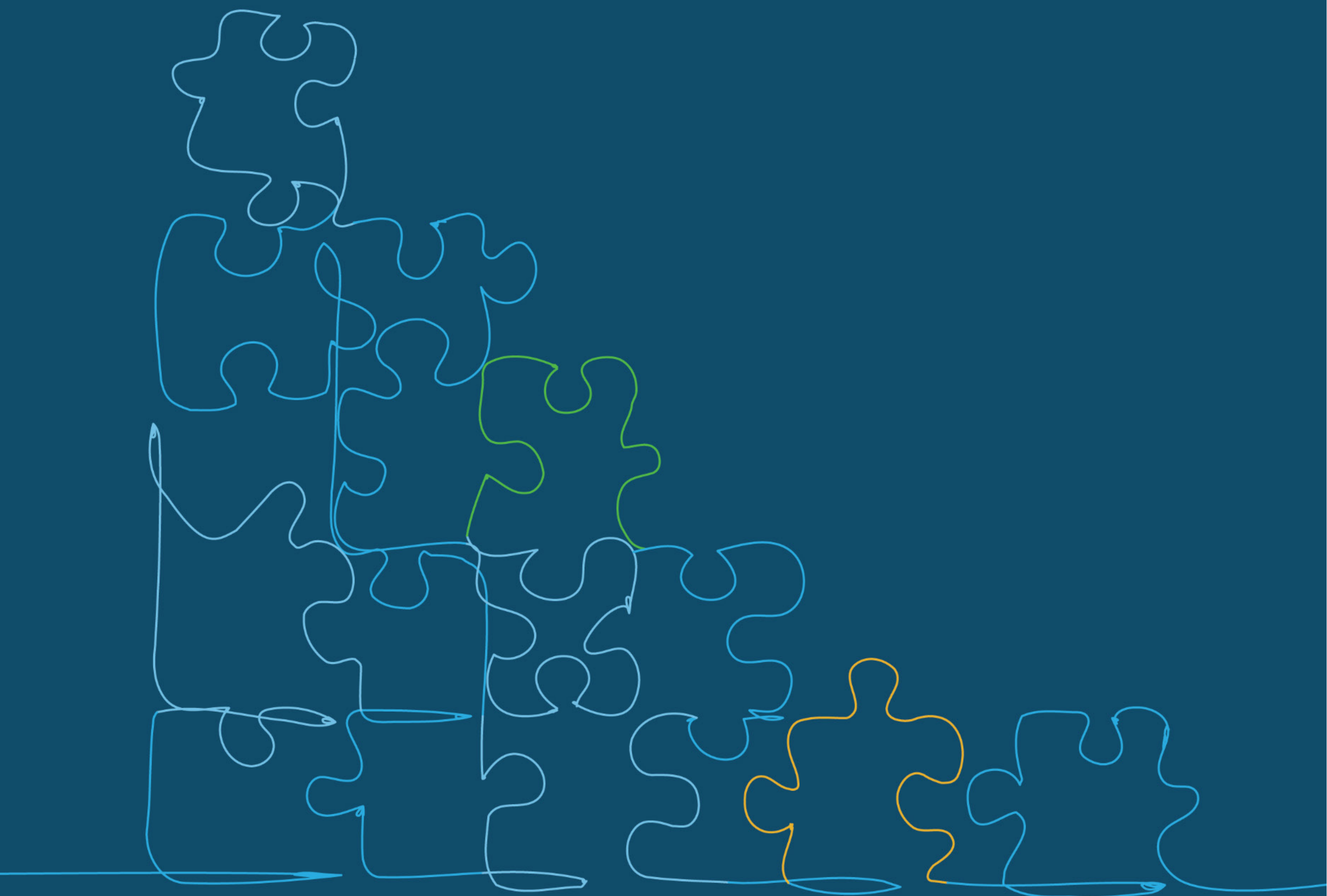
URBAN INSTITUTE

NOVEMBER 2022
(corrected December 15, 2022)



BOOSTING UPWARD MOBILITY

A PLANNING GUIDE FOR LOCAL ACTION

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STEP FIVE

Develop an Initial Understanding of Local Mobility Conditions

Now that the Mobility Coalition has been assembled and launched, it is time to begin building a shared understanding of local mobility conditions among the group. Pairing the **Mobility Metrics**—which provide a surface-level understanding of issues—with supplementary local data and information (such as administrative data, historical records, inventories of current action, or survey data) and qualitative insights from your community can help you identify the causes underlying the problems and successes you witness or diagnose.

Before you consider what strategic actions can address poverty and racial inequities in your community, you must first create a comprehensive set of insights about the conditions blocking mobility from poverty and equity in your community. This section will guide you through the steps to developing the Summary of Upward Mobility Findings section of your Mobility Action Plan. The Summary of Upward Mobility Findings should holistically address local challenges to upward mobility and equity, requiring a comprehensive approach that

- reflects the **three-part definition of mobility from poverty**, including economic success, power and autonomy, and being valued in community;
- centers **racial equity** and engages impacted communities in decisionmaking;
- uses **continuous learning and improvement** practices to assess progress, improve organizational practices and services, and drive better outcomes; and
- is thoughtful about the interconnections of multiple policy issues reflected in the predictors.

Understanding local mobility conditions is an iterative process that may involve multiple cycles of working internally as a Mobility Coalition and engaging with external stakeholders. We encourage you to regularly revisit the activities from this step throughout the Mobility Action Planning process to continually refine your analysis. You can see examples of the Summary of Upward Mobility Findings from our Upward Mobility Cohort here: https://upward-mobility.urban.org/mobility-action-plans.

Step 5.1 Review Your Local Mobility Metrics as a Coalition

The first step in building a shared understanding of local mobility conditions is for each Mobility Coalition member to access and review the **Mobility Metrics** on their own. As a reminder, the Mobility Metrics for your jurisdiction can be accessed at http://upward-mobility.urban.org/data.

To have individual members record their reflections on the metrics, pass out the Mobility Metrics Data Review Guide found at the end of this section, which is similar to the Mobility Metrics Data Review Guide from Step 2 but also includes prompts for group discussion about additional data sources. It is most useful to introduce this guide as a flexible resource designed to both inspire and capture the Mobility Coalition's thoughts and reflections, rather than as a rigid rubric.

Next, the coalition will come together to discuss their reflections as a group. If your coalition has engaged a Data Lead, they should facilitate this process because they will best understand and notice data pitfalls and opportunities. For example, it is important to understand what the numbers in a given metric mean. If the outcome is a ratio, is it better to be closer to zero or to one? If it is a percentage, is it better for it to be lower or higher? The Data Lead should read the Mobility Metrics documentation and footnotes on the Mobility Metrics data page to learn more about what the data show. Members with less experience may benefit from some explanatory text as well as a group discussion to help them understand and interpret the numbers they see in the tables and charts provided. The Mobility Coalition may also decide to engage a research organization or anchor institution partner to help with this process.

The Data Lead should also consider (1) whether the entire team ought to participate in this exercise, and (2) the amount of time needed to complete it. For example, another viable alternative is to have a few key members answer the questions and circulate the document for comments and feedback to save other stakeholders' time. The Data Lead should also set expectations by clearly communicating how individual responses will be shared (if at all) before they start the exercise.

For a step-by-step walk through of how to use the below Guide alongside the Mobility Metrics, please refer to Steps 2.1 to 2.3.

Before the discussion, the Data Lead should compile the insights, questions, and potential data sources brainstormed by each member in isolation. Once the Data Lead or Project Manager has received responses from all members, the full Mobility Coalition should gather to compare responses and discuss. In preparation for this convening, see **Preparing for Your Mobility Metrics Coalition Meeting** included in the supplemental materials for this step. The goal for these discussions is to come to a consensus or form an initial narrative about the critical barriers to upward mobility in your community based on what Mobility Coalition members have gleaned from the Mobility Metrics. The gaps and uncertainties in this narrative will highlight where you will need to invest in gathering more and/or different information, a process that will be covered in more detail in Step 6.

Step 5.2 Identify and Collect Supplemental Data Sources

Although the Mobility Metrics can be a helpful starting point for understanding local conditions, they provide only a surface-level understanding of issues and cannot illuminate underlying causes. The Mobility Metrics are based on data from nationally available sources, which makes it easy to see how a community compares to other places across the country but limits the set of variables included and their specificity to local contexts. In any given predictor, the factors that influence people's outcomes are various and multifaceted. Pairing the Mobility Metrics with supplementary local data (such as administrative data, historical records, or survey data) and qualitative insights from your community can help you identify the causes underlying the problems and successes you witness or diagnose.

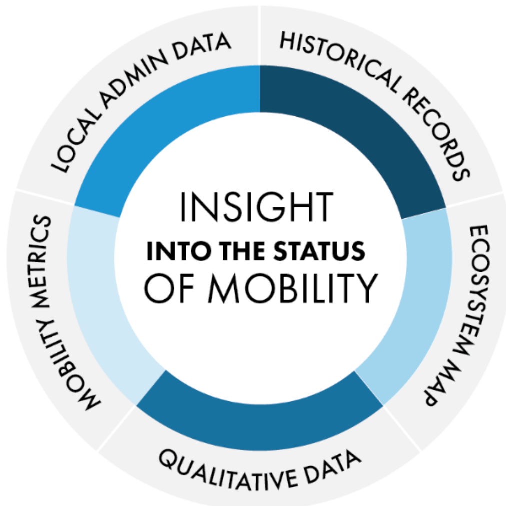

Figure 11: Insight into the status of mobility

Having reflected and filled out their individual Discussion Guide, Mobility Coalition members will have brainstormed potential data assets that can be tapped for further information and insight. In preparation for the Mobility Metrics Coalition Meeting, the full coalition should gather to compare responses and agree on a plan, including roles and responsibilities, for gathering additional local data. In preparation for this convening, see the **Sample Agenda to Determine Next Steps for Data Collection** at the end of this step.

Again, the Mobility Coalition's Data Lead is best positioned to navigate the collection and analysis of supplemental data because they will better understand and notice data pitfalls and opportunities. The Data Lead may wish to organize a separate Data Team consisting of Coalition members or data staff from their organizations who are able to do the legwork of gathering the supplemental data. Furthermore, consider that depending on the regulatory structures of security barriers they face, data procurement processes could take months, especially if data-sharing or data-use agreements need to be negotiated.

Factor in this lead time when setting expectations, determining deadlines, and evaluating the capacity of the responsible party over time. If data exist that prove impossible for the Data Team to collect at this time but would be critical information to have for understanding mobility from poverty in your community, make note of this. You can include gathering that data as a potential strategic action in your MAP. For more information on building a data team and writing data-sharing or data-use agreements, see these resources:

> Getting the Most Out of Your Community's Administrative Data: A series of five publications that can help states, municipalities, and local organizations identify, link, and analyze the administrative data sources in their communities to better track the outcomes of the social services they deliver.

NNIP Lessons on Local Data Sharing: A short blog post on lessons learned about data sharing from the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership.

NNIP's Collection of Data-Sharing Agreements: A catalog of sample memorandums of understanding and data-sharing agreements from the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership.

As you evaluate which of the potential supplementary data options to pursue, remember that quality is more important than quantity. When constructing the suite of Mobility Metrics, researchers at the Urban Institute had to evaluate and discard many potential alternative data sources that fell short of the standard of quality you need to rely on insights these data might provide. To get a sense of what data sources may not be worth pursuing, please consult the report that documents that process.

It is also important to carefully consider your needs, priorities, and logistic feasibility before investing time into collecting and analyzing further information. When evaluating a potential supplementary data source, consider the following questions:

1. Are these data going to give you insights that you cannot find with information you already have access to?
    a. What information gap would these data fill?
    b. Is this information gap a high priority, or something it would be nice to learn?
2. Are these data available at the geography of interest to you?
3. Are these data representative of the entire community?
    a. Could there be populations or areas that the data misrepresent or leave out because of how they are collected?
4. Are these data timely and relevant?
    a. How far back do these data go?
    b. Will these data continue to be collected consistently in the future?
    c. When was the most recent collection of the data source?
    d. Have these data been collected reliably and consistently over time?
5. Do these data exist in a format compatible with your systems and analysis capacity?
    a. How and where are these data stored?
    b. Does this storage method affect its accessibility?
6. Are these data housed by a partner organization?
    a. Are they held by an organization that would be willing to contract with your team for access and could easily provide it?

   b. Does your Mobility Coalition provide points of contact or access to such organizations?

7. Are there any data privacy laws (i.e., HIPAA) that govern the use of this data?

   a. If yes and it is not available at the person-level, could you ask partners to share a summary of the data?

   b. If a high-level summary of the data is all you can access, will it still be helpful to you?

Throughout the process of identifying and collecting supplemental data, the Data Lead should be sure to consider the relationships within or connected to your Mobility Coalition that might directly or indirectly provide access to data:

Government partners can shed light on Mobility Metrics and access additional data to supplement those metrics. They may know of existing memorandums of understanding or data-use agreements that you can leverage to access relevant information.

Anchor institutions may hold data that can be used to assess local conditions. For example, hospitals collect data about the communities they serve in a Community Health Needs Assessment. Universities may have data through university-run research projects. Universities may also have some technical capacity for gathering and analyzing data.

Nonprofits and community-based organizations typically collect programmatic data to understand the success of the programs they deliver. If possible, you might consider working with a group of nonprofits and CBOs to systematize their collection of data so it can be aggregated at the city or county level.

Philanthropic partners may be a funding source for this work. They may be able to support nonprofit and CBO partners in expanding their data collection efforts, as mentioned.

Research organizations can play a key role in assessing data quality and in planning and implementing original data collection. They can also conduct evaluations about currently operating interventions to assess their effectiveness or impact.

Private-sector companies can provide local data to paint a fuller picture of community conditions. However, because of laws that regulate the collection and sharing of personal data, you should engage them early in data-gathering discussions.

Advocacy groups can be a key source of historical context on data and information on a specific policy topic. However, because of their nature as advocacy groups, you should consider other sources of information that can complement their data advocating for a specific cause.

Community members already in the Mobility Coalition can suggest additional metrics that align with key mobility predictors. They can share lived experience and help the rest of the coalition understand whether Mobility Metrics outcomes align with community experiences. They may also be able to suggest other local data sources.

Step 5.3 Analyze Your Supplemental Quantitative Data

Once your Data Team has had a chance to gather the supplemental quantitative data you prioritized to fill knowledge gaps (which may be several months after your initial discussion about what you need), they will need to link this new information to the **Mobility Metrics** and reassess early conclusions with this added information and context. The team should then present these conclusions to the Mobility Coalition. As a result of this work, each person in the Data Team should be able to write a summary about the supplemental data they gathered for their metric of interest, like the example seen here:

The Neonatal Health Metric for our county shows that a larger share of Black Non-Hispanic babies—14.6 percent—are born with low weights, which is 100 percent higher than for white babies (7 percent).

After convening to determine our shared concerns around limited understanding of the underlying factors driving the statistic we saw, our team gathered additional national and locally available data to learn more about the combination of barriers that contribute to low-weight births and lack of access to maternal health care. We worked with partners internal to our county's government and with external community partners who serve mothers and newborns to identify other **Mobility Metrics** and local data that could help us understand more about the root causes of the problem:

Mobility Metrics:

- household income at 20th, 50th, and 80th percentiles
- ratio of population per primary care physician
- air quality index

Supplemental Quantitative Data:

- access to health care during pregnancy and after birth (disaggregated by race and age)
- share of women enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children out of those eligible
- the number of pregnant women in homeless shelters or who identify as unstably housed
- rate of health insurance coverage
- share of pregnant women with comorbidities
- maternal age at delivery
- rate of exposure to lead (disaggregated by race and district)
- number of births to teen mothers
- availability of free birth control

After reviewing all the data that our County Data Team was able to collect, there is a still a gap in knowledge about the quality of health care that pregnant women receive. In particular, we are interested in learning more about the experiences of Black women in receiving prenatal care.

When examining data that can be disaggregated by subgeography but not by race or ethnicity, consider visualizing it in a geographic heatmap if you are able to do so (example below). You can overlay a population map (e.g., by race or another characteristic) to examine variations or disparities that might trigger new questions or hypotheses. If you don't have population data available by relevant populations, try to examine your aggregated data with the lens of local insight: Where are neighborhoods with a high immigrant population? Which neighborhoods have disproportionate shares of nonwhite residents, have low-ranked public schools, or lack community resources? How might the characteristics within these geographic areas interact? By asking yourself these questions, you create space for other considerations and explanations and set the groundwork for more accurate data collection in the future as well as better-informed policy and program decisions. When searching for connections, rely on population demographics, homeownership data, and other evidence rather than on cultural assumptions or internalized stereotypes held about certain neighborhoods in your area.

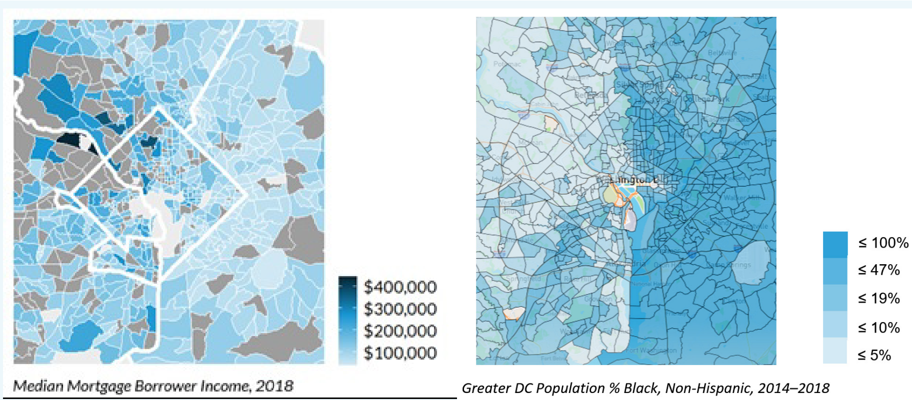

Figure 12: Median mortgage borrower income map of Washington, DC (left) as compared to a map of the share of Black, non-Hispanic residents by Census Tract in Washington, DC (right). Maps from the Urban Institute.

These maps visualize two different kinds of information broken down at the same geography in the greater Washington, DC, area. On the left, median income for mortgage borrowers is available at the census tract (i.e., neighborhood) level but is not disaggregated by race. On the right is a demographic population map of the same region that shows the percentage of the Black, non-Hispanic population per tract. A comparison of these two maps shows a correlation between neighborhoods where median mortgage borrowers have an average of less than $100,000 incomes and those with higher Black populations. Because these datasets are not linked and not at the individual level, they offer a less precise way to assess mortgage borrower income by race, but they can still be used to draw high-level conclusions about the race of low-income mortgage borrowers.

Sometimes data are not available at the level of specificity to observe deeper levels of variation or disparity. This may be the case for several reasons. Sometimes, there are too few data points or observations to compute a metric with reasonable accuracy. Other times, the data were never collected to begin with, such as when a survey or administrative data source fails to ascertain race or ethnicity or lumps diverse groups together. For example, a data point showing a statistic for the "Asian American Pacific Islander community" will group all Asian American and Pacific Islander ethnic groups together. How Korean Americans fare, however, might be very different from how Vietnamese Americans fare or from how Pacific Islanders fare.[11] A lack of disaggregation hinders your ability to understand these nuances. When faced with a lack of disaggregated data, it is still important to find a way to interrogate how structural racism, discrimination, prejudice, and implicit bias may be playing a role in the story the data tells and in what data gets collected. Wherever possible, you should collect local datasets that can help inform your understanding of local conditions. Qualitative information, which can be collected from myriad sources such as interviews, surveys, town halls, and focus groups, can also be used to better inform the context around quantitative data outcomes or gaps in information. Gathering this type of data is covered in more detail in Step 6.

By the end of Step 5, the Mobility Coalition should have collected and analyzed additional quantitative data and developed an initial shared understanding of key mobility issues in your jurisdiction. All of this work will prepare the coalition to deepen this understanding and bring in new, varied insights on local mobility issue, which is the focus of Step 6.

STEP FIVE REVIEW CHECKLIST

- [ ] The Mobility Coalition has reviewed and discussed the **Mobility Metrics** as a group.
- [ ] Supplemental data sources have been identified and collected.
- [ ] The Data Lead has led a process to analyze and integrate supplemental data.
- [ ] The Mobility Coalition has a baseline understanding of mobility issues and is prepared to begin gathering insights from the broader community.

STEP FIVE

Supplemental Materials

1. Preparing for Your Mobility Metrics Coalition Meeting
2. Sample Agenda to Determine Next Steps for Data Collection

Preparing for Your Mobility Metrics Coalition Meeting

The following is a list of considerations for convening your Mobility Coalition to determine next steps for data collection:

1. Schedule Mobility Coalition meetings at times where participants can fully engage.
    - Consider Mobility Coalition member calendars and schedule this convening at a time when they can give the process enough attention. Avoid times of the month or year when hard deadlines for other tasks create a high demand for team members' time. If you have community members on your Mobility Coalition, be sure to ask them what hours of the day work best for their schedules, because they may not be able to take off of work or need to find child care in order to attend.
    - If relevant, consider local election timelines and external stakeholder demands when determining the frequency of meetings, assignments, or time given to action items and deadlines. Being proactive around both capacity and pace will help avoid unnecessary confusion, competing interests, or a lack of engagement.
2. Ensure time for reflection and identification of next steps.
    - Plan the meeting agenda with enough time and space for all attendees to share reflections *and* identify next steps. "Next steps" are often the last item on an agenda and are at risk of being rushed or poorly communicated. Build in extra time and address this goal proactively to help ensure this doesn't happen. See the Sample Agenda to Determine Next Steps for Data Collection below, which can help you determine next steps.
3. Assign clear roles to Mobility Coalition members.
    - Give coalition members clear roles when it comes to creating the agenda, facilitating discussion, taking notes, and other logistics. If possible, share the facilitation responsibilities to maximize team engagement and contributions.
    - Depending on the size and interests of your Mobility Coalition, it may make sense to separate the coalition members into smaller discussion groups based on their policy domains of expertise. This can be done within this convening or prepared beforehand. Having smaller groups allows coalition members to discuss logistics and nuances within a particular domain that may not be apparent to the larger group (this includes alternative data sources from programs of interest). These smaller groups can also be a great foundation upon which to build out more formal "Working Groups" when your team starts working on solutions (see Step 7).

Sample Agenda to Determine Next Steps for Data Collection

Meeting Title: Convening to discuss metrics and potential supplemental data sources

Meeting Objectives:

- Mobility Coalition members will share and discuss their responses to the metrics data.
- Mobility Coalition members will discuss implications, gaps, potential avenues for additional data, and decide on next steps.

Time	Activity	Facilitator
X:00 – X:20 **(20 minutes)**	Round robin introductions & sharing of Key Takeaways ▪ Present an overview of the agenda & the goals of the meeting. ▪ Ask everyone to share their main takeaways from their responses to questions 1–3 on the “Data Review” worksheet.	*Choose a facilitator best suited to share each component of the agenda.*
X:20 – X:30 **(10 minutes)**	▪ Have participants share their questions about the metrics. ▪ Facilitate open discussion of potential answers. Note any discussion of gaps or lack of insight—these are areas that can be informed by additional data collection.	
X:30 – X:45 **(15 minutes)**	Discuss the additional data sources that each member noted in their worksheet (question 5). ▪ Keep note of which sources can (a) best inform the metrics and conditions on the ground, and (b) be collected in a reasonable time frame.	
X:45 – X:55 **(10 minutes)**	Assign individuals who will be responsible for collecting the supplemental data.	
X:55 – Y:00 **(5 minutes)**	Determine whether you will need additional meetings to clarify roles or flesh out goals. Discuss who will need to be present for these follow-ups. ▪ Identify who will schedule the additional meetings.	

After the meeting:

- The Data Lead or assigned facilitator should send around meeting notes, including assigned data collection plan and responsibilities, and any dates for future meetings.
- The Data Lead or facilitator should follow up on all agreed action items with the people responsible or check in with the person who will be doing follow-up.