Meeting Summary: Second Meeting of NAPDC Data Governance Workgroup

Date: June 26, 2025

DRAFT Meeting Summary

Attendees: Victor E. Cabrera (U.Wisconsin Madison), Dan TerAvest (Our Sci LLC), Yaguang Zhang (OATS Center at Purdue University), Chang Zhao (University of Florida), Ziwen Yu (University of Florida), Ben Craker (Ag Data Coalition), Matthew Spangler (Nebraska University), Amy Charkowski (Colorado State University), Jordan Lambert (Colorado State University); Val Kovalsky (Nave Analytics)

NPCC Facilitation team: Sofia Castellanos & Dan Lussier, Prabhas Pokharel

1. Executive Summary

This was the second meeting of the NAPDC data governance workgroup. The group reviewed updates to the workgroup guidelines and scope and had deeper discussions about challenges in farmer–researcher collaboration and the broader agricultural data ecosystem.

2. Opening Check-In

Dan, Prabhas, and Sofía welcomed the workgroup members and, before starting the meeting, led a brief check-in by asking: "What is one small but meaningful thing you've noticed in your work with farmers over the past month?" They opened the floor for everyone to participate, and the responses included:

- Continued hesitation among farmers to share data due to political climate or trust concerns

- Technical access issues (e.g., GPS not always working as expected)

- Surprises around how much valuable data is privately held (e.g., on water and archaeology)

- Concerns about the source and ethics of funding in ag research

- A growing interest in transparency in food production and labor practices

3. Updates from the facilitation team

The NPCC facilitation team shared key updates on the operational guidelines, survey results, and the group's overall scope of work.

- From the survey, only one person declined to join the workgroup, citing scheduling conflicts.

- New language was added to the guidelines to describe future opportunities for publishing and presenting the group's work. The workgroup agreed to this addition, as well as the current membership list.

- The group also confirmed that meetings will continue at the current time and will not shift to 8:00 AM Pacific Time.

Process Map Discussion

The group reviewed the draft five-phase process map for the project. Key points of discussion included:

- A workgroup member asked whether the framework is intended to be tested in practice or remain more conceptual.

- There was general agreement that the goal is to build something useful and practical.

- Several members suggested reviewing and building on existing data governance models already in use in agriculture. There was agreement that the project should not reinvent existing efforts.

4. Scope: What This Group Is and Is Not Doing

Dan reiterated the scope and purpose of the workgroup, highlighting what the group is working on:

- Creating tools and templates to support the data governance framework

- Building a small, collaborative community

- Leveraging existing work and resources

He also clarified what the group is not aiming to do:

- Solve data governance across the entire agriculture sector

- Provide formal recommendations to USDA

- Build new software or APIs

5. Ecosystem Diagram and Field Reflections

Sofía shared a draft diagram of the ag data ecosystem, showing how producers, researchers, trusted advisors, and ag tech companies are connected. She explained that the diagram is intended as a starting point for a group activity and is based on input shared so far. The purpose is to help identify the key interactions that are central to the NAPDC workgroup's efforts to collaborate on practical data governance solutions.

Sofía also highlighted the red arrow in the diagram, which shows the connection between NAPDC, or NAPDC sub-award projects, and farmers. This is the area where the group will focus its efforts.

Key feedback from the group discussion of the data ecosystem diagram:

- The role of extension agents and commodity groups are often trusted bridges between researchers and farmers

- Data ownership isn't always straightforward (e.g., sometimes vendors, not farmers, hold the data)

- Strong interest in developing tools to help researchers communicate with farmers (and their trusted advisors) clearly and ethically about data use

Additional Comments and Questions:

A few participants shared reflections about the role of extension agents and the challenges of communicating with farmers and accessing data:

- Chang Zhao shared that in Florida, there are thousands of extension agents who play a key role in outreach and collecting farm data. He noted that the relationships between extensionists, farmers, and researchers vary and can influence how work gets done.

- Ziwen emphasized the importance of trust, saying that "when extension agents approach farmers—they know what they're talking about… they literally are friends of the farmers." However, she pointed out that it can still be hard to communicate with farmers about complex or abstract topics, and asked: "Is there any guidance to direct the communication with the farmers?"

- Victor highlighted that accessing data isn't always straightforward. "Sometimes things are not linear," he said. For example, a farmer might not have the data themselves—it could be held by a company. "We ask farmers, 'Hey, can we use your data for our research?' but then we have to approach the machinery people."

- Val emphasized that private-sector data often outweighs public data in scale and value. She also shared experiences with ethical anonymization and how companies are thinking about liability, trust, and generational differences in willingness to share data.

6. Group Exercise: Identifying the challenges when working with farmers

The group engaged in an exercise to share experiences related to working with farm data. Participants were invited to talk about how they approach farmers and producers, the challenges they face in their roles, and what isn't working on the ground. As the conversation unfolded, attendees also captured their reflections on the Zoom whiteboard using sticky notes.

Emerging Focus Areas: Connecting a Data Framework to Real-World Challenges

Sofia reflected on whiteboard notes and grouped the discussion into five key themes:

1. Communication

2. Incentives and concerns

3. Managing conflict

4. Legal clarity around data use

5. Technical ease of sharing data

The group explored how these areas connect to the real-world challenge of building trust and making collaboration easier, especially for future researchers working under the NAPDC umbrella.

6. Next Steps

Sofía closed the meeting with an overview of next steps. The facilitation team will share the Zoom board so members have a chance to add more sticky notes and review the categories created. Once that's complete, Sofía will finalize and share the board with the group in the coming weeks. The facilitation team will also send out the meeting summary and a reminder of resources that may support the group's ongoing work. The next meeting is scheduled for July 24.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 AM.

7. Action Items:

- The facilitation team will share the Zoom whiteboard so members can review the categories created

- Sofía will close and finalize the Zoom whiteboard after input is complete.

- The finalized whiteboard will be shared with the full group in the coming weeks.

- The facilitation team will send out:

  - A meeting summary

  - Circulate 2–3 examples of farm data principles (e.g., from ADT, the UK, and Australia) for participants to explore ahead of the next meeting.