Appendix: Guiding questions to practice the four question framework

The following sets of questions are intended to be a starting point for applying the Four Questions to your own data sharing and integration work. We recommend considering these questions with all relevant partners and adapting them as needed to fit your context.

Question 1 Practice: defining access and use to determine legality

Use the following prompts and examples as a guide to clearly define your data access and use, which then allows you to determine legality.

WHY do you want to share and integrate data?
For example, to:
Track indicators at the population level
Identify a target population
Describe cross-enrollment patterns
Identify geographic areas of greatest impact
Evaluate program outcomes
Improve services at the point of intervention
Conduct mandated reporting

WHO do you want to share it with, and who conducts the integration?
For example:
Executive leadership
Agency serving the same client
Probation officers
A community treatment provider
A hospital emergency department
A university-based researcher
An agency-based analyst

WHAT type of data do you want to share and integrate? Is it open, restricted, or unavailable?
For example:
Information that does not identify individuals
Information that does identify individuals
Information that might identify a person
Health information
Educational records
Housing status
Demographics

HOW will you share the data?
For example, provide:
Aggregate counts at the block group level
Credentialed access to source data
Access to public-facing dashboard
View-only access to data underlying a dashboard
Edit access to data underlying a dashboard
Row-level data with identifiers
Row-level data without identifiers

Question 2 Practice: Considering risks and benefits to determine ethical use

There is a lot to balance when deciding whether and how to use data. Use the following prompts and examples as a guide to consider risks and benefits to determine ethical use.

- Why is this data sharing and integration being conducted? Are data minimization principles considered? Can this question be addressed without the release of identifiable information?
- What are the risks of this data integration?
- What are the benefits of this data integration?
- Who will benefit from this data integration? In what ways?
- Who could be harmed from this data integration? In what ways?
- How are risks being mitigated?
- How will the data be shared to protect privacy and prevent redisclosure?

Question 3 Practice: This is legal and ethical. Is it a good idea?

Now that you've spent time determining legality and ethical use—an important first step—we also encourage larger considerations of the practicalities of data sharing and integration. Specifically:

- Are available data of sufficient quality to answer the question at hand?
- What action can be taken as a result of this analysis?
- How will programs/policies/lives be improved by this use of integrated data?
- What can reasonably be changed or improved based upon the findings? What cannot be changed?
- Has this question already been answered?

- Will the resources needed to conduct this integration yield more benefit than using these same resources for programmatic or direct funding?
- What is the sociopolitical context of this data integration? Is this building upon previous work? Is this work supplanting previous efforts? Is there a related effort that "went wrong" or needs to be acknowledged in some way?
- What are the political implications of this data use?
- Who is conducting this integration and analysis? Do they have sufficient understanding of the program/policy/population that is being studied?
- Who is "asking" the question? Is this topic of interest to the broader community? Do community members, including those "in" the data, know about and support this work?