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Leveraging public nonprofit partnerships for IT innovation: Building effective neighborhood information systems

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Abstract (Summary)

This is a study of Neighborhood Information System (NIS) across the U.S. This dissertation investigates the public-nonprofit partnerships of building NIS and evaluates their effectiveness in being a tool for local governance. I employed an extensive study, including a nationwide survey, and an intensive study, including qualitative case analyses.

Neighborhood indicators play a critical role for local governance as they provide necessary information about neighborhoods. Recently, Neighborhood Information Systems (NIS) have been developed in the cities across the U.S. to provide better access to local data and information to community development stakeholders. National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP), at the Urban Institute brings many local NIS together, acting as a headquarter unit.

Government agencies, non profit organizations, and community organizations engage in decision making process for community development and NISs are designed to help information sharing, and effective and participatory decision makings for community development stakeholders. The use of partnerships has emerged as a dominant strategy to develop an NIS. This research investigated what contributes to a working partnership to develop a successful and effective NIS as an information-sharing network to help local economic development and community revitalization. This study suggests data is more important than other resources such as funding and technology in terms of building an Information System for the communities. It also indicates executive level connections with local governments are important as development of an NIS needs a project champion in government for data sharing. The implication for building NISs is that government is an indispensable part of the partnership network, even when the initiation of NIS development comes from the nonprofit sector.

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