
COORDINATING SNAP AND NUTRITION SUPPORTS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT



Thriving Children Strong Families Project White Paper

Hawaii Department of Human Services
Office of the Director
December 2022



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Attachments

Attachment A Hawai'i Project White Paper Final

Attachment B Hawai'i Project Framework Data Sharing FINAL 9.30.22

Attachment C Hawai'i DOH WIC DHS BESSD MOA 5.10.2022.signed

Attachment D Hawai'i Project Glossary and Data Dictionary Final 12.31.22

Acknowledgment

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We appreciate these two organizations for funding and guiding us to achieve this long-imagined and previously attempted effort of streamlining referral and application processes between the State's WIC and SNAP programs, making it easier for Hawai'i residents with young children. Without the technical and financial assistance and the learning shared with fellow cohort states and county, coordinating outreach and application processes of vital food and nutrition programs would remain a dream.

This project was also supported by Governor David Y. Ige, Department of Human Services (DHS) Director Cathy Betts and her leadership team, and Department of Health (DOH) Director Libby Char, MD, and her leadership team. With their investment in the state employees to re-imagine government operations and innovate new ways to serve the people of Hawai'i, the project team could continue moving forward, one step at a time, united with respect for each other no matter what department or program the members represented.

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Lastly, but most importantly, the Hawai'i Principal Investigator wishes to thank her colleague Katherine Korenaga, Family Resource Center Coordinator (formerly Community and Project Development Director), for co-leading this project. Together, we were able to support the project management team and facilitate the process of this project to continue.

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We also thank the dedicated committee members who share the same vision, common purpose, and innovative thinking to make this project a reality.

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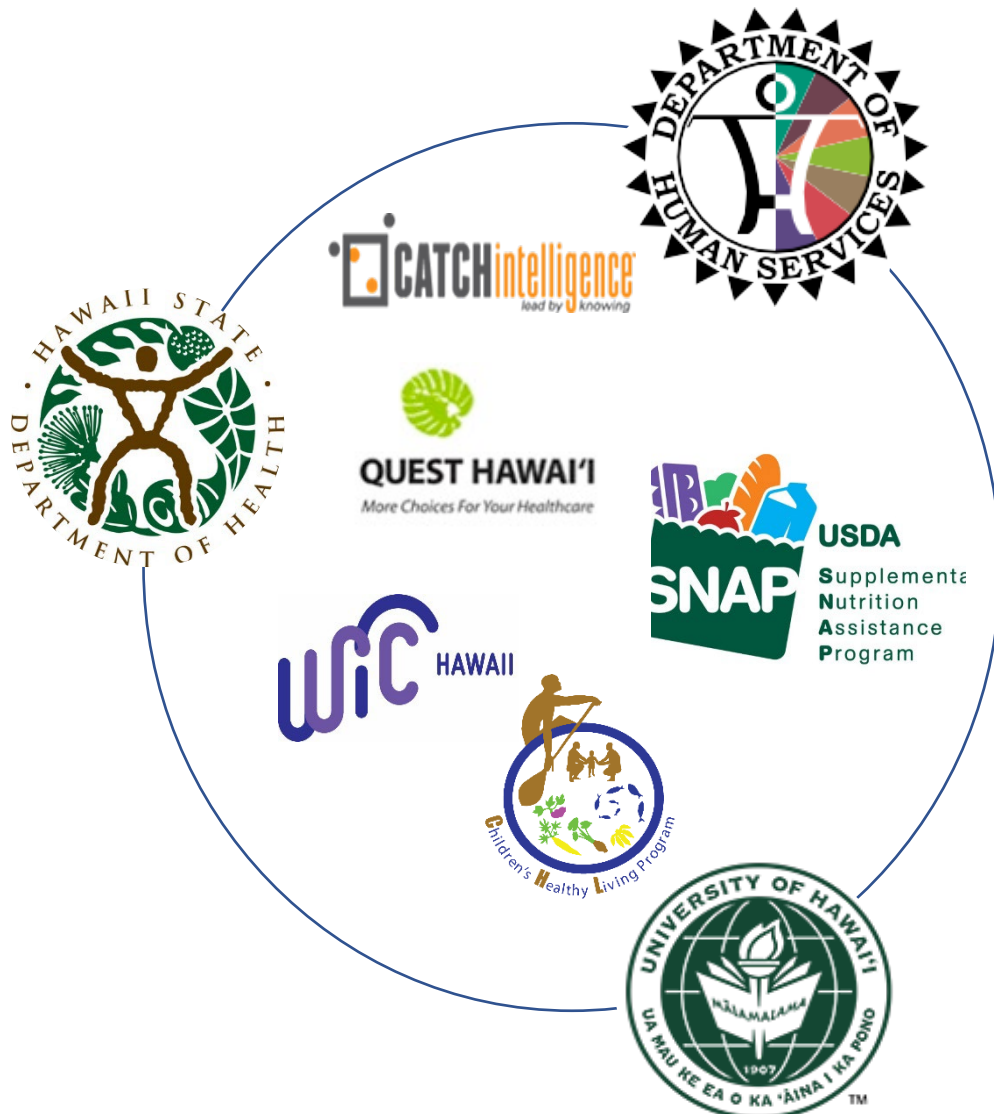
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Introduction

Hawai'i DHS provides essential public benefits and services that serve as building blocks for individuals and families in need to achieve self-sufficiency and success on their terms. The team is made up of more than 2,400 employees across the islands. These benefits and services comprise one of the largest state department budgets of \$3.6 billion, including most of the state government's federal monies.

Our vision: The people of Hawai'i are thriving.

Our mission: To encourage self-sufficiency and support the well-being of individuals, families, and communities in Hawai'i

Our core values: T.H.R.I.V.E.

T: Team-oriented

H: Human-centered

R: Respectful

I: Intentional

V: Visionary

E: Evidence-based

'Ohana Nui is Hawai'i's multigenerational approach to providing human services encompassing the whole family. The overarching goal of 'Ohana Nui is to reduce the impact and incidence of multigenerational poverty, as codified in section 26-14, HRS.

Since 2015, DHS has embraced Ascend at The Aspen Institute's Two-generation (2Gen) approaches to building family well-being by intentionally and simultaneously working with children and the adults in their lives together. Recognizing Hawai'i's extended family and generational households, DHS 'Ohana Nui, or extended family, is an adaptation of the 2Gen approach. DHS has been changing its processes to deliver human services that are whole-family-focused to address the needs of all family members to help young children and their families become economically stable.

We hope that through 'Ohana Nui, DHS and partners are addressing the social determinants of health and well-being by focusing on these pillars: housing stability, access to food and nutrition, addressing education and economic support, improving access to health care, and increasing opportunities for families to increase positive social connections or social capital.

In April 2021, Hawai'i and four other states plus one county, a total of six sites, were awarded competitive grants from a non-profit organization, Share Our Strength, through its anti-hunger campaign No Kid Hungry. The goal of the *Coordinating SNAP and Nutrition Supports to Reduce Childhood Hunger Demonstration Project* (hereafter referred to as "Demonstration Project") is to invest in state infrastructures that leverage SNAP and related programs to increase access to

nutrition support for sustained impact in reducing childhood hunger. The selected sites received funding to hire staff or contracted services to lead project implementation in conjunction with flexible operating funds that may be used to invest in technology, materials, services, and other costs associated with the proposed projects.

The selected sites participated in cohort learning to share promising practices and opportunities to effect policy changes at the federal and state level to reduce childhood hunger through increased coordination between and across SNAP and child nutrition programs. The funding organization Share Our Strength and its contracted grant administrator APHSA supported the sites for technical assistance.

Hawai'i's proposed 18-month project was to lay the foundation for interagency data-sharing and build capacity to analyze administrative data across nutrition programs—specifically SNAP and WIC—with support from both the DOH and the UH CHL Center. By enabling nutrition programs to understand trends in cross-enrollment, identify characteristics of individuals and communities that are vulnerable or have low rates of enrollment in eligible programs, and guide program and policy planning, the initiative will eventually streamline policy, programs, and resources that impact the lives of children and their families. The project would enhance interagency collaboration, improve eligibility workers' knowledge of SNAP and WIC, allow DHS and DOH to share and match participant data, and increase the number and percentage of children and families cross-enrolled in the two programs.

The purpose of this brief is to document our journey and how-to's for future collaboration-building and data-sharing projects. The project leadership hopes this document becomes useful for future innovations and will be updated with new learnings and insights.

Project Background

In Hawai'i, WIC, SNAP, and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) are administered by three different state agencies, DOH, DHS, Department of Education (DOE) respectively. Due to the administrative barriers, families must engage in three or more processes to access benefits, re-entering their information and re-telling their stories at each process. This causes an undue emotional burden on these families and an administrative burden on the systems. As each system of records is owned by three separate state departments, there is no central office or staff to collect, match, and analyze the data to understand the number of co-enrolled families.

DHS tried to break down government system silos by implementing the 'Ohana Nui framework of serving the child and parent simultaneously. In 2016, SNAP and WIC worked together to increase WIC enrollment of SNAP-eligible recipients. Both programs formed an MOA allowing WIC to view SNAP recipient income-only data for WIC eligibility. The file was too large and cumbersome, and it took the WIC agency too long to review the SNAP recipient data list. Many were no longer eligible for the WIC program. Since 2016, several efforts have been made on interagency collaboration to coordinate services that aimed to improve systems alignment, informed by data, expand program reach, identify service gaps, and identify gap groups/communities for targeted outreach efforts to provide more rapid and efficient access to families with children with needed nutrition support.

Lessons learned from these small collaboration projects always came back to the need for an interagency coordinator to lead these projects. A dedicated project manager to facilitate progress is critical to interagency collaboration. Recognizing DHS IT systems required a much-needed upgrade to achieve 'Ohana Nui, DHS began to plan and implement the IT modernization transformation project. This modernization project aims to develop an upgraded IT system for the SNAP agency, establish the DHS internal systems interface to streamline the referral and eligibility determination processes and implement the business process redesign associated with IT modernization and solutions. Once built, the SNAP agency can easily interface with government programs like WIC. The new system's projected launch is expected to launch in 2024.

The goal of the Demonstration Project, which was to invest in state systems that leverage SNAP and related programs to increase access to nutrition support, seemed well aligned with the 'Ohana Nui framework and to meet the state's desire to coordinate and streamline the referral process for sustained impact.

Leveraging the ongoing IT project allows the SNAP and WIC agencies to lay the groundwork for data governance and management framework before the system is built. This project focused on developing a common language (project business glossary and data dictionary), data matching methodology, data sharing agreement, and technical procedures. Test data extracts were conducted to understand the number of potential SNAP households that appear to be

WIC eligible and improve the accuracy of matching for the interface design. This groundwork and the ongoing IT modernization are essential steps for SNAP and WIC agencies to work better together to create a coordinated referral process.

Impact of COVID-19

Hawai'i's unemployment rate was one of the lowest in the nation (2.8% in 2019) pre-pandemic. As COVID-19 began to spread in Hawai'i in early 2020, Hawai'i's tourism and hospitality industries, the primary source of Hawai'i's economy, were shut down to mitigate the spread. Hawai'i's unemployment rate spiked to one of the highest in the nation in April 2020¹. Although the unemployment rate is trending downward, Hawai'i's unemployment remained the highest (51st) in the country for four consecutive months from September to December 2020 at 9.3% (December 2020 seasonally adjusted)².

DHS administrative data show that 193,761 persons (103,974 households) receive SNAP benefits as of January 2021. DOH WIC reported 27,804 women, infants, and children enrolled in WIC in the same month. Of those WIC participants, 37% self-reported enrolling in SNAP. The WIC program has limited access to the SNAP database for income verification purposes only; however, there is no established process for automatic referral between the two programs or ongoing data comparison to identify and address eligible gap groups.

Hawai'i's demonstration project intended to build foundational capacity to analyze administrative data across nutrition programs - specifically SNAP and WIC - with support and partnership from the DOH as the WIC administration agency, the UH CHL Center as the child and family nutrition research expert in the Pacific Region, and CATCH Intelligence as the project manager with an expertise in developing data governance. By enabling nutrition programs to understand trends in cross-enrollment, identify characteristics of individuals and communities that are vulnerable or have low rates of enrollment in eligible programs, and guide program and policy planning, the initiative will eventually streamline policy, programs, and resources that impact the lives of children and their families. More specifically, DHS anticipated that the project would enhance interagency collaboration, improve eligibility workers' knowledge of SNAP and WIC, allow DHS and DOH to match participant data, and increase the number and percentage of children and families cross-enrolled in SNAP and WIC. The goals of this project are rooted in Hawai'i's existing 'Ohana Nui framework, which aims to dismantle intergenerational poverty by collaboratively working with government agencies and community organizations to address the needs of multigenerational households.

Building an interface between the two agencies requires more than just forming an MOA for data sharing. A standard data dictionary for the matching across the agencies is needed. There

¹ Hawai'i Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, Research and Statistics, HireNet Hawai'i Labor Force and Unemployment Rate <https://www.hirenethawaii.com/gsipub/index.asp?docid=723>

² Hawai'i Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, Research and Statistics, HireNet Hawai'i Labor Force and Unemployment Rate <https://www.hirenethawaii.com/gsipub/index.asp?docid=723>

must be a set of common definitions and disaggregation of race and ethnicity to analyze at-risk or impacted communities to address inequity given Hawai'i's diversity. The eligibility workers' knowledge of available programs should be enhanced by creating ongoing in-service training. These are vital components to coordinate the nutrition programs for families to access eligible nutrition programs rapidly. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the dire need for coordinated service delivery. The need for developing streamlined, family-friendly access to multiple nutrition programs cannot be emphasized enough. These families experience trauma and stress to survive every day with an uncertain future.

The initially proposed anticipated outcomes included:

- Enhanced interagency collaboration.
- Eligibility workers' knowledge gain on WIC and SNAP programs.
- The ability of DHS and DOH to match participant data.
- Increase in the number and percentage of children and families co-enrolled in SNAP and WIC.

The performance metrics associated with the proposed anticipated outcomes were:

- Established referral process between SNAP and WIC.
- Data governance documents.
- Execution of data sharing MOAs with WIC and UH.
- Ongoing data comparison between the two agencies.

The metrics will be refined during the planning phase with technical assistance from APHSA. DHS will provide a quarterly progress report to APHSA and participate in regular check-in meetings to update the progress.

Cohort Support and Technical Assistance

Over the course of the project, the sites were supported by Share our Strength and APHSA with resources, peer-to-peer information exchange, cohort meetings, and project check-ins with the funders. In the planning phase, Hawai'i received support from APHSA to gather samples of MOU, MOA, and data-sharing agreements between the SNAP and WIC programs.

The monthly cohort meetings provided opportunities to exchange ideas and best practices, share the progress of each site project, and learn from each other about the successes, challenges, and potential solutions to overcome barriers. The cohort sites were given access to national experts and leaders on related topics supporting the project implementation.

Throughout the project, Hawai'i had the opportunity to learn from other states. Peer-to-peer information exchange and learning opportunities with a few cohort states helped Hawai'i consider and apply what has worked and was successful and what we would do differently. Leveraging each other's successes was indeed a strength-based approach.

For example, we connected with cohort members from Michigan and Kansas. Michigan established a cross-enrollment coordinator before starting this project as part of its commitment to coordinating across programs to reduce barriers to accessing nutrition and other critical supports. This role supports intra- and interagency linkages to remove the obstacles for families to access services. Hawai'i was interested in learning more about this role and the ongoing efforts that Michigan was already doing. Learning lessons from other States that are trying different strategies, such as texting as a form of outreach.

WIC also reached out to Kansas early on. Hawai'i and Kansas are in the same WIC Management Information System (MIS) consortium and share the same vendor. As Hawai'i's project was broken into two phases, Kansas' data sharing model was similar to Phase 2 of Hawai'i's, i.e., WIC to SNAP. The WIC partner took the lead to learn more from Kansas and leverage the work to be done by Kansas.

In August 2022, all six sites gathered at the Child Hunger Summit to discuss local, state, and federal strategies to advance a child nutrition framework to align nutrition programs to reduce childhood hunger.

Federal law allows Medicaid and SNAP to share enrollee data for WIC³. WIC can obtain client information for documenting adjunctive eligibility. The SNAP program allows WIC to view SNAP recipient data only for income verification. However, although SNAP and WIC are both regulated under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), each program regulations vary. For example, SNAP is a public assistance program for eligible

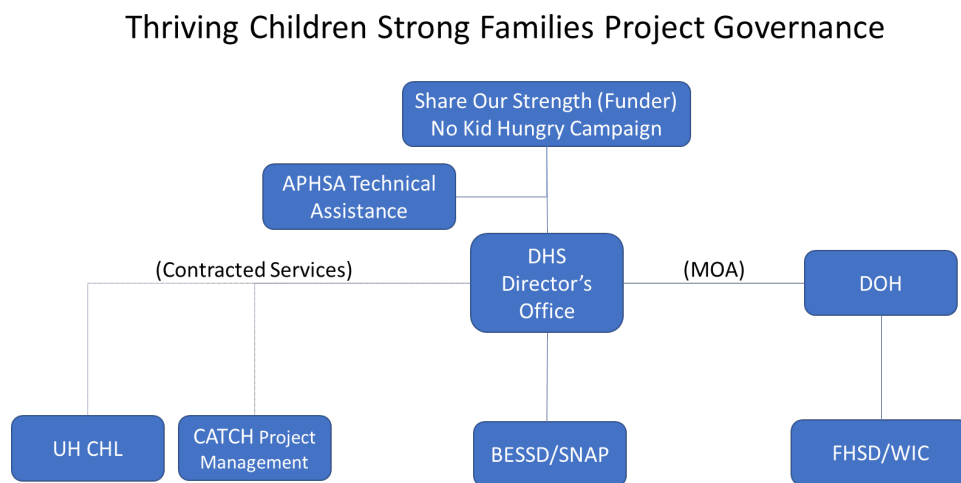
³ 7. C.F.R. § 246.7 (d)(2)(vi) <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-246/subpart-C/section-246.7>

U.S. citizens. WIC does not have a citizenship requirement. In addition, SNAP “outreach” has been interpreted as synonymous with “recruitment” to enroll in the public assistance program. Conversely, WIC can conduct direct outreach to individuals from an authorized agency or to the broader public with fewer restrictions than SNAP.

Cross-Agency Collaboration as Project Governance Framework

Cross-sector collaboration requires strong governance and leadership, shared purpose and outcome, shared information, data, and evaluation systems, and sustainable financing and oversight.⁴ (Figure 1)

Figure 1. Project Charter



As evidenced by the prior efforts, DHS and DOH are committed to building an ongoing interagency collaboration in the context of client data sharing and comparison process so that potentially eligible applicants are referred to and enrolled in appropriate programs in a streamlined way. This Demonstration Project accelerated Hawai'i's ability toward cross-agency data sharing.

WIC and SNAP are the USDA FNS programs, and different regulations apply. Satisfying both program requirements of data sharing, confidentiality, privacy protection, and information security was the anticipated barrier to overcome. The process of reaching an agreement in the form of an MOA was expected to take several months. During the planning phase, the project team spent ample time developing a shared vision, setting collective goals, clarifying outcomes we wanted to see as results of this project, and discussing and learning each other's decision-making and data entry processes. This was a very slow process, and it often felt like the discussions were circling. However, taking the time to build trust and learn of the other's system process similarities and differences paid off in reducing and eliminating assumptions and contributed to overcoming the legal and regulatory barriers during MOA development and execution. Consequently, DHS and DOH were able to sign the MOA within six months of the working group's inception.

⁴ https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/ghpc_briefs/16/

Recognizing the importance of a well-connected interagency and cross-functional collaboration team to play a critical role in the success of this project, the DHS project lead and PI began to engage with DHS executive leadership to obtain buy-in from the very top. As this project is an “add-on” to the daily responsibilities of our staff, we asked the leadership to assign appropriate staff to this project. The PI also requested the DOH WIC leadership to invite appropriate staff, particularly the experts in the data and system, to this project. We observed that early engagement with potential stakeholders was the key to success. We also kept ongoing engagement and communication with DHS and DOH staff as necessary so that the information sharing and feedback solicitation during the development were continuous. We were prepared for the transitions that happened in the project.

Upon onboarding the Project Management Team (CATCH Intelligence), the project team began to solidify the project charter and created the RACI (Responsible/Accountable/Consulted/Informed) matrix (Figure 2) to describe the roles and responsibilities of team members.

Figure 2. RACI Matrix

No Kid Hungry Project RACI Matrix
Hawai'i Department of Human Services

Responsibilities
Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed

ROLES: Project Team, Principal Investigator, Leadership Team, IT, DHS / SNAP, DHS / Legal, UH, Partners/Owners/Subject Matter Experts

Key Process Area, Deliverable, or Task	Status	Sponsor / Leadership						Other Resources		
Data Comparison		A	R	R	C	C	C	C	C	C
Policies & Procedures		A	C	C	I	I	I	I	I	I
Business Processes										
Referral Process		A	R	R	I	C	I	I	I	I
Data Comparison Process		A	R	R	I	C	C	C	I	I
Policies & Procedures		A	R	R	I	C	C	C	I	I
Training		A	R	R	I	C	I	C	I	I
Technical Execution		R	R	R	A	I	I	I	I	I

Insert new rows above this one

Legend:
 R Responsible: Assigned to complete the task or deliverable.
 A Accountable: Has final decision-making authority and accountability for completion. Only 1.
 C Consulted: An adviser, stakeholder, or subject matter expert who is consulted before a de.
 I Informed: Must be informed after a decision or action.

While developing the project charter and RACI matrix, the Project Management Team also began to lead the discussions to create a project implementation plan, including the tasks (Figure 3). When the RACI matrix was finalized, it was used in the implementation plan to assign a member and specify timelines associated with the tasks to ensure completion.

Figure 3. Implementation Plan

Legend: Tasks In Progress Item that changed

HI DHS TCSF Project Data Governance Implementation Plan				2022												2023					
Activity	Task/Deliverable	Assigned to	Status/Comments	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
Planning Phase																					
Planning	Convene the core implementation team of DHS, DCH and UH for introduction and preparation for the kick-off meeting with APHISA and plan ongoing meeting frequency.	Core Team	Complete																		
Planning	Hire or contract a project manager dedicated to this project.	Core Team	Complete																		
Planning	Project Kickoff Meeting	CATCH/UH/DHS	Complete	8/11/21																	
Planning	Implementation Plan and Timeline	Core Team	Complete		Sep																
Planning	Begin contract negotiation with UH CHL Center on technical advising	Core Team	Complete																		
Planning	Gather information from the SNAP and WIC agencies – data dictionary, federal and state laws related to information disclosure/data sharing/confidentiality/privacy/security, sample MOAs between SNAP and WIC agencies (TA needed).	Core Team	Complete			Oct															
Planning	Gather service contracts	Core Team	Complete																		
Planning	Begin MOA negotiations for data sharing and start the draft	Core Team	Complete																		
Planning	Contract with UH executed	Core Team	Complete																		
Planning	Contract with a project manager executed	Core Team	Complete																		
Planning	Onboard the project manager	Core Team	Complete																		
Implementation Phase																					
Implementation	Onboarding new (and existing) project team members.	Core Team	Complete	8/18/21																	
Implementation	Identify topic specific working groups.	Core Team	Complete																		
Implementation	Convene a sub-workgroup of outreach staff from WIC, SNAP, and Medicaid agencies to connect and provide in-service training with each other	Core Team	Complete					Dec													
Implementation	Continue brainstorming nutrition research questions and additional	Dr. Novotny	On going																		
Implementation	Submit an interim report to the funder.		Complete					Dec			Mar			Jun	Jul						
Implementation	Submit the project final report		Not started																	Dec	Jan
Data Standards																					
Data Governance Documents	Develop the conceptual project framework for interagency data sharing programs guided by UH CHL	UH	On going			Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug					
Data Governance Documents	Finalize the data governance framework	Core Team	Complete																	Sep	
Data Governance Documents	Review SNAP and WIC data requirements	Core Team	Complete			Oct															
Data Governance Documents	Develop process scenarios	Core Team	On going						Jan												Oct
Data Governance Documents	Line up key criteria with actual variables in the data dictionary to see what is needed to talk with each other	Core Team	In Progress						Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct			
Data Governance Documents	Review CHL examples	Core Team	Introduced						Jan												
Data Governance Documents	Develop a Draft standard data dictionary and matching methodology for Phase 1	Core Team	In Progress			Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct			
Data Governance Documents	Develop a Final standard data dictionary and matching methodology for Phase 1	Core Team	Not started											Jun	Jul					Nov	
Data Governance Documents	Develop a Project Glossary for Phase 1	Core Team	Complete						Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep				
Data Governance Documents	Technology Discussion	Mark, Gordon, John, Sandi	Complete			Nov	Dec														
Data Governance Documents	WIC Current Contract Ends		Milestone												Jun						
Data Governance Documents	WIC New Contract Begins		Milestone												Jul						
Data Governance Documents	Build sample data set framework to test the Framework		In Progress																Sep	Oct	
Data Governance Documents	Conduct field tests		Not started			Nov			Jan	Mar										Oct	

Initially, the project team agreed not to break into smaller working groups, given that the project team was small enough and everyone had a vested interest in each working group. As we began to tackle identified tasks, the project team began to schedule additional meetings to work on targeted tasks. Realizing the need for additional meeting times to accomplish tasks, the project team agreed to establish working groups even when the members in each working group mostly overlapped (See Figure 4). Below is the approximate total staff time the project team members invested throughout the grant performance period.

Working Groups:

- MOA – 3 meetings; 8 people (1 hour) = **24 hours**
- Framework Document – 1 meeting; 8 people (30 minutes) = **4 hours**
- Project Glossary – 3 meetings; 4 people (1 hour each) = **12 hours**
- SNAP to WIC data file exchange – 2 meetings; 10 people (30 minutes each) = **10 hours**
- Data Dictionary – 2 meetings; 7 people (30 min each) = **7 hours**
- Technical Procedures Documentation – 3 meetings; 10 people (30 minutes each) = **15 hours**
- Technical Procedures Documentation & Data Dictionary – 7 meetings; 7 people (1 hour each) = **49 hours**
- Communication/Outreach Planning – 6 meetings; 6 people (1 hour each) = **36 hours**
- White Paper – 8 meetings; 6 people (2-30 min; 6-1 hour each) = **42 hours**
- Project Team – 32 meetings; 17 people (1 hour each) = **544 hours**
- Leadership Team – 29 meetings; 13 people (1 hour each) = **377 hours**
- **Total Invested Hours = 1,120 hours (appx.)**

Figure 4. Project Team and Workgroups



Project Data Governance Framework as Foundation

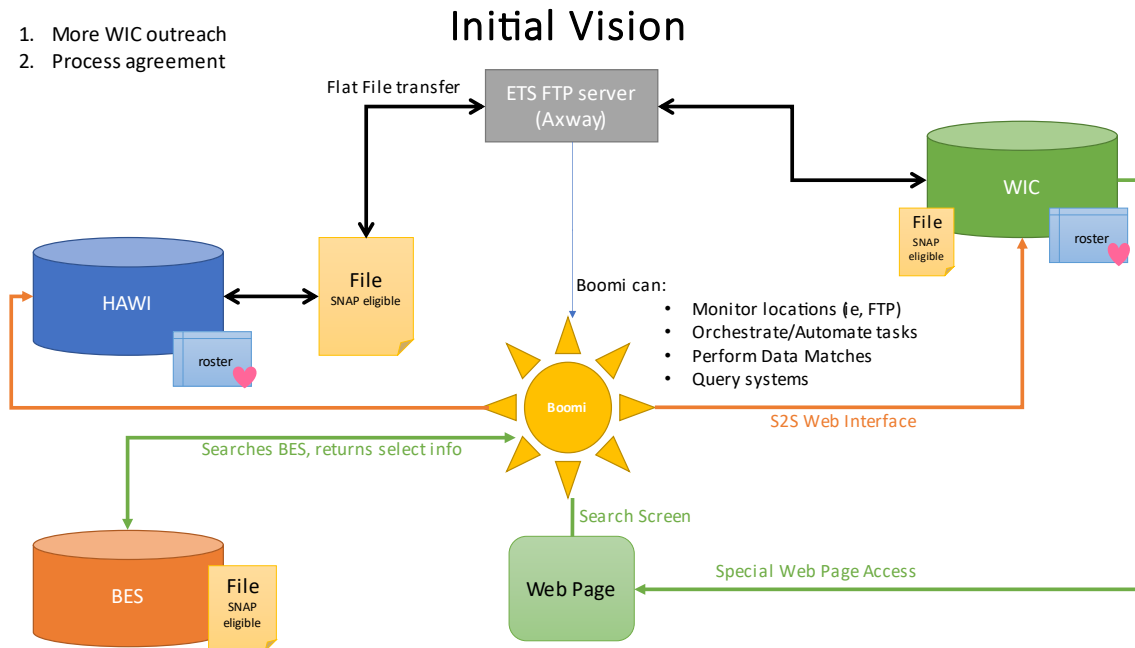
Hawai'i DHS wishes to promote the use of the data collected to aid community partners, stakeholders, researchers, and policymakers in Hawai'i and the U.S. to inform policymaking to the extent federal and state regulations allow. It is crucial to have an established framework about how to govern and manage the data assets of DHS to avert any mistakes and mishandling of confidential information.

DHS currently does not have an established department-wide data governance policy or framework. The current landscape of the DHS data governance is that each of the four divisions owns and manages the data stored in its own system of records. This complicates the department-wide data governance framework development as each database system is different.

The IT modernization projects intended to address the physical database siloes by initially envisioning a DHS data warehouse to consolidate all program participant data into one database. There were also efforts made by a working group of DHS employees who voluntarily participated in the group to formulate concepts of department-wide data governance. DHS had to make a painful decision to pivot the vision to build an interface to share or connect common client information, like Master Data Management (MDM). In addition, the pivot occurred as the new eligibility system for the SNAP agency was in the design phase.

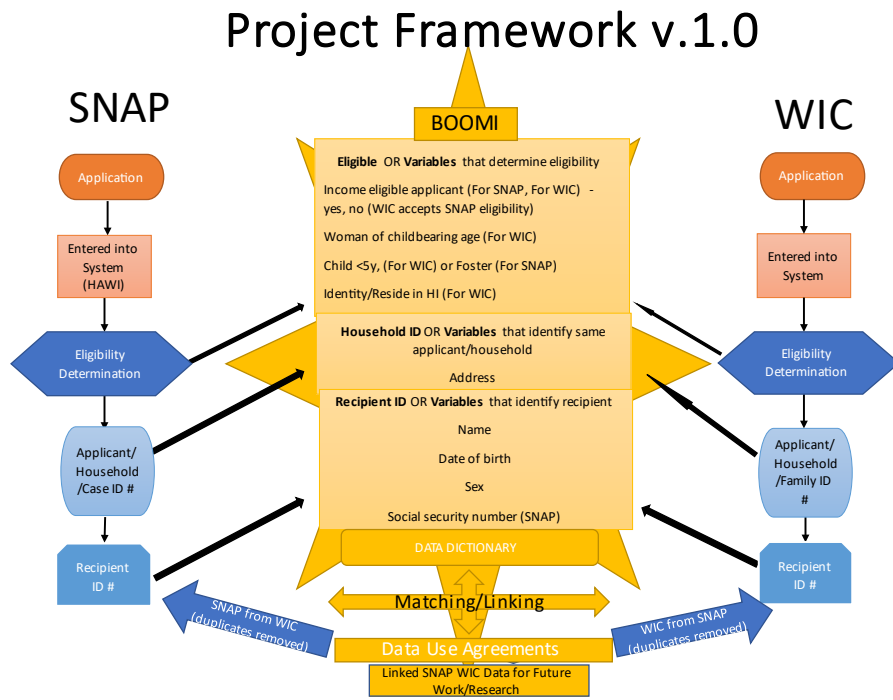
This Demonstration Project provided a valuable opportunity for DHS to start where it could begin, on a smaller scale, to create a common language and data definitions and to establish a protocol and procedures for data requests to manage the flow of the data better. This project has been used as a learning lab to test the conceptual framework and to develop a process that can be scaled to a more comprehensive data governance policy and potentially to the department-wide. Figure 5 below shows the initial vision of the data-sharing framework DHS Enterprise Officer created as a starting point. During the planning phase, existing relevant documents and resources were collected, e.g., the data dictionaries and codebooks from the SNAP and WIC programs, business glossaries, program applications, applicable federal and state statutes and rules, procedures, etc. This helped the team members understand the similarities and differences and informed the development of the project glossary, data dictionary, and framework. In addition, the project team held presentations on SNAP and WIC programs by the team members and subject matter contributors. This further contributed to clarifying assumptions. The team spent ample time ensuring we understood the data elements and their definitions correctly so that the proper criteria would be developed for the SNAP data extract and matching with WIC participants. The team also spent time with deeper discussions to refine the project goals and outcomes it was to achieve.

Figure 5. Initial Vision of the Framework



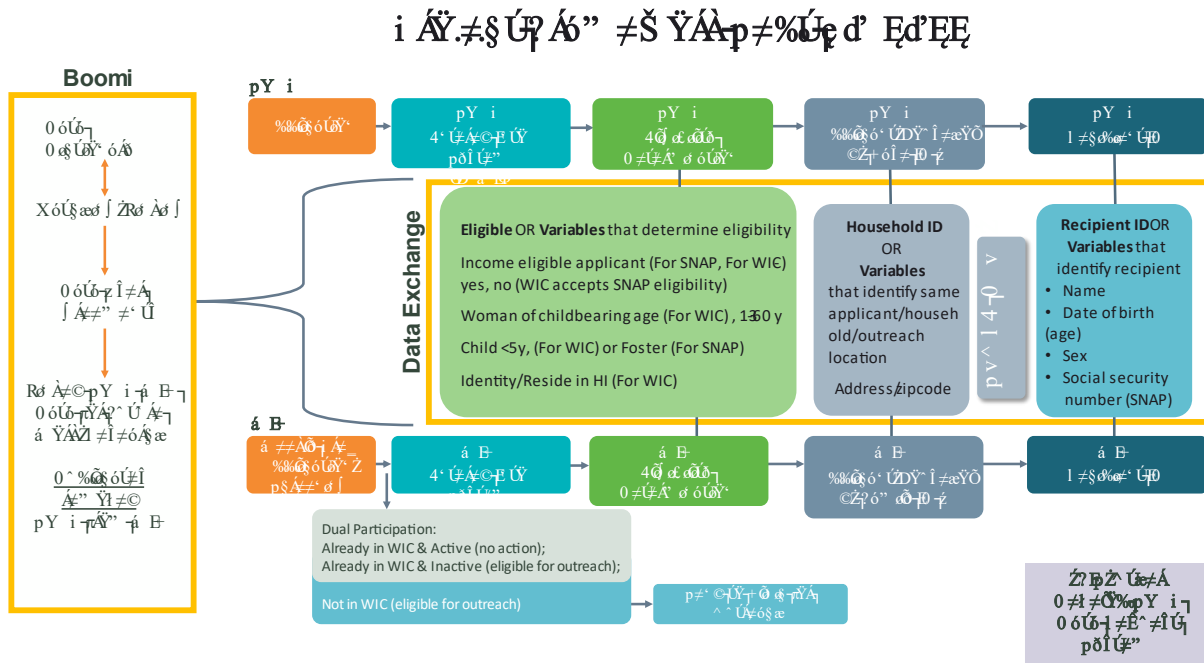
By November 2021, the university partner began to visualize a draft project framework according to the team discussions, including clarifications of data elements, data collection and entry processes, and the relationships across (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Version 1 of the Project Data Governance Framework



From December 2021 through September 2022, the project team updated the draft framework each time clarifications were made that corrected the old understanding or assumptions. The team also updated when new information and thoughts on why, what, and how to match the extracted SNAP participant data with WIC participant data emerged. At the end of the UH CHL and the CATCH Intelligence contract period, the team completed the Project Data Governance Framework (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Final Project Data Governance Framework

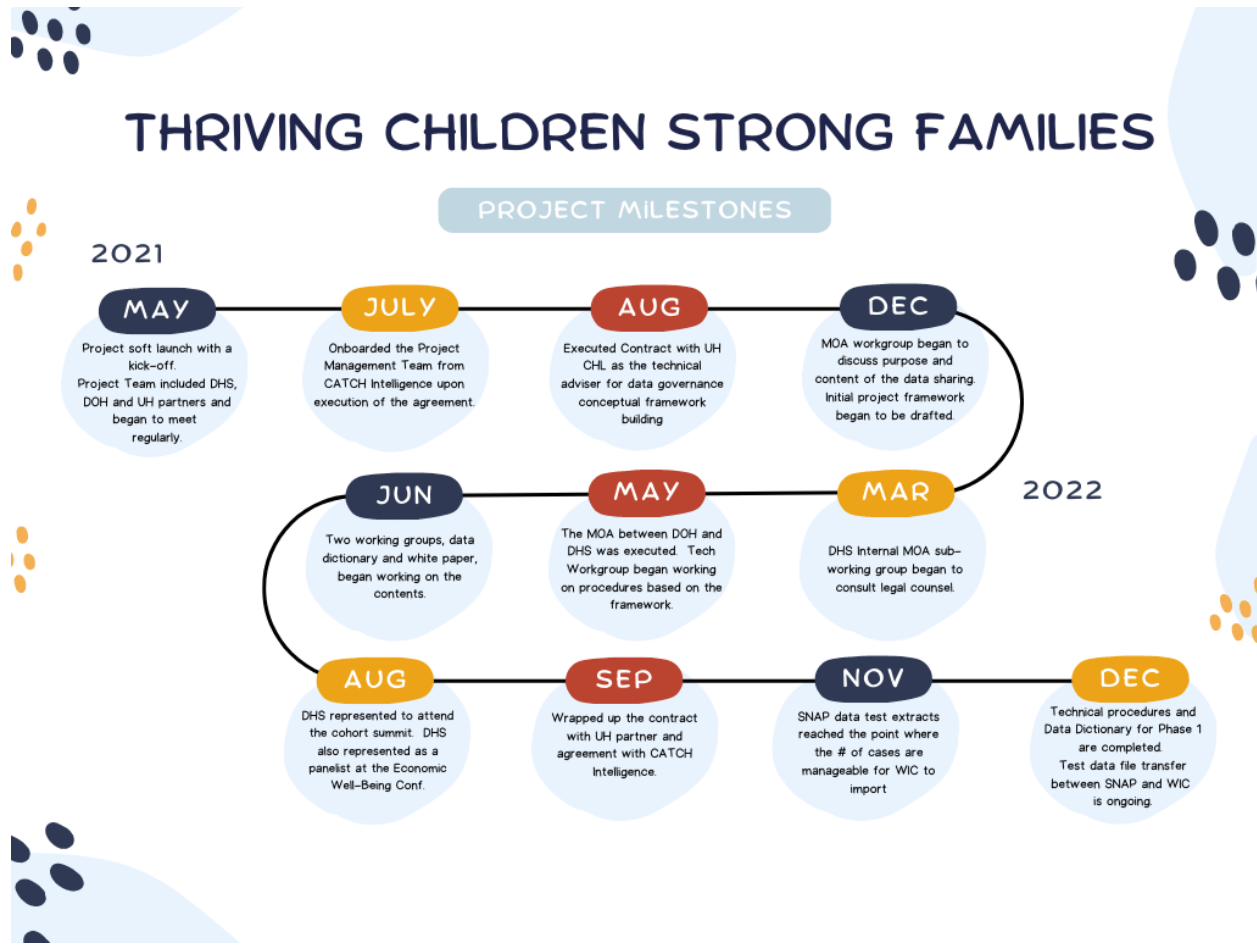


This was a proud milestone for the project team. The team discussed issues, made decisions to resolve them, and revisited these issues throughout the project team meetings for clarification when necessary. At times the discussions seemed to be going in circles. However, the time it took to clarify key data-sharing considerations was necessary to ensure the two programs shared what was permitted to share and for the proper purpose.

Accomplishments

To capture the accomplishments from the previous sections, Figure 8 shows the milestones overview.

Figure 8. Project Milestones



2021

May: Project soft launch with the core members, including DHS representation (Director’s Office and SNAP agency), DOH WIC representation, and UH CHL representation. The project team meetings were scheduled biweekly to build and continue the momentum. Microsoft Teams for this project was created as a communication tool and repository of documents. The team collected existing documents and resources and deposited them into the folders.

July: CATCH Intelligence as the project manager onboarded. The project management, including the team meeting facilitation, was passed on from the PI to the project manager.

- August: Contracts finalized with the UH CHL.
- December: MOA workgroup began meeting and drafting the agreement contents. The initial version of the project data framework was prepared. This framework helped the team identify terminologies to be included in the project glossary, data elements necessary for data sharing, and better understanding and clarifying the purpose of data sharing that informed the MOA content.

2022

- March: DHS internally started to engage with its legal counsel for MOA guidance.
- May: DOH and DHS signed and executed the MOA. Tech Procedures Workgroup began its work to document the process of data sharing.
- June: Data Dictionary and White Paper Workgroups began meeting.
- August: Two DHS team members represented the Nutrition Systems Alignment Summit as the Cohort 1 state presenter. The PI represented Hawai'i on the APHSA Mobility and Economic Well-being Conference panel presentation.
- September: Two contracts, the project management and the technical advising, were completed. The PI resumed the lead for the project for completion of the tasks for grant goal attainment.
- November: SNAP data extract file met WIC expectations. This was a significant milestone for the project to know the ability of DHS and its vendor to extract SNAP data.
- December: Project Glossary and Data Dictionary were completed for Phase 1. Project Technical Procedures is completed, pending the WIC MIS vendor to begin the work for this project. Before the end of the year, DHS generated a data file with de-identified clients and transferred it to DOH via the SFTP according to the DOH WIC MIS vendor's request to determine compatibility, capabilities, hours it may take for importing and report generations of matching/non-matching, and any changes to make to the system. This was another significant milestone for the project to continue moving forward. The team is excited to begin the work with the WIC MIS vendor.

In October 2022, the Communication and Outreach Workgroup began its work. This workgroup started as a result of the progress the team made on the data extract. While it is not quite at the point for the WIC MIS vendor to import the SNAP file for matching, the team recognized a need for communication strategies. Both WIC and SNAP applications include the applicant's rights and responsibilities, and they are notified of the program's rights to share client information with other federal public assistance programs. Recognizing the sensitivity of the applicants to personal data being shared, the communication and outreach workgroup was formed to develop a messaging platform. The workgroup is in progress and currently

developing a website visual messaging with a direct link from the DHS website to the DOH WIC webpage, which includes a link to its pre-application portal. This workgroup scheduled the WIC program presentations for the SNAP and TANF eligibility workers in early 2023.

Lessons Learned – Successes

Hawai'i's project aimed to build foundational capacity to share client data between SNAP and WIC agencies. The project team is confident it was accomplished despite unforeseen challenges, e.g., delay in the DHS new benefits eligibility system development and launch, WIC MIS vendor transition, delayed onboarding of a dedicated project manager, project team member transitions, etc.

Building cross-sector relationships has been a significant success. It allows us to reach out internally and across departments as well as personally and as systems to discuss how to break down silos and help each other to serve children and families better.

This project provided an opportunity to develop a data request and management system (process). DHS has endeavored to create department-wide data governance as data requests of all kinds are made frequently. The process was developed by tailoring the UH CHL Center's data request system. Partnership with UH CHL Center stimulated the thought process from conceptualization to the actual process development.

Interagency collaboration is complex and challenging. Navigating the government bureaucracy is expected to be complicated. This project allowed the team to think big, be bold and innovative, and imagine what could be possible by creating a common purpose, envisioning children and their families in the center, and imagining how easy it could be for struggling families to meet their basic needs. The team members were persistent with a never-give-up attitude, had a growth mindset to learn new things and be inquisitive, and solved encountered issues one at a time collectively to keep going. Regular and frequent team meetings facilitated the momentum to continue.

Lessons Learned – Challenges

The pandemic underscored the value and agility of DHS' ongoing IT modernization to pivot rapidly to a hybrid service delivery system. Supporting the Department's legacy systems, continuing modernization projects, and initiating new pandemic programs and processes left little time for DHS Enterprise Officer, IT, and subject matter program administrators to consider the system-to-system processes. DOH also underwent a planned procurement process for its MIS vendor contract. In this project, we learned and better understood, considered, and clarified each department's operational limits. The team made continual adjustments to the project objectives, timelines, and task shifting.

Missing a dedicated project manager from the beginning provided a challenge to kick off and continuity to develop an implementation plan. The project provided an opportunity to analyze the costs and benefits of having an internal project manager versus outsourcing the project management service. The use of outsourcing project management includes the time it takes to procure a service like this appears shorter than hiring a project manager by going through the recruitment process. Despite initial concerns, having the project manager in different time zones did not impact the project's progress and communication. The project manager and the team balanced meetings to make it work. It takes time to develop government IT systems and programmatic staff with experience and knowledge of multiple state programs. The cost of outsourcing a project manager is a lack of continuity and sustaining the knowledge and experience gained throughout the project.

Some skills that would have been needed for the project manager included typical project management skills such as good communication, meeting coordination, facilitation, the ability to capture the essence of the discussion, organization of activities and documentation, and accountability on task completion by follow-up. Skills that would enhance the project manager's ability would include understanding technology and knowledge of the Hawai'i state agencies, i.e., DHS and DOH. Regular project checkpoints with the project sponsor should be included to ensure the effort is on track. There would be advantageous for the project manager to be familiar with the historical effort, future vision, and the agency partners and players. As the IT modernization project continued to be delayed with changes, it would enhance the project manager to be aware of the larger IT modernization status and progress to be coordinated and linked.

Another challenge to note is the staff transitions during the project. As stated earlier, at the time Hawai'i was awarded the grant to begin planning and implementation, it was in the second year of the pandemic. Many experienced program specialists were deployed to different projects or to cover vacant positions to continue with operations. This included project members being participants for a few months and transitioning out to another. From the consistency and continuity perspective, it was challenging for the project leadership to

orient and onboard new members. The project manager and the DHS leads tried their best to welcome and onboard new members quickly and seamlessly to continue moving forward.

In hindsight, we were aspirational and optimistic compared to the reality of the time it would take to implement and produce outcomes of this project. The time it took to develop processes was painstakingly slow and longer than we initially anticipated. A lesson learned here is that sufficient onboarding and planning time is necessary to set the project up for success at the onset.

We also recognized that we needed more consideration on organizational change management to be part of the planning and implementation. This should be expected in the future as part of the innovation has to do with an organizational cultural shift, e.g., from compliance and timeliness to assisting the residents in accessing all potentially eligible services with one touchpoint, from processing paperwork for program participation to understanding well-being and health impacts the services might offer to the residents, etc.

Key Takeaways

There are many takeaways from this project to apply to similar future initiatives. Below five points are the highlights to leave with future innovators for consideration.

A dedicated project manager and consistent project members are vital to maintaining the momentum to achieve project goals and completion. Hawai'i opted to outsource a project management service. One lesson learned to apply in future projects is to build in enough onboarding period when we bring an external project manager. SNAP and WIC are federal programs, and program information about these programs is available. Each state and agency have different geographic and organizational cultures. To make the contracted project manager successful along with the project, the state leadership should have spent more time and diligently brought them on board to be integrated into an already-working project team if we are not afforded time to kick off after the project manager is brought on and ready.

A research partnership opportunity with the local university experts stimulated the state agency staff with deep learning and professionalism. State agency staff are generally good at technicality and processes. This project provided us with ongoing opportunities to become more aware of our internal and state-level processes, where things work well, where things need improvements, and how to improve.

From the beginning of the project, the facilitator and project manager made every effort to level the ground with every member as equal partners regardless of position and title and to ensure everyone knew their presence and contributions were sincerely appreciated to make a difference for children and families.

At the project's onset, DHS leads made efforts to bring broader and subject matter contributors to the table, particularly technology and data specialists. DHS leads believe early engagement, buy-in, and onboarding of relevant experts are critical to the project's success. We were successful with some but not successful with others. An explanation of unsuccessful engagement can include unclear or unrefined project messages and goals to ensure the time invested in the project was not yet perceived as worthwhile initially. Having a clear messaging platform about the project from the beginning would have been helpful. Early onboarding would have also brought the team members together early to develop mutual commitment and expectations.

Celebrating each milestone and success is critical to keeping the motivation going. This project has been a journey. Sometimes, the members felt the project was stuck in one place and hadn't stepped forward. Acknowledging each small accomplishment along the way contributed to maintaining the shared vision and collective commitment.

In closing, we hope this White Paper provides a replicable model for future collaborative initiatives, documentation of how we built and enhanced cross-agency collaboration, processes,

and mutual agreement on how we share, govern, and manage client information to scale or apply.