

# DATA YOU CAN USE – 2016 Highlights

## **About DATA YOU CAN USE:**

DATA YOU CAN USE was created in 2016 by a diverse group of local professionals who help people access data and make it useful in improving community conditions. We connect people who need data to people who have data and assist in accessing, analyzing, translating, interpreting and presenting data. We can help you ask the right questions to get the right data, put it into a local context, present it visually and put it to work in addressing issues important to you. We subscribe to the principles of the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership and work to democratize data by building local capacity, sharing best practices and helping users sort through the data to surface, explain and address issues of concern. We know this takes technical expertise, knowledge of local context, the ability to convene and collaborate with multiple stakeholders and trust. We appreciate those who have helped to assure that Milwaukee has a strong data intermediary and look forward to continuing to promote better data, better decisions and a better community.

## **Building the Infrastructure**

With an appreciation of the importance of using data to address community needs, Mary Pat Jacoby of Quarles & Brady, former Secretary of the Board for the Planning Council for Health and Human Services, connected us with Foley & Lardner who created, on a pro bono basis, the Articles of Incorporation and filed the application for 501 (c) (3) status establishing DATA YOU CAN USE. Former Planning Council Board Chair Deborah Blanks and former Advisory Committee member Tom Hlavacek agreed to serve on the Founding Board. To assure fiscal integrity, services were secured from the local accounting firm of Mitz and Rozanski.

The **website** for DATA YOU CAN USE was developed and launched identifying the principles of the nonprofit organization and listing the "human assets" who collaboratively team to deliver needed services. The core team included a small group of colleagues, consultants and fellows who brought different perspectives and backgrounds but a common belief in the mission of the organization. Contributors in the initial months included Salma Abadin, Marques Hogans, Carrie Koss Vallejo, and Katie Pritchard.

## DATA YOU CAN USE – 2016 Highlights

To assure that DATA YOU CAN USE is aligned with local digital capacity -building and innovation efforts, the team partnered with Matt Richardson founder of the **Milwaukee Data Initiative** and leader of the Milwaukee branch of **Code for America**. Together, we are exploring how the Milwaukee Community Data Base might incorporate and host data at the neighborhood level.

### Building the Base

The **Zilber Family Foundation** provided financial and technical support to build DATA YOU CAN USE as Milwaukee's "data Intermediary" and assure that Milwaukee is actively represented in national data efforts including the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership Program (NNIP).

**Northwestern Mutual Foundation** supported DATA YOU CAN USE through the Community Development Alliance to refine the neighborhood focus of the foundation, promote the alignment of funded partners around clear goals, and secure assistance in measuring its impact in the Amani, Metcalfe Park and Muskego Way neighborhoods.

The **Greater Milwaukee Foundation** contracted with DATA YOU CAN USE to evaluate the **Neighborhood Leadership Institute**, a collaborative partnership between the Zilber family Foundation, LISC, United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee, the Northwestern Mutual Foundation and Cardinal Stritch University. The program was in its third year of supporting neighborhood residents paired with agency staff to develop leadership skills. The formative evaluation included interviews with founders and funders, focus groups with participants in cohorts 1 and 2, and feedback from participants in cohort 3 before and after the session. Results were used to inform the future design of the effort.

Partnering with the **Nonprofit Center** and nine Neighborhood Strategic Planning Areas for the City of Milwaukee's Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG), DATA YOU CAN USE worked with community organizers from the neighborhoods to design a prototype data profile of basic information needed for planning, preparing requests for funding, and reporting to residents. Together, neighborhood boundaries were defined, and census data were pulled, presented and interpreted. These profiles were then made available more widely on the website.

## DATA YOU CAN USE – 2016 Highlights

### Building Local Capacity and Making Data Useful

To further build local capacity in accessing and using neighborhood data, DATA YOU CAN USE presented **trainings and workshops**. These included: *Using American Fact Finder Data* to provide an introduction to the use of census data; *Discovering and Using Open Source Mapping Resources* to aid neighborhood groups in using free software; *Developing a Theory of Change* to assist nonprofits in knowing what data to look for; and *Community Asset Mapping* to begin to change the narrative in describing neighborhood conditions. Two of the workshops were held at the UWM **Zilber School for Public Health** allowing nonprofit neighborhood organizers access to first class computer lab training and students the opportunity to improve skills and actively engage with staff from community organizations. Plans are in the works to build on this relationship.

Lead agencies of the **Building Neighborhood Capacity Programs** (BNCP) Including the **Dominican Center** (for the Amani Neighborhood), the **Milwaukee Christian Center** (for the Muskego Way BNCP neighborhoods), and **Metcalf Park Community Bridges** contracted with DATA YOU CAN USE to gather, digest and summarize useful neighborhood data to inform the plans for their extended efforts. The data they needed also required custom geographies and standard data like the profiles designed by the CDBG agencies, but was supplemented with crime, property and voting data. These are also available on the website.

Several local agencies including **Nativity Jesuit** and the Southside BNCP neighborhoods of Clarke Square, Muskego Way and Historic Mitchell benefited from improved access and understanding of data. For example, a report describing Latino Milwaukee in a four County area was produced by academics for the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. A four page "**Data Digest**" produced by DATA YOU CAN USE made it more user- friendly and relevant to local planning needs. This summary report was originally prepared for the **Siebert Lutheran Foundation** and was made available on the website with permission.

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### Supporting Ongoing Efforts

Bringing expertise and data availability to other ongoing community efforts is part of the work of DATA YOU CAN USE.

As a Population Health Service Fellow, Salma Abadin, worked with DATA YOU CAN USE and the **Healthier, Safer, More Prosperous Milwaukee** leadership team to create an inventory to document current services and to potentially identify other partners and resources in the Milwaukee area. The inventory – *Working Well Together: The Intersection of Public Health, Safety and Community Development in Milwaukee, WI* – reports on a survey that describes the work of agencies and programs and the partners they have in community/economic development, criminal justice/safety, and healthcare/public health.

DATA YOU CAN USE participated in the training, interviewing and mapping for **Project Central Voice**, a grant from the Diversity and Inclusion Fund at the Greater Milwaukee Foundation.

Project Central Voice partnered with community researchers to interview more than 90 residents of the central city whose voices are seldom heard. They offered their insights about crime prevention and community organizing in the Northside CDBG neighborhoods and shared their results with community leaders at two public forums.

The **Milwaukee Police Department** contracted with DATA YOU CAN USE to serve as the research partner for its three-year Byrne grant – a place-based effort to strengthen police/community relations and engage residents' voice in the construction and development of plans to strengthen Milwaukee's Amani neighborhood.

Other examples of the contributions of DATA YOU CAN USE include: serving as Chair of the Data Council for **Milwaukee Succeeds**, a collective impact effort to assure educational success from cradle to career; sharing data with the **Milwaukee Anti-Violence Coalition**; assisting the **Local Initiatives Support Corporation** (LISC) Milwaukee identify MANDI award winners, and identifying targets and metrics of partner agencies under their new strategic direction.

## DATA YOU CAN USE – 2016 Highlights

### Attracting National Resources

DATA YOU CAN USE represented Milwaukee at the **National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership** meetings in San Antonio in April and at Cleveland in October. Highlights of the Cleveland conference were presented to the organizations participating in the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Healthy Neighborhoods effort. We also participated in the **Code for America** meeting in Oakland in October connecting civic hacking and real community issues. As an advocate for neighborhood based data and the integration of a public health perspective to neighborhood development, DATA YOU CAN USE was invited to lead a session at a conference sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) **500 Cities: Local Data for Better Health** conference. Most health data are available at the County or State level, making neighborhood level analysis extremely costly and difficult to access. This project will make 27 health indicators available at the census tract level for America's 500 largest cities-- allowing us to better understand the health issues impacting residents and address targeted solutions.

DATA YOU CAN USE was selected as the research partner for Milwaukee in the national cross-site project **Turning the Corner** project of the Urban Institute, the Kresge Foundation and the Federal Reserve. Joining Detroit and the Twin Cities, the project will pilot a research model that monitors neighborhood change, drives informed government action and promotes equitable policies that protect against physical, commercial and cultural displacement.

### The Road Ahead

Gearing up for 2017, we are looking forward to expanding our partners and helping to assure your access to DATA YOU CAN USE. Let us know how we can help!

For questions about partnering with us, please contact:

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**Thank you!**