New Solutions for the Resource Referral Problem

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The Problem

It’s hard to see the safety net.
Community Resource Directory Data:

WHICH agencies?
WHAT services?
WHERE are they located?
WHEN & HOW are they accessed?
Community Resource Directory Data:

IT’S COMPLEX...

Organizations: multiple services, facilities

Services: elaborate eligibility requirements

Language: vocabularies vary widely

Jurisdictions: federal, state, local

Public and private: government vs charity

& IT’S ALWAYS CHANGING
A FRAGMENTED FIELD:

Conventional Referral Providers

- United Way
- Veterans Crisis Line
- 211
- ADRC (Aging & Disability Resource Center)
- AIRS (Setting the Standards for Information and Referral Services)
- CCRR (Child Care Resource & Referral)

Web-based startups

- Aunt BERTHA.com
- NOWPOW
- UNITE US
- Activate Care
- Healthify
A LANDSCAPE OF SILOS: CHAOTIC, WASTEFUL, INEFFECTIVE

PEOPLE IN NEED

CALL CENTERS

Paper Directories

Resource Websites

Many others

People with disabilities
Veterans
Elders
Etc.

REFERRAL PROVIDERS

SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

Shelters

Food Pantries

Medical Care

Counseling
Vision

A healthy information ecosystem in which **people can find what they need, in whatever way works best** for them.
In November 2018, the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems “moved to promote the adoption of Open Referral’s Human Service Data Specification and API protocols.”

HSDS/A are now the industry standards.
A HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM IS INTEROPERABLE

PEOPLE IN NEED
- Poor families with children
- People with disabilities
- Veterans
- Elders
- Etc.

REFERRAL PROVIDERS
- Call Centers
- Paper Directories
- Resource Websites
- Many others

OPEN REFERRAL
- Verification
- Interoperable
- Open Data
- Automatic Updates

SOCIAL SERVICE SERVICES
- Shelters
- Food Pantries
- Medical Care
- Counseling
Early adoption from key institutions
The Big Question:

If resource data is public information, and should be openly accessible, how can we sustain its maintenance?
THREE HYPOTHESES: CENTRALIZED, FEDERATED, MANDATED REGISTRY

#1: Centralized
Open Platform

#2: Federated Network

#3: Funder-mandated
service registry
Model #1: The Data Utility

A referral provider can sustainably publish open data as a public good by generating revenue for services associated with the data.
Example: the Data Utility

- One single source of truth for a community.
- One organization is responsible.
- Monitor usage to produce valuable data analytics (in future iterations!)
Model #2: The Data Collaborative

A network of referral providers can cooperatively maintain and share data, decreasing costs and increasing quality.
Data Analysis Review

Resource Directory Data Duplication

% Site Records appearing in:

- 4+ sets: 22.5%
- 3 sets: 21.6%
- 2 sets: 29.7%
- 1 set: 26.2%

73.8% duplication
Model #3: The Register

A funder can ensure reliable open resource data by requiring grantees and contractors to update their own information in a registry.
Mayor’s Office of New York City is publishing data on all municipally contracted service providers in the standardized Open Referral format on its open data portal.

Benefits:

- Canonical public resource directory record
- Gov collects limited data (which is out of date)… and they might pay for enrichment / updating.
- Gov might pay for traffic / analytics data that are interoperable with its own records.
Goals

Local pilots to move the world
Multi-stakeholder participatory research and deliberation
Thanks for listening. Let’s talk!

Sign up for email announcements: https://openreferral.org
Join our discussion forum: groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/openreferral

Discuss a pilot in your community:
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