policy analyst at the Migration Policy Institute's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. They focus on refugee resettlement and access to benefits for immigrant families. Previously, Lillie worked with the Rights in Exile Program on legal aid and the International Rescue Committee, the IRC, supporting refugee employment in Richmond, Virginia.

RC: Next, I'd like to introduce Julie Sugarman, associate director for K–12 education research at MPI's National Center on Immigration Integration Policy, specializing in multilingual learner education. She analyzes policies affecting immigrant and English learner students and advises on program design. Previously, she worked at the Center for Applied Linguistics on language learner programs, and she holds a bachelor's, master's, and PhD in second language education.

Learning Objectives

RC: For today's session, we have the following learning objectives. We hope that by the end of the session you will be able to, first, explain how effective data-sharing practices can promote community connectedness and positive outcomes for new arrivals to the United States. Then we'll move on to being able to describe helpful strategies for how to share information effectively, particularly in the context of quarterly consultations in terms of planning and facilitation. Last but not least, we're going to hone in on a couple key metrics and contacts within local community systems, and we're going to use the K–12 education space as sort of a spotlight for

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that, but just to give you an idea on how you can integrate data effectively into your own community engagement consultation practices.

Poll Question

RC: Those of you who have joined Switchboard webinars before know we love Slidos. We love our live polling platform here. If you take out your smartphone and scan the QR code at the top left of the screen or you go to slido.com and enter the code 1275800, it will bring you to a window in order to answer this question here. We want to first ask,

Which of the following best describes your role?

RC: This is a helpful question for us because we like to know who we're working with, who's in the audience today, as we can tailor some of the content that we have prepared for those audiences. Great. We've got a lot of folks in leadership or administrative roles at resettlement agencies, a couple folks from state refugee offices or replacement designees. We've got a handful of folks who are more client-facing. Other, whoever you are, we love that you're here. Thank you for being here.

RC: It just goes to show that the kinds of experiences and the folks who are in this room speak to the diversity of people that we need in the room for quarterly consultations and resettlement at large. All right. We've got over 50 responses so far. We really love seeing people using that platform. We will be using Slido throughout the presentation, so be prepared to have your smartphone ready to respond to ongoing questions.

RC: All right. I get the idea that a lot of the leadership and administrative folks at resettlement agencies are often people who have historically been conveners and leaders and facilitators in quarterly consultations or folks who are making really important strategic decisions based on data and capacity assessments. We're hoping that this can be a really fruitful training for you. All right. Looks good on this one.

Discussion Question

RC: I think we can move on to our next Slido. Excuse me. This is more of an open question for you all here:

What are the ways you use data in your day-to-day newcomer services work?

RC: Already got some folks typing. Really love to see it. All right. Resource coordination. Yes, data can tell us where resources are in a community and who has the ability to leverage them. Using data to assess capacity— you're in the right webinar just for that. Informing resource gaps, funding decisions, supplying data for reports on the impact that you're having or the clients that you're serving, measuring deliverables and performance measures. I really love to see the word decision-making in that list and that data can inform and should inform decision-making.

RC: All right. Strategic planning, grant writing. As you can see, the data finds its way into a lot of different work functions that we're doing. Whether it's program design, whether it's just doing the day-to-day case management and identifying resources where they are in the community, in terms of tracking volunteers, in terms of tracking gifts in kind and other ways that folks contribute to our work, trying to figure out metrics for communication, our impact there, in terms of how we're doing outreach in the community. There are all these different ways and spaces where data is really essential in our work.

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RC: Yes, program evaluation and impact. All right. Really super answers. Just feeling like we're getting this audience nice and primed, and nice to know that we've got such good energy in the room, got some really good experiences, got folks who are doing this on the day-to-day. We really hope that this session will be exciting and empowering for you in figuring out new ways to leverage data or refine currently practiced ways. Just as we're going, like I said, we'll have more Slidos as we go, but want to emphasize that you can engage with us throughout the webinar by writing in the Q&A box at the bottom.

RC: We have the chat disabled for participants. However, we will be dropping links through the chat as we go out, as we reference different things. The best way you can engage with us as your speakers and panelists and folks on the Switchboard team is through that Q&A box. Once we answer questions, they'll show up for others. We will do our best to get to them as much as we can, and we may work on addressing some of them live. Really excited to have you guys here and so eager to respond.

RC: Without further ado, I think we can move into our first section and objective for today, where I will turn it over to our friends at the Migration Policy Institute, and we'll start with Lillie. Welcome, Lillie.

1. Leveraging Data in Resettlement for Coordination and Connection

Lillie Hinkle: Hi, everyone, and thanks, Rob. I wanted to go ahead and get us started in this particular section on broadly understanding why leveraging data in resettlement is important. I'd like to start by situating the importance of data, really, in the immigration and newcomer services landscape. We can go on to the next slide.

Reflecting and Grounding: Three Years After the Afghan Evacuation

LH: Since the Biden administration took office, there have been a lot of shifts, some of which have been pretty tremendous for the field. These shifts have ushered in a lot of new stakeholders, a lot of new newcomer populations into communities, the Emergency Resettlement Initiative, Operation Allies Welcome being a notable example of this.

LH: It's really valuable to consider how to best reflect a lot of these new actors and populations in the information and the data that we exchange during coordination processes, both informal and formally, like the quarterly consultation, or the QCs, which is how I'll refer to them from now on.

How Data Helps Us in Resettlement

LH: On the next slide, you'll see that data is really critical to resettlement work because it is helpful in helping providers prepare for new arrivals by communicating essential information, things like language needs, medical considerations, ages. And data can help us to anticipate the needs for benefits and services, as well as to help us visualize these periods of growth and decline, because we know that rates of arrival are often highly inconsistent. It's helpful for us to visualize benefits and services take-up as well.

LH: Lastly, data is helpful in mitigating resource constraints, as some of us have talked about in the Slido responses. When we're able to mitigate some of these resource constraints, we can typically proactively plan a bit better with accurate data rather than reacting to something that's already happened. As we consider how data impacts resettlement work, it's really helpful to consider that the resettlement ecosystem stretches far

beyond local resettlement agencies, including local systems that work with a wide variety of different populations.

Where to Access Federal Population-Specific Data

LH: On the next slide—and before I dig into this, I would like to say that this table is by no means meant to inundate folks with information or make you feel like you need to scramble to write things down. This is not an exhaustive list. This table is just to help us visualize a lot of the different newcomer populations that local systems can and often are working with, and where there is consistently updated public federal data for some of these populations.

LH: I mentioned this because oftentimes there are stakeholders or participants that are represented in community consultations whose experiences and whose voices in the discourse are significantly impacted by immigrant populations outside of the traditional refugee population—our populations like asylees, parolees, unaccompanied children, all of which have their own unique integration needs and do factor into this larger, broader conceptualization of capacity. Understanding the scope of these different populations is really important.

New Pathways, Familiar Demands

LH: On the next slide, you'll see we have had the emergence of alternative pathways like we've mentioned a little bit, and an expansion broadly of humanitarian population under the Biden administration. We've seen substantial increases in arrivals from certain places through emergency resettlement initiatives like Uniting for Ukraine, but we've also seen an increase in folks that are arriving through long-established executive authority parole, which is a discretionary authority that allows individuals into the country for humanitarian reason or reason of public good.

LH: The administration has opted to formalize processes for individuals from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, or the CHNV program. Several of these populations admitted through some of these pathways are eligible for benefits and services that are funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, in addition to accessing different systems, different mainstream systems, like school districts, for example. In some cases, these new populations outnumber the number of refugees that are being admitted into a state or into a community.

Understanding the Data Gaps

LH: Despite these growing numbers, there are still some gaps in the data that you'll see on the next slide. With these gaps come gaps in our understanding for how and where some of these newer populations, like Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees, as well as familiar ones like beneficiaries for Temporary Protected Status or the unauthorized, gaps in our understanding where they are and what their needs are, how we can best reach them in a way that's proactive.

LH: I'll turn it back over to Rob to lead us through some of the policy considerations.

2. Sharing Data Effectively in Our Expanding Immigration Landscape

RC: Yes, thanks, Lillie. We'll also take things into the context specifically of quarterly consultations, as that has been a space where we are working to improve our dissemination of data, excuse me, as that data is critical to assessing capacity in our ever-expanding and changing immigration landscape.

Poll Questions

RC: We're going to start in this section with Slido again. Get those smartphones back out or get back to slido.com. I want to get a sense of thinking specifically, like I said, in the context of quarterly consultations,

What populations are you currently representing in your data presentations during your QCs in your localities and your communities?

RC: This question has an option to select all that apply. I imagine you might not be talking about just one of these populations. Yes, and it's important to note that historically, conversations around newcomers and arrival numbers has centered, historically, a lot on refugees mostly and other more historically used and typical ORR populations. However, as Lillie was saying with the expansions, it becomes really important to be able to talk about some of these other populations that are coming through different pathways who are coming outside of the traditional pipeline.

RC: That being said, it's really hard to be able to talk about some of these other populations given our need to focus on the already high numbers that we're already seeing. I'm really heartened to see that y'all are reporting that you are able to represent other populations that you're serving. I think it's really essential to be able to do so, to expand out of the typical conversation about refugees who are arriving and be able to talk about all newcomers who are using these services in your communities. That's really great.

RC: Let's move on to our next one. Again, just to get a snapshot of what practices are currently being used in QCs related to data sharing,

How is data shared in your QCs?

RC: Again, select all that apply. Is your QC data shared out as pre-reading material in advance of QCs? Is it shared during QCs aloud verbally? Is it sent in a follow-up email? Is it sent or is it not sent at all? Is there some other way that you do it? Seeing lots of "during" responses. We see fewer posts and a handful of pre-reading folks as well.

RC: Certainly, there's no right or wrong way to do this, as long as you're sharing data. I guess the wrong way is my QC does not share data. The most important part is that it's being shared. Part of this section, we'll be discussing some of the best practices in sharing data to make sure that it's accessible, that it's clear, and that it's able to support you and your participants and QCs to accurately assess capacity.

RC: Great, and I love to see folks who are using that data visualization. I think it's really, really cool just to be able to, even if you are sharing aloud, that you're accompanying it with that data visualization as well, makes that data a little bit more memorable, a little bit more easy to contextualize as well. Good stuff. Thank you guys

for responding to that question. Let's dig into some of the content and some of our implications here policy-wise and the reasons why we're talking about this.

Updated ORR QC Policy Related to Data

RC: Those of you—excuse me—who have been attending other Switchboard webinars and learning opportunities related to quarterly consultations likely know about the Dear Colleague letter that came out earlier this year, 24-09, that addressed changes related to many things in quarterly consultations. It also has some data implications in there. We want to highlight some of the most essential changes that may have come up through the new Revised State Plan template.

RC: First one we want to highlight is that consultations must address assessing community capacity for placement and service provision, and planning for appropriate placement and arrival planning. Now, that's not something that's super new, of course. That's just talking about arrivals and figuring out what is available and accessible for newcomers in your community in order to dictate and help us assess capacity and dictate the number of arrivals that we can sustainably welcome.

RC: Next, assessing the needs of refugees for services and assistance, so really identifying what services and communities that newcomers that we're receiving these days will be needing to access.

RC: This last piece is the one most related to data explicitly: using the best available data to gauge the projected refugee services and benefits needed. That's why I liked seeing earlier that piece about decision making, using data in that Slido response, because our data should be telling us where our services, where our energy, and where our resources should be going.

RC: In the next couple slides, we're going to talk about how we're going to access that data and how best to leverage it and use it in the context of QCs to accomplish those goals of assessing community capacity.

Required Data Sharing Practices

RC: All right, so within the requirements for quarterly consultations for data sharing, ORR requires that data be shared for consultations, and they explicitly mention what kinds. However, they do not specify how that data is shared. That earlier question of how you share data in your consultation is just scratching the surface in terms of how you can be creative in how data is disseminated and engaged with by folks in your community. If you walk away with anything from this session, it's that you can be really free in a lot of the ways that you share data, whatever works best for your context.

RC: That's the second point. They're highly dependent on your context, and think about the people who are in your community and how they best will receive data. If you're not sure, simple way to start is just to ask folks and have honest and open discussion about like, "Hey, how should we be doing this process in our consultation so that it's effective for us here in our community?"

RC: Last, yes, that last piece, consider how to get participants actively engaged with the data. Just asking folks the ways they engage with data best is great. If you have some folks who prefer to—who would say, "I'd rather have it as pre-reading," are we able to create a protocol or a procedure for that in consultations? That's something to float out to your constituents and your participants and see how well that would be received and

how utilized that would be. Really think about how to make the data engaging and meaningful to those who are involved.

Facilitation Strategies for Data Sharing in Quarterly Consultations

RC: All right. Next slide is on facilitation strategies for data sharing in quarterly consultations. These practices, in general, I would say are quite good to practice in terms of sharing data. In the context of quarterly consultations, we hope you'll be able to see the impact of these and how they can be really supportive.

RC: One, we do recommend sending out important data in advance of QC sessions. I think one of the reasons for this is just because it creates space for folks to actually be primed and thinking about this in advance of coming to sessions. If you're sharing data only during the quarterly consultation, it can be really hard to be able to contextualize and make that practicable in your context. That being said, it does take some planning and some administrative legwork before then. I know there are some communities that hold quarterly consultations who will field that information in some shared document in advance where folks from different resettlement agencies have to populate the document at least a week in advance of the QC.

RC: If you're able to do that, that's a way to reduce the burden of someone needing to go seek it out every time. People have a consistent place that they go. It's very procedurally consistent. That can be a way to reduce that administrative burden, still make data accessible in advance.

RC: Our next strategy we'd like to recommend is employing data visualization to emphasize trends and stories. If you're just reading data out loud, especially thinking of constituents who are outside of the traditional resettlement spaces, and just saying like the numbers of enrollments in different programs you have or the numbers of arrivals you have, for many people that will make sense. But for a lot of folks, it just might sound like a string of numbers and a string of terms and jargon that might not be accessible. If you are going to be reading things aloud, as you should be, it can be a good idea to anchor that for folks visually and to give people an idea, just another way to engage with it, so that it doesn't seem perhaps so disembodied or without context and things like that.

RC: Next strategy we'd like to recommend is intentionally contextualizing the quantitative data with qualitative data. If you're sharing information on the numbers of folks you're seeing, also share qualitative data or more descriptive data that's more narrative about that contextualizes the numbers that you are seeing. If you're seeing an increased number of a certain population in your services, share additional information about those enrollments that can give context as to the implications of that or experiences of folks who are enrolling in those programs, and what are considerations given the increased numbers of that population in a certain service.

RC: The last strategy we'd like to recommend is just from the get-go, ensuring that participants understand and believe in the purpose of sharing data. Often, the data-sharing portion of a quarterly consultation can feel really just like checking a box. You just sit there and wait for the numbers to be over. If you can sit there and at the beginning make sure that participants know why this data is being shared, how effectively folks can use that, and what it means on their day-to-day, that's going to make it a more effective space and make it easier for folks to say, "Hey, I need to be plugged in to this portion because this is going to be really essential for helping me assess capacity for myself, for my organization, and for folks who are resettling in our community."

Balancing Data Availability with Confidentiality

RC: All right, a piece on here that I want to share, give special attention to, and our speakers later in the webinar will address this as well, is balancing the availability and access of data with the need for confidentiality. In an earlier section, we showed just where you can access a lot of federal data related to the populations we're serving, but it's really important to acknowledge that how we handle that data directly matters for the safety and security of clients and other newcomers that we're serving.

RC: It's really important in the context of data sharing in quarterly consultations to the best of your ability to speak generally and broadly about resettlement trends rather than specific cases as much as possible. If you do get to the next point, if you do need to discuss something that's more specific to individuals or share anecdotes or things like that, avoid at all costs revealing any personally identifiable information, or PII, especially important in communities with low arrivals. Even if you're sharing, generally speaking about trends, in some of these communities with smaller numbers, it may be isolating. It might be very abundantly clear to some people who you're talking about. Be really, really intentional about what data you share, and try and connect and make sure that it can be anonymized, it can't be traced back to those that you're serving.

RC: Last but not least on this one, we just want to emphasize that quarterly consultations do not need to be town halls. They don't need to be open to the public. Communities that do do that with great success, we have a lot of examples of that. That is great. However, if you're in a community where you have more of a need for data security practices and things like that, then just consider inviting only the key implementing partners that you need to protect the information and still accurately assess capacity. If there are other states also that instead of losing that town hall feeling might create other forums or other venues for folks from the broader community. Just to keep in mind that QCs functionally can work as working meetings. They're spaces where real actionable items can happen and real connection and coordination of resources should be accomplished.

RC: We can go to the next slide, please. All right. The next slide is actually just a transition. I'm going to move things back over to Lillie to bring us into here. This section will also be moving into more of a facilitated conversation and a bigger Q&A. Please keep questions coming in, and we'll be able to add them throughout our discussion today.

3. Capturing Capacity Meaningfully Across Mainstream Systems

LH: Thanks, Rob. Yes, to bring us—we've talked a little bit about populations and the differences that that can mean for QCs, but I want to talk a little bit now about the differences across mainstream systems because there are so many moving parts within the larger landscape of integration.

Discussion Question

LH: I wanted to start with a Slido, and this is just an open-ended question:

What challenges do you experience while trying to assess capacity for resettlement in your community?

LH: Again, you can join through the QR code or through a web browser using the code below, slido.com on the slide. I get that it's a big question, so I'm looking forward to seeing some of the responses. Seeing

transparency, awareness, siloed work with different populations. This idea of just gaps. There are some folks that we really don't know much about. Bad data or there's no data or bad data. We see biased data as well. Seeing some recurring trends on silos and how that might trickle into lack of communication. Housing being a big one.

LH: Seeing some of these more systemic-based issues. Housing, of course, a big one. Seeing a couple of things come in for a lack of system-based data like housing data, funding issues, of course. Got a couple more people typing. The larger political landscape. Seeing some, again, lack of community knowledge. Trying to bring folks up to a baseline understanding of what resettlement is, to even talking about capacity backlogs.

LH: Lots of responses based around different systems that we often talk about when we think about capacity, systems like housing, and certain benefits programs, broadly, funding being a challenge. In trying to assess what your capacity is, there's knowing what the capacity is and knowing what you can do within the resource constraints that you're operating in. Can see that. Then I think we are good to move on. We've got a couple of people typing, but—and thanks, everyone, for participating. That was really helpful to see where some of the different tension points can be when you're trying to assess capacity, both big picture and the way that the system can function sometimes and within the local context of certain systems.

The Challenges of Assessing Capacity

LH: The idea that we can use data to capture capacity is certainly not without its challenges, obviously, as evidenced by the responses. Assessing capacity is hard to do comprehensively and concisely. I do want to acknowledge that capacity cannot always be entirely distilled down into numbers and trends. They're supposed to be a tool for us but, of course, sometimes they can't completely capture the ways in which capacity is very context-dependent, as Rob mentioned. Like many of us know, the community and individual needs cannot always be captured in a meaningful way when we're talking about capacity because they're so dynamic.

LH: Where one community may have built capacity around one particular need, it may suddenly need to pivot to meet an entirely different one because things have changed, arrival patterns are different. Capacity can be tough to assess, particularly within the scope of resettlement, because, like we've said, local systems are impacted by numerous not only newcomer populations, but other vulnerable populations just generally with particular needs that are making demands on the system as well. These challenges really underscore the need to look deeper at how we capture capacity across a patchwork of local systems of integration.

A Patchwork Picture of Capacity

LH: You'll see on this next slide, which, again, by no means [is] supposed to be an entirely comprehensive visual of all of the different moving parts that we know factor into resettlement, but it is meant to illustrate how understanding capacity can be the patchwork process of pulling together and cobbling together various metrics to understand a holistic picture of a community's capacity.

LH: As you can see within these different various areas of integration, there are plenty of figures and metrics to draw on when communities are gathered together to discuss opportunities and challenges in resettlement during a QC and to help articulate how these metrics can help us to construct an understanding of capacity within a local system. The narrative experience, the engaging part. I'd really like to turn it over to my colleague at MPI, Julie Sugarman, to talk us through how we do this in the K–12 space as a spotlight from the field.

Q&A Panel

RC: Great. Just to level, set the format of our conversation today, we're going to move out of our screen sharing here of our slides and move into more of facilitated conversation here on our end. I'll just be asking some questions of Julie and Lillie based on their experiences of this topic, using data for community connectedness and strategic consultation. Julie and Lillie both have a ton of experience, and I'm really excited to be able to draw some of that out here in this space. Like I said, feel free to drop questions in the chat, and we can work those into our conversation as well.

RC: First and foremost, welcome, Julie. Haven't heard from you yet in this webinar. Good to have you with us.

Julie Sugarman: Thank you.

RC: All right, so I just want to start really broadly by, if you could share specifically, we're going to be looking at this K–12 education space as a spotlight.

Can you share broadly, hence, regarding K–12 education, what your experiences are in data sharing and capacity assessment within the context of newcomer services?

JS: Sure. I actually have some experience in this realm of refugee resettlement because my first 15 years of my career were at the Center for Applied Linguistics, and I, for part of that, was a program evaluation specialist with the Cultural Orientation Resource Center. I'm familiar with all of the resettlement work that you all are doing, and it's nice to be back in this world, even though I've come to MPI and I'm working on English learner policy specifically.

JS: One of the things I do at MPI is I look at things. I try to explain the world of English learner education to people outside that world, just like you who are trying to advocate or trying to understand it for people that you're working with, because it's very complicated. There's a lot of terms that we use that are different from how you might use those terms. That's why as we go along, I'll be telling you about some very specific things that might be useful to you, but it's a lot of very in-the-weeds stuff that has to layer on top of our general knowledge of the population and their issues. That's my niche.

RC: Awesome. Thanks, Julie.

Obviously, English learners and multilingual learners are our bread and butter here in the resettlement world, especially those of us who work with youth and family. Lillie, what does your experience in this space look like?

LH: Yes, right now, I largely look at the different integration and trajectory experiences for different humanitarian populations and how sometimes status can factor and the different infrastructures built up around status, or lack thereof, affect the ways in which they interface with mainstream systems as well as specialized programs like the resettlement program. Often, I'm looking at arrival trends and trying to understand where and how local systems might struggle to meet a need, particularly needs that surface pretty regularly with certain populations.

LH: This is a really big thing in the legal services field right now, where certain populations have a very acute need for representation compared to others. It's helpful to see when high volumes are arriving through certain programs or certain pathways to know where localities may need to shift their attention or their resources. I think we see a lot of this, too, when we're trying to triage where needs are and identify what more immediate needs are like shelter and nutrition compared to like career pathways programs.

LH: Understanding the regularity or inconsistency with arrival trends for different populations, I think, has been hugely helpful in identifying how we can appropriate resources. That's been a large part of what I do, but I do come from the resettlement world and have myself presented data during QCs, and I'm really excited about the idea of expanding QCs to be really comprehensive of all of these different moving parts and different folks that are our new neighbors.

RC: Absolutely. QCs are such a good space for those kinds of conversations, so thank you both for sharing a little bit about that contextualizing. I want to start with that K–12 deep dive and get really into the idea of what kinds of data that we can access from K–12 education systems, thinking of what's available for resettlement providers in this webinar.

Julie, can you specify what kinds of data are federally required for schools and districts to track that resettlement providers can have access to and use?

JS: Absolutely. I like to look at it from the point of view of what is federally required because those are the things that you will be sure to find at the state level, district level, school level, but states and districts and schools often have other data as well. The big buckets that I'm going to talk about are the things that you can find. I'm going to talk more a little bit later about specific places where you find this data. In general, these are the things that are easier to find. The big buckets are things like enrollment and demographics.

JS: All of these, but especially the enrollment numbers, are usually disaggregated by things like race, gender, students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students. There's some other categories, but those are the big five that you'll always find. Some of the other buckets—student outcomes like standardized test scores and graduation rates and related to that student accountability or school accountability ratings, whether schools are meeting their goals for student outcomes—those pieces speak to capacity in the sense of how well they are doing with various populations.

JS: Information about the systems like teacher qualifications, how prepared are the teachers to teach the various populations. Civil rights data—it's been collected for a long time, but it's been added to the state dashboards and is very helpful looking at whether schools are treating student groups equally or equitably. School finance data, which I never thought that I would be a school finance data nerd, but I have found it to be an incredibly rich source of information about how states and localities use their resources, as I'm sure all of you who work in agencies understand.

RC: Yes. That truly is frankly just a lot of data, which is really cool to be able to have so much access to that. In asking some further questions on this, I hope we can make this a little clearer to participants how to use some of that data because some of those you say, I'm like, "Wait, how does that matter for resettlement?" Hope we can dig into those. I want to start with an easy one, enrollment data.
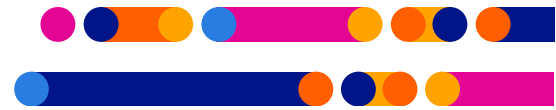
You shared about some of the demographics you can access from enrollment, but what are some ways that you have been able to see enrollment data leveraged really well for assessing capacity in the resettlement space?

JS: Yes, I think enrollment is really important. It's important to know, we've said this a little bit already, that English learner is the proxy that we use for the entire immigrant/refugee world. We don't have information on any of these groups specifically, and we'll talk more about that in a little bit. Looking at the information for English learners tells us about an important group, an important subsection of immigrants and refugees, but it also gives us really good insight into how these students fare and the resources that are provided for them.

JS: Using the English learner, sometimes race or ethnicity as proxies, one of the things I think is really important is looking at the percentage of English learners in a school or a district that you're interested in. I don't want to ever say that the low-incidence schools are anything to fear or don't do a good job, but I certainly would think that there's a different level of services that can be offered in a place that already has 10% or 15% English learners. Some places have much higher than that, but I would say the schools and districts that have very few English learners, it's maybe a yellow flag.

JS: It's maybe something to look at in terms of finding out from them whether they're going to be ready for these populations, and they are required to serve. There is no minimum number required. "Oh, if you only have three people, you don't have to serve them." No, it's a civil right for every single child coming to the U.S. to be served equitably. You're probably not likely to find overcrowding data specifically in these sources, but you might find that from newspaper accounts. They often report on that and can say which schools are overcrowded.

JS: Then, in terms of services or what's being provided, how the schools are doing, there's not really data per se on what services students are getting, but I would definitely want to ask for narrative data on, are English learners getting adequate services? How are they being served? Are they a visible priority? Again, thinking about the lower incidence schools, are they still a visible priority to the administration and to the school?

RC: Yes, absolutely. I'm seeing a question in the Q&A, and one of my further questions down the line might take us in this direction. Again, lots of really good data here and a lot of things even that you wouldn't necessarily think to use that can have implications.

Often data accessibility isn't necessarily the issue, but I would like to ask first, what are the data pieces that we can't access and also for what reasons perhaps?

Then also getting at this idea of, for folks who are just inundated by all the data that is available, what are some strategies or best practices or recommendations you would make for maybe the busy caseworker or the busy decision-maker who needs to find the most essential data?

RC: To reframe, first question is what's not available, and second question is what are the most, most essential ones you feel like?

JS: Getting back to this idea of immigrant data, schools, as you know, are not allowed to ask about immigration status. Although they do have to keep track of students who have been in the country for three years or less for one particular reporting purpose, they generally don't use that information for reporting. It's very hard to get. It's not public, but you can ask for it. I would say, unfortunately for this group, what is least available is probably

what you most want to know, which is how many immigrant students? What languages [do] they speak? What kind of education do they come with?

JS: The schools know, the teachers know, but it's not data that you can necessarily get very readily. The good news about what data we do have is that it's usually pretty easy to get. State data dashboards are where I would go first, even for local data, because they're very built out, and that's generally where that information lives. Things like looking up the English learner percentage in a whole bunch of school districts should be fairly straightforward. It can take a little bit, a few tries to get used to those systems, but you already get the list. It comes in a nice package of nice visuals, so that's the good news.

RC: I really appreciate that idea of the locations, the sources of this data. That's something we can drop a ton of links about later in this conversation. I want to highlight that the data is out there, and there are people who are anticipating that it is hard to access this or know what to look for. Things like your state-level dashboards, I agree, super, super good places to look. I want to zoom out the conversation a little bit and say, we have this K-12 data, and I wish we could have a subject matter expert on every single integration domain. This is where I might ask Lillie for some help.

If we can get enrollment data from schools and school outcome data, how can information like that be helpful in assessing capacity in some of those other integration areas?

RC: Just thinking about how we can generalize that enrollment data.

LH: Yes, it's a great question. I feel like the intersectionality of data or the multipronged use of it across different systems, I've seen it really flourish in outreach strategizing and funding strategizing as well. It really benefits other programs to have enrollment data when you're trying to think about how to do targeted outreach for assistance programs, for example. If you are a WIC provider and you're wanting to reach more immigrant populations, it can be really helpful to see where folks are enrolling into school to try to develop strategies around reaching different folks.

LH: It can also be really helpful in the vein of fundraising, where you may not necessarily be wanting to build out a program like an after-school or an education-based program, but wanting to understand where folks are and at what rate they are enrolling can be really helpful to look at if you're trying to raise funds to build a youth workforce development program, which sits in the employment realm. There's definitely some overlap with the education field, but I do think that these figures that help us to understand what a system is currently experiencing helps us to build complementary programs across different integration systems, complementary programs, supplementary programs. That's where I've seen it be really helpful. This is an education statistic, but it's been tremendously helpful to do fundraising for programs for kids that do not necessarily sit squarely in the education field.

RC: Absolutely, that makes a lot of sense. We also had some people in our registration ask particularly about the integration area of health and wellness. One of the things that I think of really often with school data, and perhaps not information that we can access specifically, but for every enrollment, you're also going to have expectations around well-child checks and immunizations and things like that.

RC: I'm wondering, we have someone in the background, a special guest, Barbara Day.

Barbara, could I bother you to come off mute for a second and talk about specifically generalizing into the health space?

RC: Sorry to put you on that.

Barbara Day: Oh, or something else because I just had another idea. This is really fascinating because when you're in the resettlement universe, we are used to receiving demographic information about who's coming. Then we share that information with other people, so they can prepare teachers and health programs and whatever. What's really interesting to me in this conversation is that the resettlement folks, now there are more people coming that we don't know who they are and where they're coming. There are so many more, I'm loosely calling them immigration categories, of people coming into our communities.

BD: If they end up in this example the school system, we could look at the number of pre-kindergarten or K–5 or pick an age group, and we could extrapolate, "Oh, maybe we have a bunch of at-home moms." Thinking outside the education for children box and thinking, "We have a bunch of at-home moms because this demographic, from what we know about it, a lot of the moms stay home to take care of these little kids. Maybe they need at-home English language training, or maybe they need some at-home home ec help or whatever." Then maybe it's grandparents staying home.

BD: You could look at what do we know about this demographic, this culture, this nationality, families with this age of children and what other—maybe it's employment services. Maybe the high school kids can come home after school and take care of themselves. Now mom or grandma can go get a job. Do you know what I mean? It's learning how to almost turn our thinking completely around so that we use the information we have to think bigger, just as we have expected in the past, the school to respond to resettlement or the health system to respond to resettlement, how can resettlement respond or the service providers because you have money from different places. If you don't have ORR or PRM money, you can ask for a grant to go serve what you already do really well for other people.

[crosstalk]

RC: Awesome. That's amazing. I love it, Barbara. I'm really grateful to have you come off mute and on camera for that. I think it just points to the creativity that can come out of this, getting at that earlier point. There's no one way to share data or make connections in the data. That's the job of the folks in your community, to be able to make those connections. Yes, no idea necessarily is too crazy there as long as you're preserving confidentiality and protecting the people that you're serving in making those connections. Thanks, Barbara, for that. Feel free to go off camera again if you need to [chuckles], but also feel free to chime back in.

RC: I want to move into a last question space. I'm returning to that point of,

All right, we have all this data. Where do we find it, Julie, and how do we use it? What are the best ways to leverage this?

RC: I'll also accompany whatever you're saying with some helpful links in the chat for participants here just so you guys can get a sense of where Julie might recommend.

JS: Absolutely. It's very great that we have these databases. Again, it's either feast or famine. We have databases that have more data than you could ever use in a lifetime, and then stuff we just can't get no matter what [chuckles].

JS: Taking the first part, eddataexpress.ed.gov. Oh, here, we have in the chat a few of these links. Ed Data Express is a place where you can get national data, but you can also get it by state and by locality. That's a really good source because it's all very clean and organized. The negative part about it is that it takes a couple years. If you want to know what's happening right now, that is not the place to go. If you want to see trends or you want to compare across geographies, it's a great source.

JS: Civilrightsdata.ed.gov also is where you can get a lot of that equity information and finding out which schools are really doing a good job or a poor job at paying attention to discrimination. Again, not something I would take one data point as gospel, but I think that's going to this, "How do we use this?"

JS: I think that's why looking at data is really important, because you can say, "Oh, gosh, this is a really highly diverse district. They don't do very well in their civil rights, but they do very well in their student outcomes. I wonder what that means. I'm going to go have a conversation about it to find out more." All of these pieces of data are things you can just use to build some questions for yourself. I think that's probably your best bet, because even those of us who use this data every day tend to try not to make assumptions about just a single piece.

JS: I also wanted to point out schoolfinancedata.org. There is some school finance data on state data dashboards, which we already talked about. I love this site. If you're just interested in this as a layperson or just for fun, it has all of the states and a huge number of school districts. It talks about things like how progressive are the tax structures, are poorer schools given more money than richer schools, which is how we want to see it, are the states actually providing enough money to schools. Again, these are maybe higher level discussions, but things that can really inform your advocacy.

JS: If you're seeing, "Oh, gosh, my state is not spending an adequate amount on education; that can work into my conversation with the legislature about providing additional resources through the schools," there's lots of places to look. I also would really encourage you to get in touch with me. If you can't tell, I love this stuff. I'm totally a data nerd. If you want to know, "Julie, where do I find this?" please send me an email, and I'd be really delighted to help you out.

RC: Thanks, Julie. We appreciate how accessible you make all of this as well. I think data can be scary for those who are less comfortable wading into the waters of it, but I really appreciate the ways that you make it come to life. I also want to say, guys, that I love this idea of data providing questions, because I think obviously data gives us answers, but it should be pointing us towards questions that we can use to motivate some of our work and some of our actual community engagement. If we're approaching schools and districts with this information in mind, that's going to make us more effective and strategic partners to them in the future and better able to interact with them.

RC: I really want to say thank you so much, Julie, for your expertise in sharing that here. I'm going to drop in the chat also a really helpful report that had come up in some of our planning about where to access some English learner data that was produced by MPI back in 2018. We hope that participants of this webinar will be able to access that and enjoy seeing some of these same findings in a different format there later on.

RC: I just want to say thank you so much, Julie and Lillie, and Barbara, as our background guest, for providing such really helpful insight. Thanks for joining us today.

RC: One last thing I want to plug is that if you are one of those people who's like, "Okay, now what do I do with this data? I'm still overwhelmed by what is out there," we just want to tease that we have a really cool plan and dream of creating a useful tool with that in mind. MPI and Switchboard have worked in the past year and a half or so on creating different tools, and one of those has been a state and local systems mapping template. Lillie did an excellent job of identifying some of these things and putting them in a really helpful Excel document.

RC: We're working on the Switchboard side in terms of how to make that more of a fillable template for you all to use in your own context and community. We're really excited to explore that probably in our next fiscal year, so stay tuned for that. We've also got a toolkit coming out on quarterly consultation facilitation. It is 20-something pages, and it's full of really, really good tips and tricks and a lot of the same information about data sources there.

Conclusion

Feedback Survey

RC: With that, I'm going to close us. Unfortunately, we've been handling questions as we went, so we hope you feel heard. If you didn't, we hope we can answer those later on. We want to ask for your help in sharing some feedback.

RC: Help us help you. We at Switchboard really value knowing how our training and learning opportunities land with our learners. If you could take a moment to scan the QR code on the screen or click the link in the chat and let us know how we did. Let us know if there's anything else you wanted us to chat about that we didn't have time for today. That helps us inform our ongoing learning opportunities and processes. Just take a couple seconds to fill that out.

Recommended Resources

RC: Just as a reminder also, all of the resources that we shared about today, including those that were embedded into our slide deck, will be shared with you in a follow-up email from Switchboard within 24 hours of the completion of this webinar. Just wanted to tease some of those here. Other resources relevant to folks who work in quarterly consultation, those who work in data and monitoring and evaluation can find those sorts of tools really useful.

[silence]

Reviewing Learning Objectives

RC: We hope that by now you've been able to accomplish the learning objectives we set out to do. We hope you're able to explain how data is important in resettlement, describe how to share data, particularly in the context of consultations, and also determine some key metrics that you can use in your own work to inform your community engagement and consultation practices.

Stay Connected

RC: Last but not least, we just want to say thank you again for attending today's webinar by Switchboard. We hope you'll stay connected with us. Sign up for our newsletter on our website, SwitchboardTA.org, to stay up to date with upcoming learning opportunities and new projects that we've been cranking out, especially as we finish the fiscal year. We've got a lot of really good stuff coming out, and you don't want to miss it.

RC: Thank you again for attending. Thanks to our speakers as well for their expertise, and we hope you have a great day.