11-2018

# Key Factors in the establishment of an academia-government center of public sector administrative data and policy research

James Ayles
*New Brunswick Department of Health*

Ted McDonald

# Key Factors in the establishment of an academia-government center of public sector administrative data and policy research

## Abstract

A collaborative between the Government of New Brunswick (GNB) and the University of New Brunswick to establish a center of public sector administrative data and policy research was envisioned in 2012. Subsequent work between the parties led to the establishment of the New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training (NB-IRDT) in 2014.

Academia-government partnerships are not unique in Canada, however what sets this apart is: 1) the legislative approach used to support research, 2) scope of administrative data made available, 3) value placed on anonymized linked data, 4) governance overseeing the partnership, and 5) measures taken to ensure the protection of citizens' data.

In 2017, the New Brunswick Act Respecting Research received proclamation. This Act serves to provide clarity and addresses gaps in access and use of personal / health data for research. The Act has opened the doors for NB-IRDT with data owners of public sector organizations. NB-IRDT may now receive pseudonymous personal data from any public sector program collecting personal information.

The partnership is governed by several advisory committees each serving a different role in overseeing the growth of NB-IRDT; overall direction setting being led by a panel of Deputy Ministers and the Clerk (the senior ranking civil servant in GNB.)

The collaboration is well positioned to support public policy research and fosters the use of evidence-based information in the development of government programs and services. The partnership has also helped to encourage new and innovative thinking within GNB about the value of linkable data to support decision-making.

## Comments

# Academic / Government Collaboration:
## A centre for public sector administrative data access and policy research

*James Ayles, New Brunswick Department of Health*

*ADRF Network Research* Conference
November 13, 2018

# Context

- Proposal in 2012 to establish an academic centre of public sector administrative data was presented to the Government of New Brunswick (GNB).

- The Vision: a resource for the use of administrative data to support the development and evaluation of policy and programs.

- Led to the establishment of the New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training (NB-IRDT) at the University of New Brunswick (UNB) in 2015.

# Keys Factors of Success

1. Legislative approach to support research;

2. Governance overseeing the partnership;

3. Scope of administrative data made available;

4. Value placed on anonymized linked data;

5. Measures taken to ensure the protection of citizen's data.

# Legislation

- An *Act Respecting Research*

- Introduced March 2017, proclaimed May 2017

- An omnibus Bill to modify PHIPAA, RTIPPA and 20+ other pieces of legislation to define a clear legal authority for government and public bodies to share data with NB-IRDT

- Allow public bodies to disclose prepared personal and personal health information to NB-IRDT as a research data centre

- Allow public bodies to **disclose** personal information and/or personal health information to the **Department of Health** for purposes of making each dataset linkable at the individual level

# Governance

- The NB-IRDT & the partnership established by way of:

  – Originating Agreement

  – Operating Agreement

- Oversight & Research Priorities

  – Deputy Ministers & Clerk of the Executive Council Office

- Privacy Committee

  – Chief Privacy Officers

- Data Research Committee

# Data Scope

- Plan is to house all administrative data from all Government Departments – Health, Education, Social Development, Public Safety, Transportation, Justice, etc.

- Other public bodies & agencies -  hospitals, schools, alcohol sales

- Must show a reason to not send data to the Institute

- Currently housing 14 data sets (mainly from health system)

- A data sharing agreement and refresh schedule required for each data set

- All data shared is anonymized

# Linked Data

- Citizen specific data is to be linked

- Authority to do so by the *Act Respecting Research*

- Must be anonymized

- "The Crosswalk Process"

- Department of Health conducts the crosswalk

- The NB-IRDT never sees the name or identifiers of a citizen

- The Department of Health must enter into a DSA with the data provider (i.e. other Departments)

# Privacy

- In addition to Legislation, the Crosswalk safeguards, and the Data Sharing Agreements;

- NB-IRDT was required to complete a

  - Threat Risk Assessment (TRA)

  - Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA)

- Complies with GNB security standards

- Annual review per the Operating Agreement

- Secure "air-gapped" facility

# Key Challenges

- Legislation

- Privacy

- Resource requirements for Departments providing data

- Expansion

# Contacts

**James Ayles**
Director, Health Analytics
New Brunswick Department of Health
PO Box 5100
Fredericton, NB, Canada
E3B 5G8

Phone: (506) 457-3591
Email:  james.ayles.@gnb.ca

**Ted McDonald**
Director, NB Institute for Research, Data and Training
University of New Brunswick
PO Box 4400, 304 Keirstead Hall
Fredericton, NB, Canada
E3B 5A3

Phone: (506) 447-3363
Email:  nb-irdt@unb.ca