

Session 2

IDEATION & INNOVATION IN ACTION Strengthening Data Quality and Reporting

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**Senior Researcher and Deputy Area Director
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- ✓ 20 years experience in research, evaluation and TA to address disparities and disproportionality in public education, child welfare, juvenile justice
- ✓ Specialize in evaluation TA for federal grantees and subgrantees to improve program administration, monitoring, and performance
- ✓ Develop resources for practitioners to improve data quality, analysis, reporting, and use
- ✓ Direct HHS Equity TA Center
- ✓ Led a landscape analysis of evaluation TA to build the evaluation capacity of TANF and other human services programs
- ✓ Study on time limit policies and Illinois TANF recipients with work requirement exemptions



Agenda

/ Overview

- Persistent Challenges
- Promising Practices

/ Ideation & Innovation Discussion



Overview

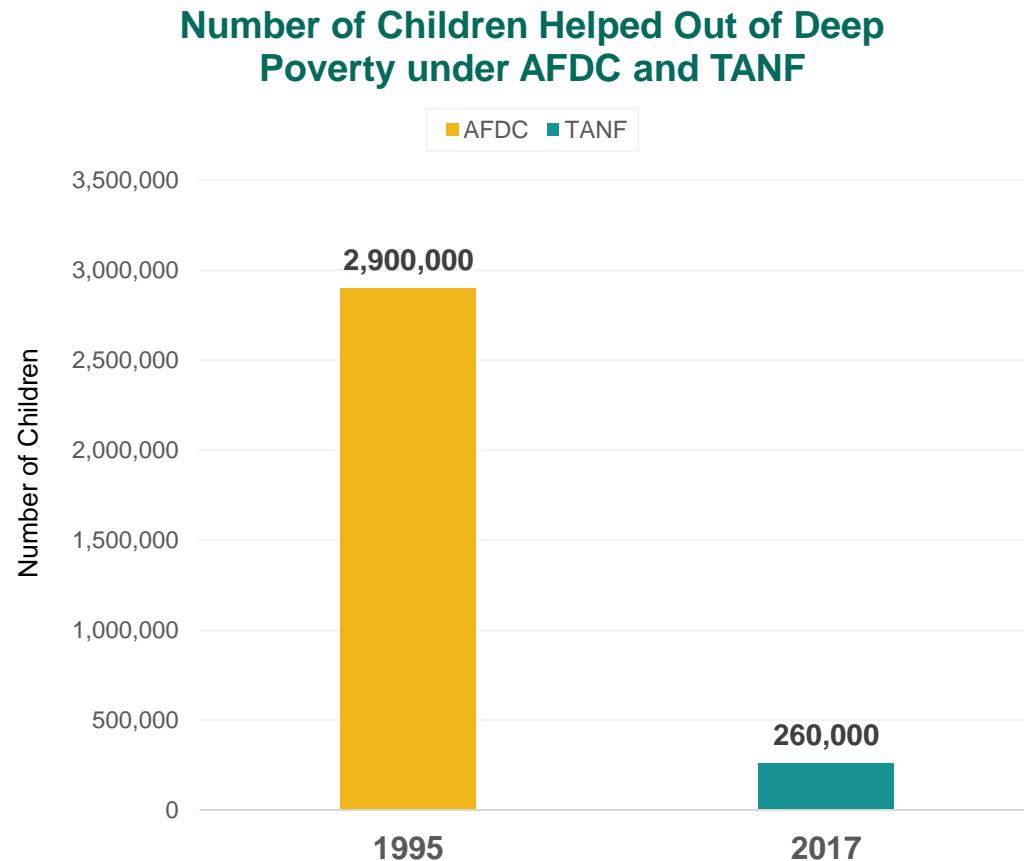
Strengthening Data Quality for Reporting and Improved Outcomes



“If you can’t measure it, you can’t improve it”

/ Federal law does not require states and territories to evaluate TANF program effectiveness

- A dearth of continuous improvement data with which agencies can make evidence-informed program design and implementation changes to produce better outcomes for families



Source: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/income-security/tanf-cash-assistance-should-reach-millions-more-families-to-lessen>

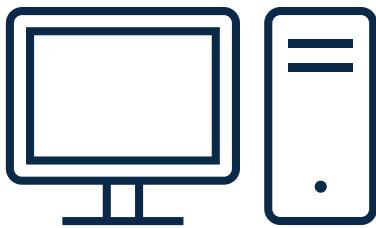


Persistent Challenges

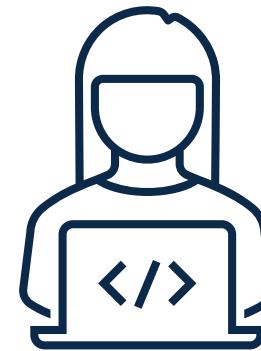
Which resource constraints are NOT associated with data use to improve outcomes for families?



Insufficient staff time



Old or inadequate information technology infrastructure



Lack of data scientists



Persistent Challenges

Challenge	Potential Implications
Reductions-in-force and budget cuts	Enforcing data quality standards and procedures becomes an administrative burden
No reporting requirements for non-cash services even though funding for non-cash services accounts for the majority of TANF spending	<i>Incomplete expenditure reporting contributes to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="993 544 2375 688">Inaccurate information about how TANF funds are used and the extent to which non-cash services (such as child welfare) are meeting program participants' needs<li data-bbox="993 694 2375 803">Increased risk of improper payments to ineligible recipients or for ineligible services
Missing or underreported data and erroneous or no common identifiers in data files	Complicates linking and matching administrative datasets (such as with employment and geographic data) to determine eligibility contributing to diminished access to assistance
Inadequate or nonexistent technical documentation, data dictionaries, metadata, and user guides	Systemic data entry and data management errors resulting in data that staff do not trust or understand and therefore, do not use

Source: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/exemplary-data-use-state-tanf-agencies-beyond-routine-reports-and-analyses>, <https://www.mathematica.org/publications/state-agencies-use-of-administrative-data-for-improved-practice-needs-challenges-and-opportunities>,
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/ib_tanf_needyfamilies_021815_final_0.pdf, and <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-15-572t.pdf>



Promising Practices

What do states and territories with
exemplary data practices do?

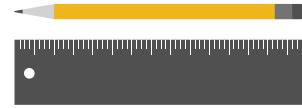
Exemplary Data Use

The ability to **use** data to
generate evidence-
informed program
improvement

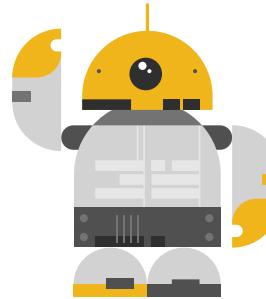
Which **ONE** of these capacity-building needs would you prioritize to bolster your state or territory's ability to improve your TANF program?



Data culture



Data literacy



Data analytics



Building a Strong Data Culture

What does a strong data culture look like?

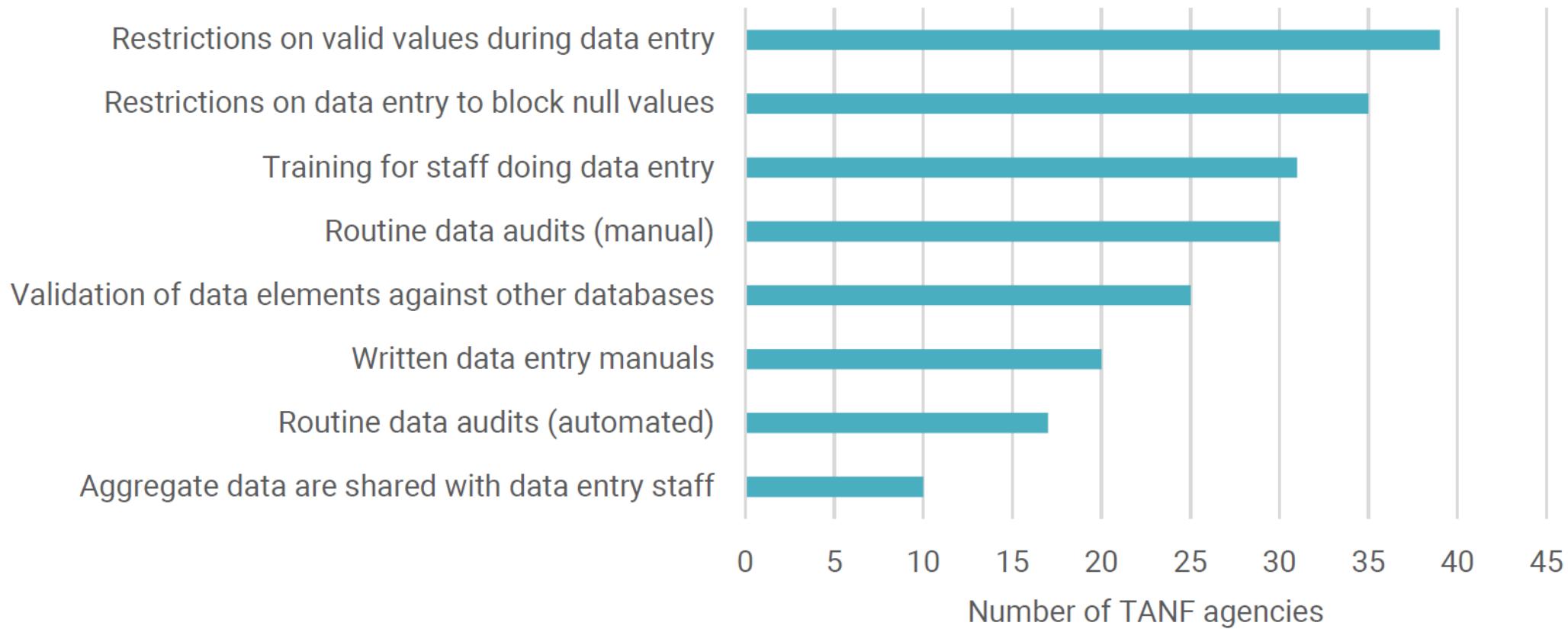
Distinguishing characteristics of states and territories exhibiting exemplary data practices

- Frequent communication** between frontline staff and other TANF data consumers
- Collaboration** with other state agencies (such as unemployment insurance and child welfare offices)
- Access** to more than five data sources that can integrate with TANF data (such as child support and Supplemental Security Income)
- Sharing data** with external partners (such as academics and research firms)
- Deriving value** from data sharing agreements (such as expanded analytic capacity and program evaluation data)
- Dedicated staff**—data professionals with program knowledge—with **protected time**

Source: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/exemplary-data-use-state-tanf-agencies-beyond-routine-reports-and-analyses> and <https://www.mathematica.org/publications/state-agencies-use-of-administrative-data-for-improved-practice-needs-challenges-and-opportunities>

Promising Practices

Data Quality Strategies in Use by TANF Agencies



SOURCE: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/unpacking-data-use-state-tanf-agencies>

Building a Strong Data Culture

What's a critical step your state or territory could take to build a strong (or stronger) data culture?



Promising Practices

Conduct a comprehensive data quality assessment

Data Quality Assessment Tool for Administrative Data

- / Assesses six quality dimensions:
 1. Relevance
 2. Accessibility
 3. Coherence
 4. Interpretability
 5. Accuracy
 6. Institutional Environment
- / Comprised of 43 questions organized into 3 phases: Discovery, Initial Acquisition, and Repeated Acquisition

	Discovery	Initial Acquisition	Repeated Acquisition	
Relevance. Relevance refers to how well the administrative data file meets the needs of the user in regards to data level (person, family, household, establishment, company, etc.), broad data definitions and concepts, population coverage, time period and timeliness.				
1	✓			What are the general contents of the administrative data file(s) maintained by the program?
2	✓			What entity is represented at the record level on the administrative data file (person, household, family, business, etc.)?
3	✓			Describe the scope of the records included on the administrative data file (program participants, geographic areas, etc.).
4	✓			What are the earliest and latest dates for which administrative data are available (including in archive)?
5	✓			How often are the data collected at the program office? (Daily for flow data, or a particular date such as April 1)?
6	✓			What is "reference time period" by which the data are organized in the administrative file(s)?
7	✓			How soon after a reference period ends can a data file extract be prepared and provided?
Accessibility. Accessibility refers to the ease with which the data file extract can be obtained from the administrative agency. This includes the suitability of the form or medium for transferring the data, confidentiality constraints, and cost.				
8	✓			Describe any legal, regulatory or administrative restrictions on access to the data file extract.
9	✓			Describe any records or fields that were collected but cannot be included (for confidentiality or other reasons) in the data file extract provided to the user.
10	✓			What is the typical reimbursement for sharing your data? Are reports, a data product, or a monetary fee given in return?
11		✓		Describe any disclosure control methods or other modifications of the data file used to protect the confidentiality of the data (i.e., Topcoding, Replacing names with identification numbers) or will non-modified data from the program agency's database(s) be provided and accessible to the statistical agency?
12		✓		How will the data file extract be transferred to the user?
Interpretability. Interpretability refers to the clarity of information to ensure that the administrative data are utilized in an appropriate way. This includes evaluation of data collection forms, data collection instructions, and a data dictionary.				
13	✓		✓	Describe each variable on the administrative data file and note their valid values. (See template for data dictionary).
14	✓			If a complete data dictionary is not available, describe the primary identification and response fields on the administrative data file and note their valid values.



Ideation & Innovation Discussion

Discussion

**Consider the policies,
practices, or initiatives
you've employed to
strengthen data quality
and accurate reporting**

- / Persistent challenges**
- / Recent wins**
- / Hopes or fears**

Discussion questions:

1. To what extent do the persistent challenges or promising practices discussed resonate with me and apply to my state/territory?
2. What do I need to learn about data quality and reporting that I don't already know?
3. What do I hope OFA can do to support progress in my state/territory on this topic?
4. What do I hope my agency can do to support progress in my state/territory on this topic?
5. What do I hope I can do to support progress in my state/territory on this topic?



Thank you!!

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