

Turning Data
Anxiety Into
Data Enthusiasm

Presented by:

Anne McIntyre-Lahner

Connecticut Department of Children & Families

And

Ron Schack, Ph.D.

The Charter Oak Group, LLC

October 19, 2018

Objectives

- Identify primary sources of anxiety, hesitation and fear in the analysis and use of performance data
- Articulate basic principles to transforming these fears into an appreciation of and enthusiasm for data
- Share real-world examples of the application of these principles in the non-profit, municipal and state agency, and community collaborative setting

Anxiety Related to Capacity

- Basic Fear of Math or Statistics
 - Fear that math skills aren't strong enough
 - Fear of not being able to understand programs, formulas
- Fear of being “found out” as being less than “data savvy”
 - “I can't do math – that is why I became a social worker”
- Fear that data and measures you have been using are flawed or inappropriate, and you did not have the wit to see it
 - Fear that “what we have always done” will be judged as useless

Anxiety Related To Use

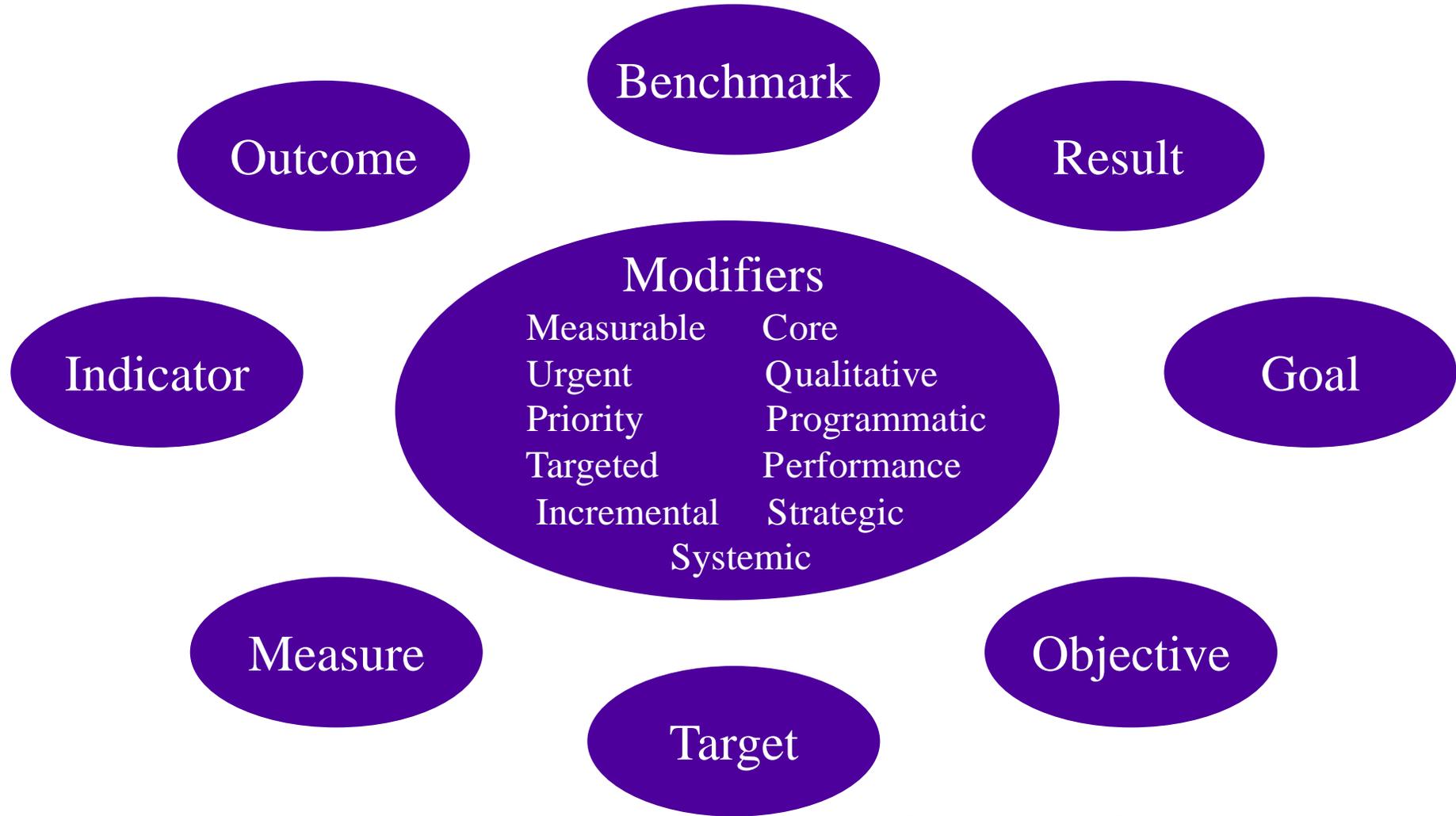
- Fear that having good data will require undue data collection or reporting burden
 - Fear that focusing on data collection and analysis will “take away” from direct service provision
 - Fear that data/performance reports will “just sit on the shelf”
- Fear that activities and programs will reveal performance issues
 - Fear that data will be used as ammunition to reduce program budgets, downsize staff or make other organizational changes
 - Fear that having good data will make a program a “target” while other programs that do not have data can “sneak by”
- Fear that data will be misinterpreted, not put in context

Dealing with Fear of “math”

- Demonstrate to staff that most performance analysis does not require advanced math skills...make it more about “problem solving” or “forensic investigation”
- Empower staff and community partners to embrace their “Enlightened Ignorance” by asking for clarification of data and clear language, and challenging use of jargon
- Explain that other participants will silently thank them because they don’t get it either
- Use common sense, non-buzz wordy terms when talking about data...some performance frameworks, such as Results-Based Accountability, emphasize this (see Mark Friedman’s Language Trap)

THE LANGUAGE TRAP

Too many terms. Too few definitions. Too little discipline



Ex: Measurable urgent systemic indicators

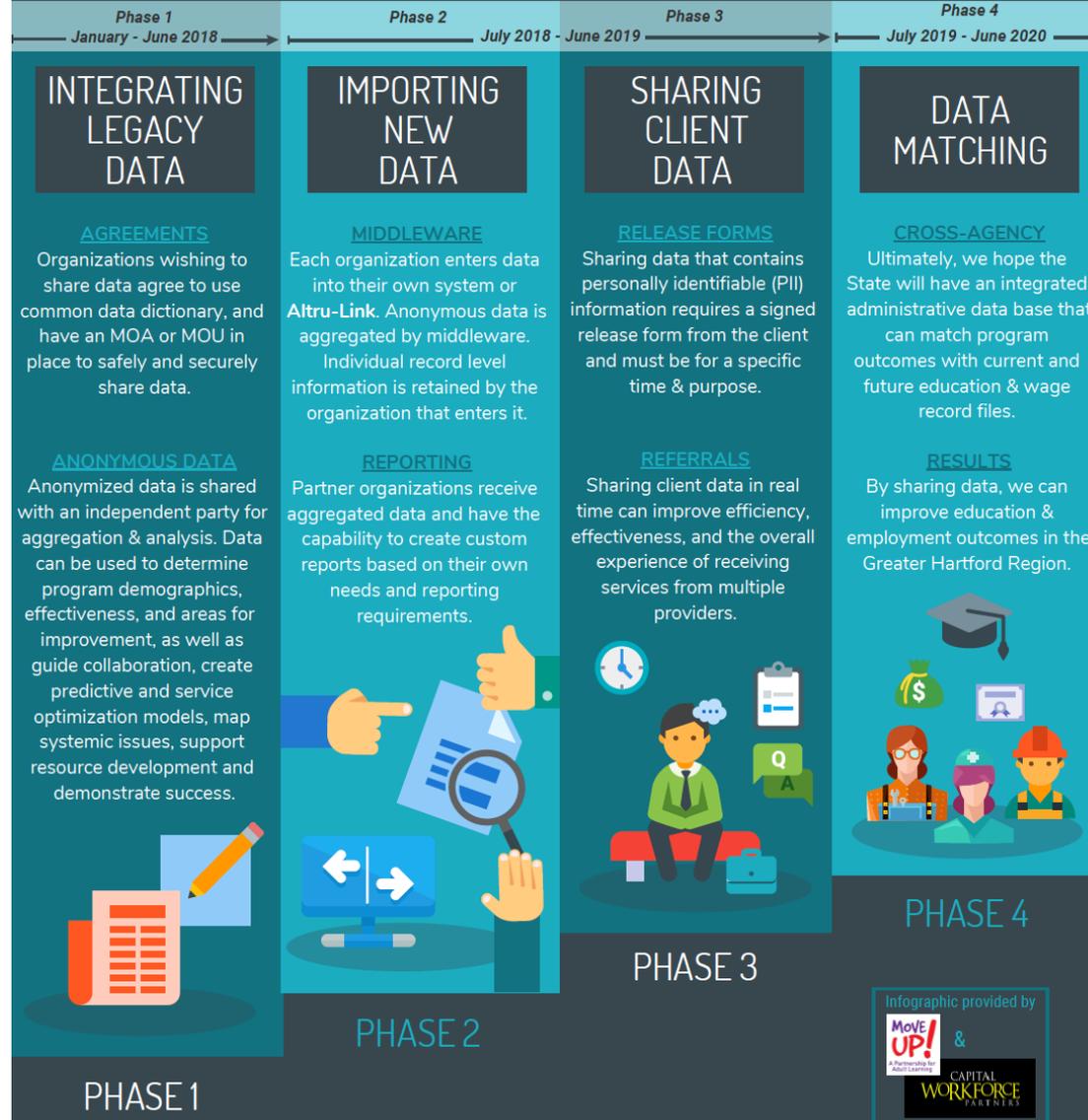
Dealing with Fear of Data Collection Burden

- Leverage data that are already collected
- If additional data collection is necessary, connect the dots between the data collected and ultimate use of the data [staff often are never told in detail why certain data are necessary]
- Avoid duplicate data entry whenever possible
- Have staff and partners identify data elements that aren't being used, and they can stop reporting
- Actually USE the data...have staff participate in regular performance discussions where the data are actively used, and TAKE ACTION based on those data that flow from these participatory discussions (don't bring a data driven solution to staff as a done deal...have them participate in the decision process)

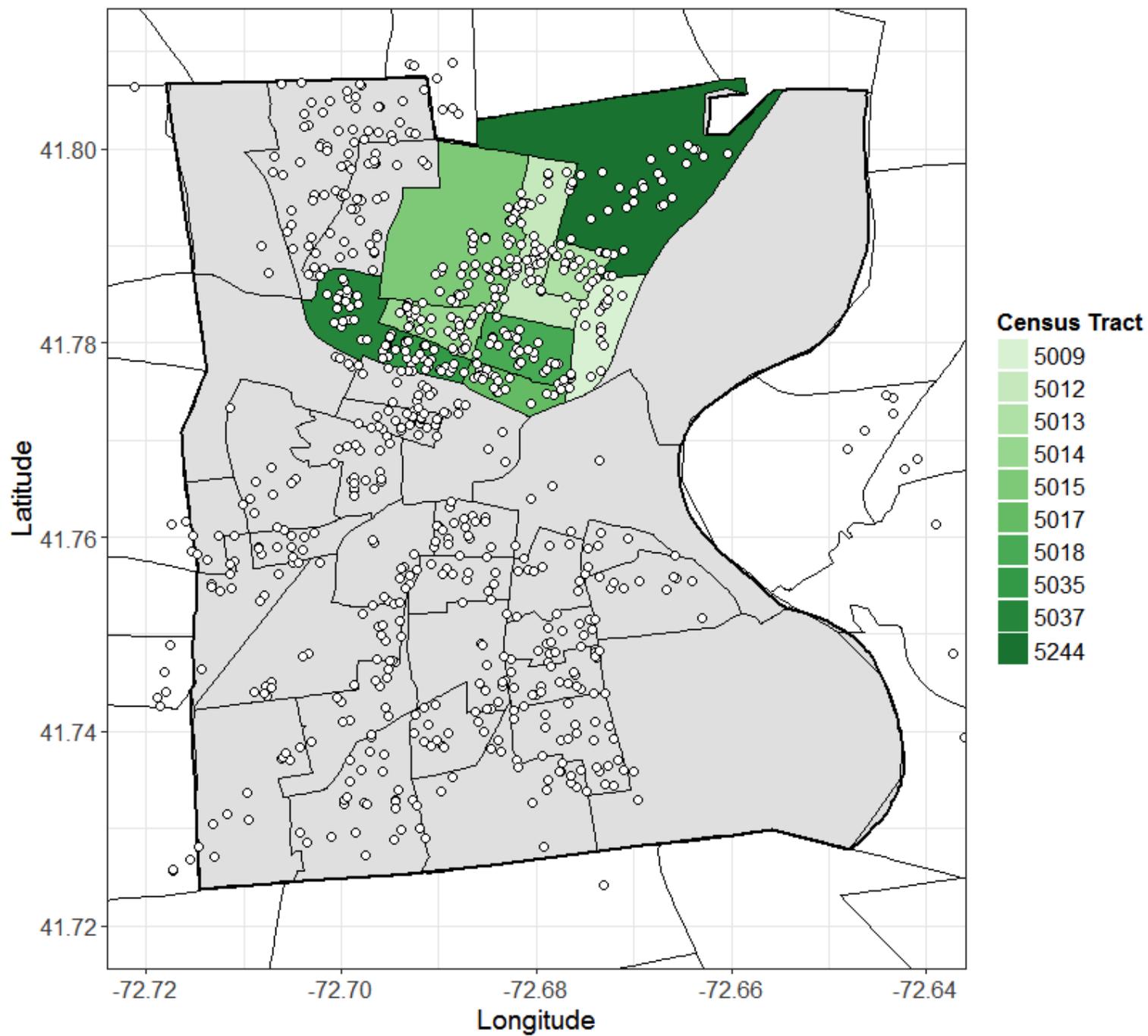
BUILDING DATA-SHARING CAPACITY

The Hartford Region is learning how to share data so we can understand how well our programs are doing, use resources more efficiently, and provide services more effectively.

The Hartford Data Collaborative (HDC) is approaching this work in four stages.



Hartford Participants



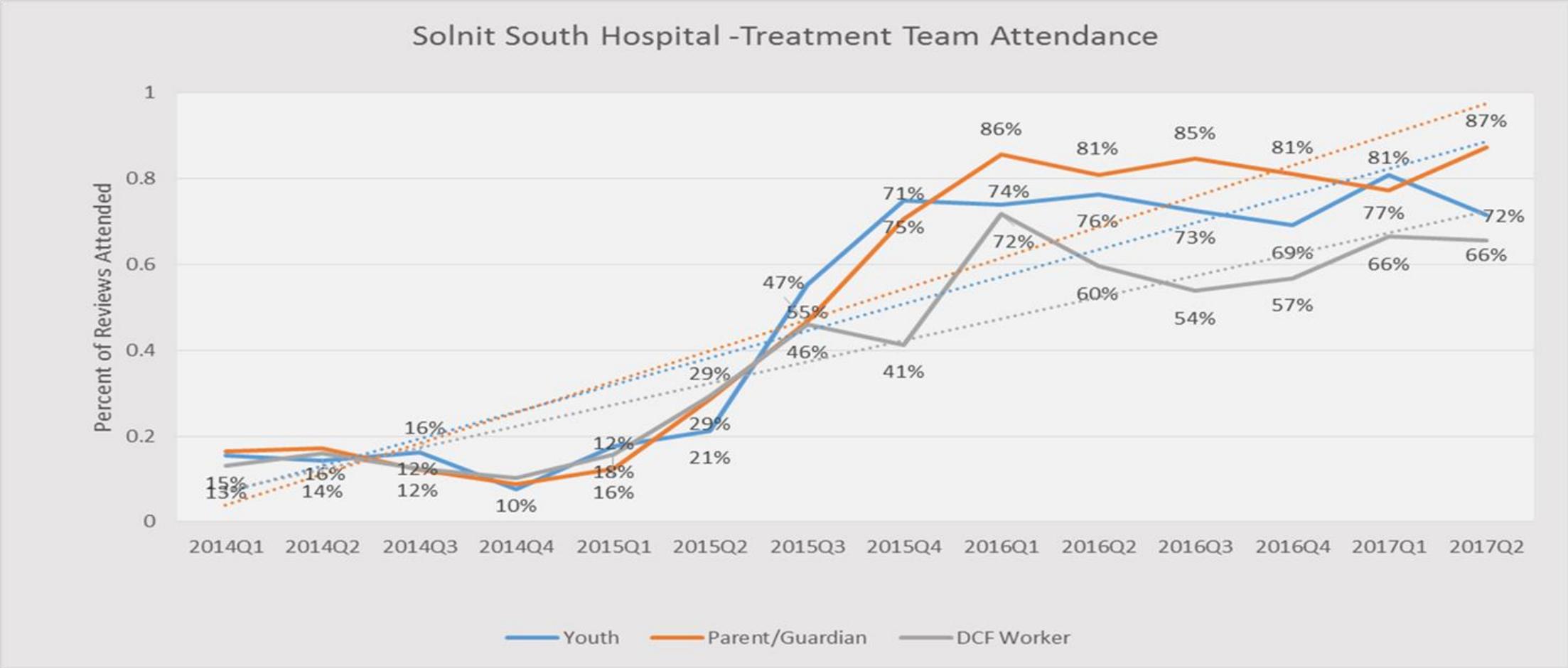
Dealing with the fear
that data will reveal
performance issues,
or will be used as
ammunition for
downsizing or other
undesired
programmatic or
organizational
changes

- Distinction between population and performance accountability
- Regular, open review of performance data
- Rather than using a “black box” approach to performance management (where staff are asked to meet one or more performance goals without discussion or context), ask staff to work together to continually improve performance
- Distal and proximate outcomes
- If created and used correctly, data WILL reveal performance issues – that is why we collect and use it. Identifying performance issues allows us to address issues and improve performance – ensuring strong performance is the best way to preserve funding and protect programs

Dealing with the fear that data could be misinterpreted

- Use of story behind the baselines
- Use of easy to interpret data displays
- Don't look at single measures in isolation
- Look at trend data over time instead of point-in-time data

Solnit Center Treatment Teams



Performance Dashboard

Juvenile Justice System Performance Metric Dashboard

Juvenile Justice System---- Population or System Performance Metric Dashboard	Most Recent Available Year	One Year Prior	Five Year Trend	Is Trend Positive or Negative?
	2016	2015		
Total Unique Clients Served	10567	12004	↔	Positive
Youth Justice Involvement Rate	2.67%	3.06%	↔	Positive
12 Month Recidivism Rate For All Those Referred To Court				
New Arrests	44.01%	42.95%	↔	Negative
Adjudication/Conviction	19.01%	18.91%	↔	Mixed
Juvenile Detentions	1080	1261	↔	Positive
Committed Delinquent to CJTS	140	207	↔	Positive
Committed Delinquent to Congregate Care	164	224	↔	Positive
Committed Delinquent to Detention/Corrections	148	146	↔	Mixed
Committed Delinquent to Parole	215	288	↔	Mixed
12 Month Recidivism Rate For All Those Under Supervision	46.60%	42.83%	↔	Mixed
Outcomes for Children Referred to Court				
Convicted (Probation)	1358	1716	↔	N/A
Convicted (Discharged)	749	780	↔	N/A
Convicted (DCF Commitment)	257	317	↔	N/A
Transfer to Adult Court	180	192	↔	N/A
Non Judicial Supervision	2207	2445	↔	N/A
Not Guilty or Dismissed	5115	5692	↔	N/A
CT Four Year Graduation Rate	2015-2016	2015-2014		
Statewide	87.40%	85.50%	↔	Positive
Eligible For Free Lunch	74.40%	73.10%	↔	Positive
CT Chronic Absenteeism Rate	2015-2016	2015-2014		
Statewide	9.60%	10.60%	↔	Positive
Eligible for Free Lunch	17.70%	19.90%	↔	Positive
School Suspensions	2015-2016	2015-2014		
in school	56866	56638	↔	Positive
out of school	34415	37701	↔	Positive
School Based Arrests	1630	1624	↔	Negative
Health Index	2015	2013		
mental/behavioral risks	19.27	20.57	↔	Mixed
safety	14.55	16	↔	Mixed
nutrition	11.78	13.71	↔	Positive
fitness	23.3	25.4	↔	Negative
substance abuse	25.83	25.75	↔	Negative
	18.1	21	↔	Positive

Plain language metric labels

Allows comparison of multiple metrics and trends simultaneously to identify possible co-variation

Shows multi-year trend

Alerts viewer to metrics trending in wrong direction

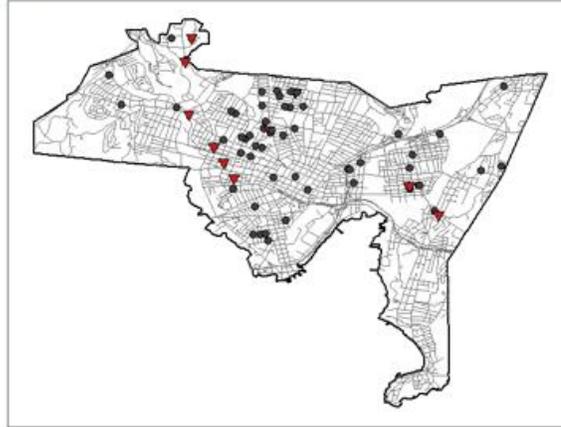
Comparison to past performance period

Bridgeport



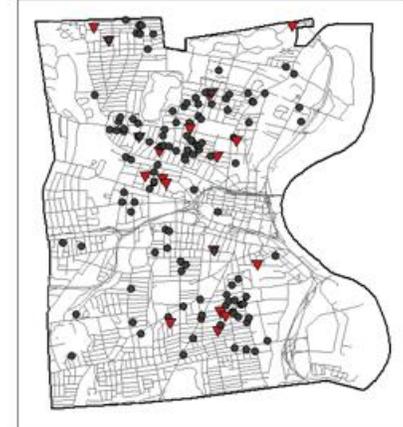
Fatal
▼ FATAL
● NON-FATAL

New Haven



Fatal
▼ FATAL
● NON-FATAL

Hartford

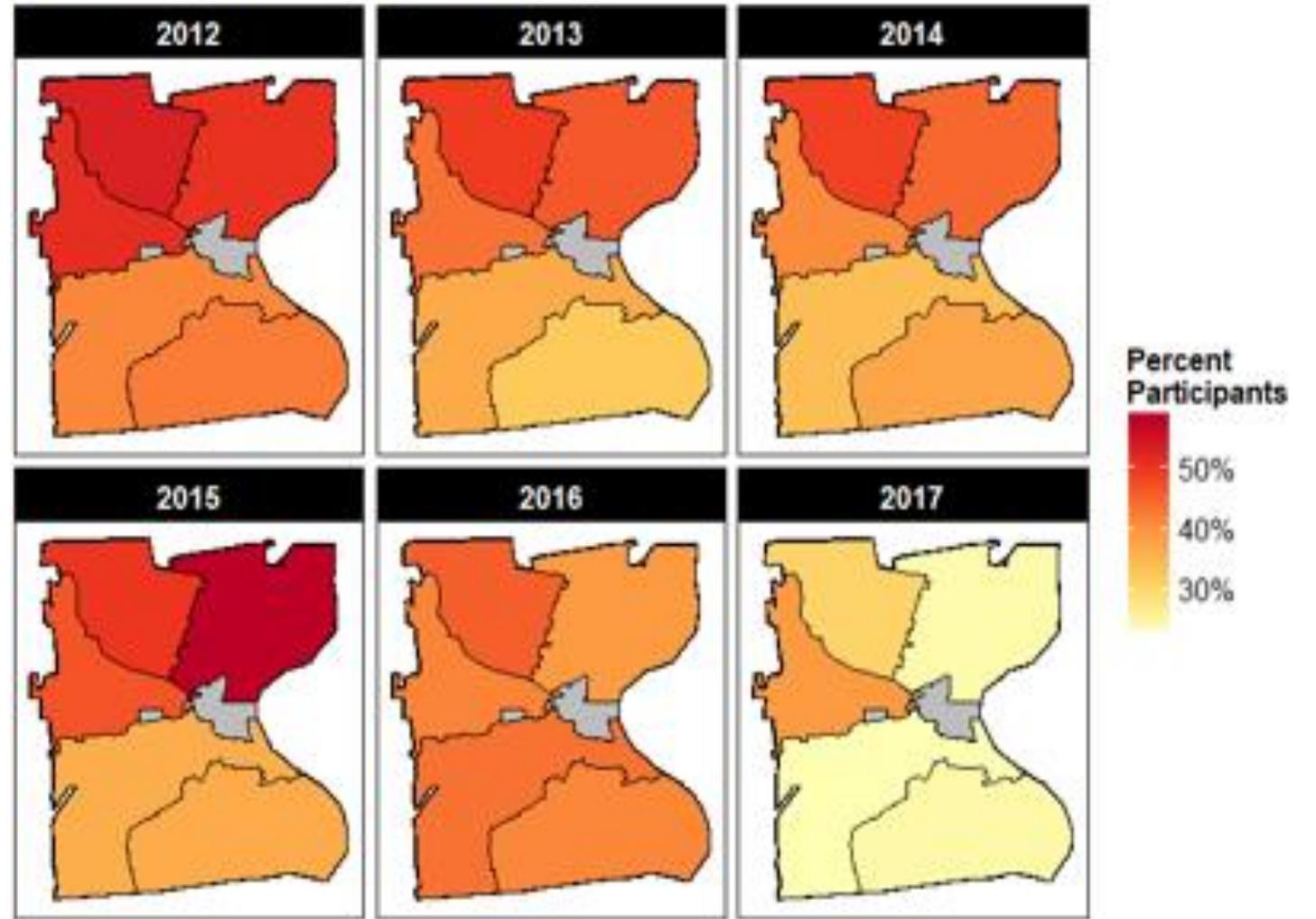


Fatal
▼ FATAL
● NON-FATAL

Standardization of Data: Analysis of Shooting Data in Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven

Use of Small Multiples

Percentage of Participants by Zipcode



Conclusion

- We should always be cognizant that anxiety and fear related to data can slow performance improvement efforts
- This anxiety can be pervasive and multi-dimensional; we ignore it at our peril
- We need to address this anxiety by both helping staff to be more comfortable with their own ability to work with data, and allaying their fears of HOW data will be used by fostering open, transparent, and participatory use of data
- The data we use in our improvement efforts should be reported in easy to use formats that also allow adequate contextualization

Conclusion

We should always be cognizant that anxiety and fear related to data can slow performance improvement efforts

- This anxiety can be pervasive and multi-dimensional;
- we ignore it at our peril
- Two common categories of data anxiety:
 - Anxiety regarding one's own capacity
 - Anxiety about how data will be used

Conclusion

We need to address this anxiety

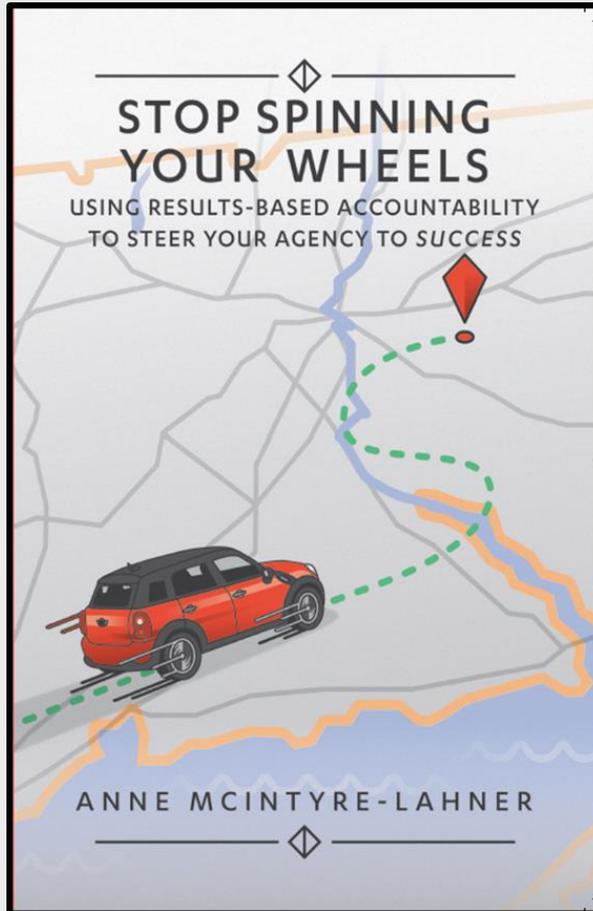
- Build staff skills and confidence to work with data
- Use accessible, jargon-free language
- Be available to provide support and assistance

Conclusion

We need to be smart about data collection and use

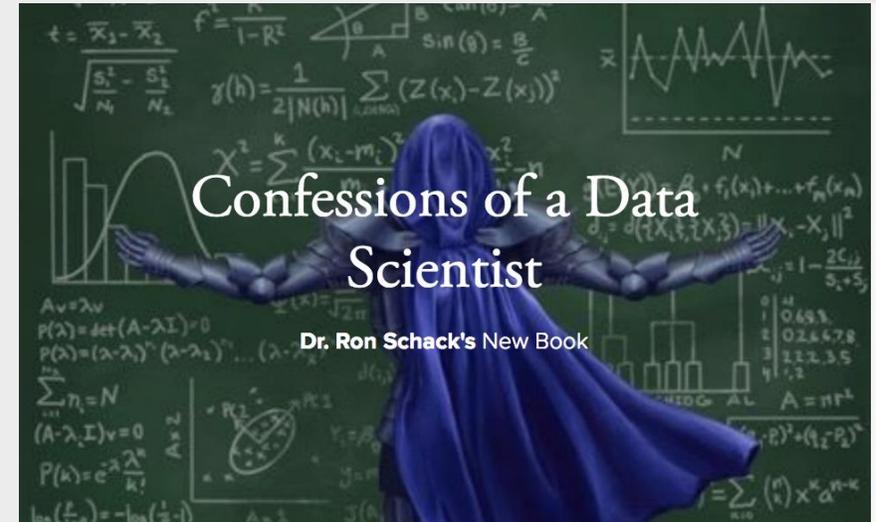
- Include staff and partners in using the data
- The data we use in our improvement efforts should:
 - Be reported in easy to use formats
 - Be relevant (stop collecting unnecessary data)
 - Already collected where possible
 - Allow adequate contextualization

Anne McIntyre-Lahner



Anne McIntyre-Lahner, High Impact Consultant
anne.mcintyre-lahner@outlook.com
(203)507-4474

Ron Schack



Ron Schack, Ph.D.
Managing Director
The Charter Oak Group, LLC
rschack@charteroakgroup.com
860-478-7847