

Counsel, collaboration, and community: A systemic approach to public health data modernization in Utah



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CATEGORY: Enterprise Approach to Data Systems Modernization

Utah Department of Health and Human Services (UDHHS) is using an enterprise approach to modernize their data systems. They conducted focus groups with several programs and will use artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze the data to ensure accurate representation of public health system needs.

The “What”

Utah is addressing data modernization needs through an enterprise approach. Utah is a decentralized public health system and is composed of the state health department, 13 local health jurisdictions, and eight federal recognized tribes. The data modernization initiative team at the Utah Department of Health and Human Services (UDHHS) conducted 18 focus group sessions in the fall of 2024 and focused on seven key areas of public health data modernization including



data access, data sources, data quality, data processes, infrastructure, governance and policy, and people to make sure they address the needs of their public health system. The focus groups were encouraged to be in-person as much as possible but were held in a hybrid format to ensure accessibility. This approach was selected to make sure voices were heard across all public health agencies, public health areas (infectious disease, chronic disease, health equity, environmental health, and more), and included executive decision makers, grant PIs, front line workers, data analysts, public health nurses, and more.



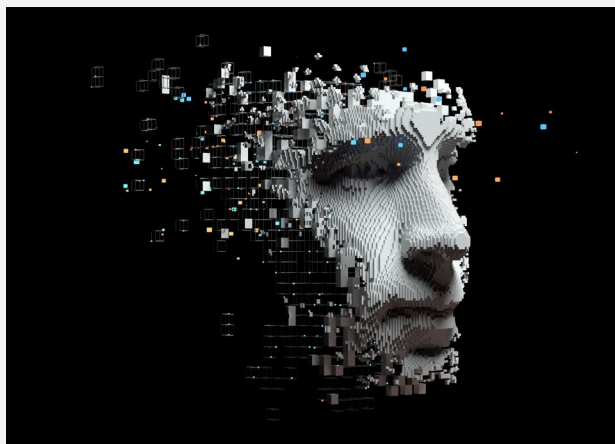
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The “So What”

The approach to scoping Utah's public health system has been met with applause both internally to Utah and externally. Many participants said this is the first time they have been invited to speak, or their area of public health has been represented, in a project of this size. The focus groups gave the team a chance to identify quick wins they could address rapidly while the larger systemic changes would be added to their Data Modernization strategic plan. The focus groups also allowed participants to make connections with each other, break down existing siloes, and form stronger partnerships. This massive project will ensure that projects prioritized for modernization will provide a positive impact for the system. Additionally, other jurisdictions have reached out to Utah to ask if they can share their facilitation guide and approach to the system-wide scoping project. They are sharing their guide as best as they can in the various data modernization learning communities and will share the strategic plan when it is completed (goal date of end of May 2025).

For the qualitative analysis—they are participating in a pilot project with UDHHS using Google Gemini AI. This is providing a use case for the project to demonstrate the cost saving, time saving, and good work of the system. They will also use the software NVIVO to verify the content of their listening and learning sessions. This has been a great opportunity to use demonstrate the utility of AI on a systemic project and hopefully push for system-wide adoption of this tool in a safe and secure way.



The “Now What”

Focus groups (listening and learning sessions) are complete and they are conducting a qualitative analysis of the sessions to compile into a Utah Data Modernization Strategic Plan for the life of the Public Health Infrastructure Grant and beyond. All the session data will be shared with each of the 18 group participants to use their own data how they choose, but the larger elements that impact the system will be included in the strategic plan. The strategic plan includes an implementation plan that will outline specific project goals and objectives, project scope, task breakdown, timeline, roles and

Responsibilities, required resources, success metrics and monitoring methods, sustainability plan, and mitigation strategies. Each project will be given a value score for a quick view of the overall value and difficulty of the project. This implementation plan will allow leaders to move quickly through the decision-making process of data modernization priorities and provide a menu of projects that can be selected when funding opportunities arise, allowing them to direct how funding is used rather than the funding dictating their projects. This will be a living document they can refer to for the next several years and provide a valuable use case for UDHHS' AI project..

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