Data, Dashboards and Decision-Making

Worksheet and public data guide · NPSI 14th Annual Staten Island Nonprofit Conference, October 22, 2026 · Dr. Olivia Ildefonso, North Arrow

Step 1: The questions you are asked most

Write the question each group asks you most often that is hard to answer quickly.

Who asks	Their question
Your board	
Funders	
Your own staff	
One you wish you could answer	

Step 2: The data you already have

List where your data lives (intake forms, attendance, surveys, a CRM, DYCD Connect, paper files) and the shared key that connects it to other data: an address, school, ZIP code or date.

Data you collect	Where it lives	Shared key	Which Step 1 question it could help answer

Step 3: Bring two datasets together

Pick one dataset of your own and one public dataset from the list on the back.

Your program dataset	
The public dataset	
The shared key that connects them	
Which Step 1 questions they could help you answer	

Public data sources by field

Every field has free public data that can sit next to your own. Find your field, start with these sources, and use the example indicators to decide what to compare with your program data.

If you work on	Where to start	Example indicators
Climate & environmental justice	EJNYC Mapping Tool and Report (Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice); NYC Environment & Health Data Portal; NYC Flood Hazard Mapper	Heat vulnerability, flood vulnerability, tree canopy, air quality (fine particulate matter), nearby pollution sources
Housing	Census American Community Survey; HUD's CHAS and Fair Market Rents; HPD data on NYC Open Data; NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey	Rent burden, overcrowding, housing code violations, evictions, fair market rents
Health and mental health	NYC Environment & Health Data Portal; NYC Community Health Profiles; CDC PLACES (census tract estimates)	Asthma emergency visits, diabetes, obesity, frequent mental distress, health insurance coverage
Education and youth	NYC Public Schools InfoHub and School Quality Reports; NYSED public data site; DYCD program sites on NYC Open Data	Attendance and chronic absenteeism, test proficiency, graduation rates, English learners, students in temporary housing, school survey results
Food security	USDA Food Access Research Atlas; Feeding America Map the Meal Gap; NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy Food Metrics Report	Food insecurity rate, low food access areas, SNAP participation, distance to a supermarket
Workforce and economic mobility	Census American Community Survey; NYS Department of Labor data; Opportunity Atlas	Unemployment, median household income, poverty, educational attainment, adult earnings by the neighborhood a child grew up in
Immigrant services	Census American Community Survey (tract-level extracts through IPUMS NHGIS); NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs annual report	Foreign-born share, limited English proficiency, languages spoken at home, children in immigrant families, citizenship
Public safety and justice	NYPD crime and complaint data and NYC 311 service requests, both on NYC Open Data	Crime complaints by type, arrests, 311 complaints such as noise, heat and hot water, and housing conditions

Before you trust a public dataset

Public data describes places and populations, not always what your participants live through. Check four things first:

1. Who is counted? Every survey misses someone.
2. At what geography? A neighborhood average can hide a block, and small areas like census tracts carry large margins of error.
3. How recent is it? Some figures are several years old.
4. Does it match what your participants tell you? If it does not, that is the case for using your own data, or collecting it.

See the full presentation: https://bit.ly/4jwR30z

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