Meeting Summary: Fifth Meeting of the NAPDC Data Governance Workgroup

Date: September 25, 2025

Attendees: Ziwen Yu, Nasima Subedi, Pei-Ying Chen, Joel Harley, Ben Craker, Dan TerAvest, Yefan Nian, Scout Calvert, Amy Charkowski, Yaguang Zhang, and Dan Lussier

Facilitators (NPCC): Sofía Castellanos and Kristen Wright

Executive Summary

The fifth meeting of the NAPDC Data Governance Workgroup built on earlier discussions of the four clusters and the drafting of the principles. The group shared draft wording for each cluster and shaped a first "Version 1" of the guiding principles for the data governance framework.

Opening Check-In

Sofía shared scheduling updates:

- The November and December meetings will be canceled due to holidays.
- An **early December session** (December 11 or 18) is being considered; a poll will be sent to confirm the date.
- Pei-Ying Chen, new faculty at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, was introduced and welcomed to the group.

Purpose of This Session

- Hear updates from volunteer subgroups on the four principle clusters.
- Identify where there is agreement and what still needs work.
- Get as close as possible to a **Version 1 wording** for all principles.

Volunteer Share-Outs

Farmer Communication & Data-Use Expectations

- Emphasized **clear, accurate, and plain-language communication** so farmers understand what data are collected and why.
- Open questions included how to explain AI use (e.g., ChatGPT) and what counts as a minimum standard when plain language is difficult.

Farmer Motivations, Concerns & Incentives

- Focused on **co-designing projects** with farmers so research aligns with real goals.

- Avoid over-promising "benefits"; instead, talk about **value** or **outputs**—such as access to results or learning workshops.
- Keep engagement steady through feedback and updates.
- Discussion highlighted that this work is about **transparency and trust**, not transactions.

Farmer–Researcher Agreements

- Brought four starting points:
    1. Create a default rule for handling conflicts not covered in agreements.
    2. Define data categories clearly—who contributes what and who owns what.
    3. Spell out rights tied to ownership (control, sharing, and use).
    4. Identify and resolve conflicts between laws, policies, and farmer expectations.

- Takeaway: Merge #1 and #4 into one **conflict-resolution principle** that remains flexible but consistent with state, federal, and tribal laws.
- Joel and Ziwen will rework this section for the next draft.

Farmer Education & Extension Partnerships

- Principles centered on shared understanding and data literacy.
- Farmers should receive basic training before giving consent.
- Researchers, students, and extension agents also need education on data ethics and management.
- Goal: ensure everyone works from the same foundation and vocabulary.

Open Group Discussion Highlights

- Amy shared that Minnesota law protects certain farm data from public records requests. She will explore how other states handle this; Sofía will also compile examples.
- The group compared the agricultural data context to medical research ethics, farmers may not always gain direct benefit, but they should always understand the purpose and risks.
- Members discussed how to frame future projects. Rather than treating them as a "quid pro quo" exchange (*"you share data, you get X"*), the suggestion was to be upfront about what the project will produce and what outputs can realistically be shared.

Workgroup Activity / Discussion

Sofía recapped the four clusters and walked through the principle-drafting matrix used to guide the process. Each principle included rationale, affected stakeholders, data lifecycle stage, example situations, and open questions.

Participants refined the draft principles across clusters:

- **Cluster 4 – Farmer Education & Extension Partnerships:** Focused on meaningful training and resources that lead to practical use—not just check-the-box materials.
- **Cluster 2 – Farmer Motivations & Incentives:** Stressed co-design, visible value, and long-term engagement; highlighted the need for clear communication instead of monetary promises.
- **Cluster 1 – Farmer Communication & Data Use:** Focused on plain-language explanations, timely updates, and clarity around risks and benefits. Open questions included how to disclose derivative benefits and how to explain evolving AI use.
- **Cluster 3 – Farmer–Researcher Agreements:** Explored data ownership, stakeholder rights, and conflict resolution. The group discussed combining overlapping statements and acknowledged ongoing challenges in legal and policy frameworks.

Post-Breakout Discussion

After small-group work, participants emphasized the need for:

- Clear and practical language.
- Recognition of both tangible and intangible benefits.
- Communication tools that farmers can easily understand and use.

There was a discussion about whether conflicts between farmers and researchers should be addressed separately from policy-driven disputes or combined under one broader principle. A few members volunteered to refine this wording. Overall, the group agreed the draft represents a strong starting point for Version 1.

Volunteers for Next Session

- Ziwen Yu and Joel Harley will refine overlapping principles under Farmer–Researcher Agreements.
- The other clusters were generally approved as ready for Version 1 review.

Next Steps

Sofía will send:

- The full meeting summary and updated Version 1 draft of principles.
- A Google Form for quick feedback.
- A short poll for confirming the December meeting date.

Next session (October 23):
The group will move from *principles to practice*—brainstorming which tools and templates are needed to put the principles into action.

The meeting concluded at **10:50 AM (PT)**.