# USING DASHBOARDS TO DRIVE BUSINESS DECISIONS
in the ECE SECTOR

What is a dashboard?

A dashboard is **a visual display of all your key data**. A dashboard usually sits on its own page and receives information from one or more linked databases. In many cases it's configurable, allowing you the ability to choose which data you want to see and whether you want to include charts or graphs to visualize the numbers. Dashboards can include real-time episodic information (how many infants are enrolled in this program?) and information trends (how has infant enrollment changed at this program over past six months?).

A dashboard is an information management tool used **to track metrics, key data points, and trends** that are relevant to your business or project. When a group of ECE providers use Child Care Management Software (CCMS) as part of a Shared Service Network, the information collected by each provider/program can be pulled into a central location so Hub staff can see progress and performance at the **individual site** and the **network** level.

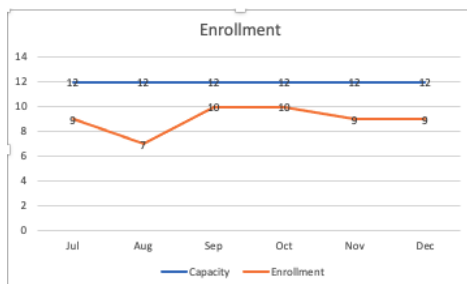SAMPLE DASHBOARD
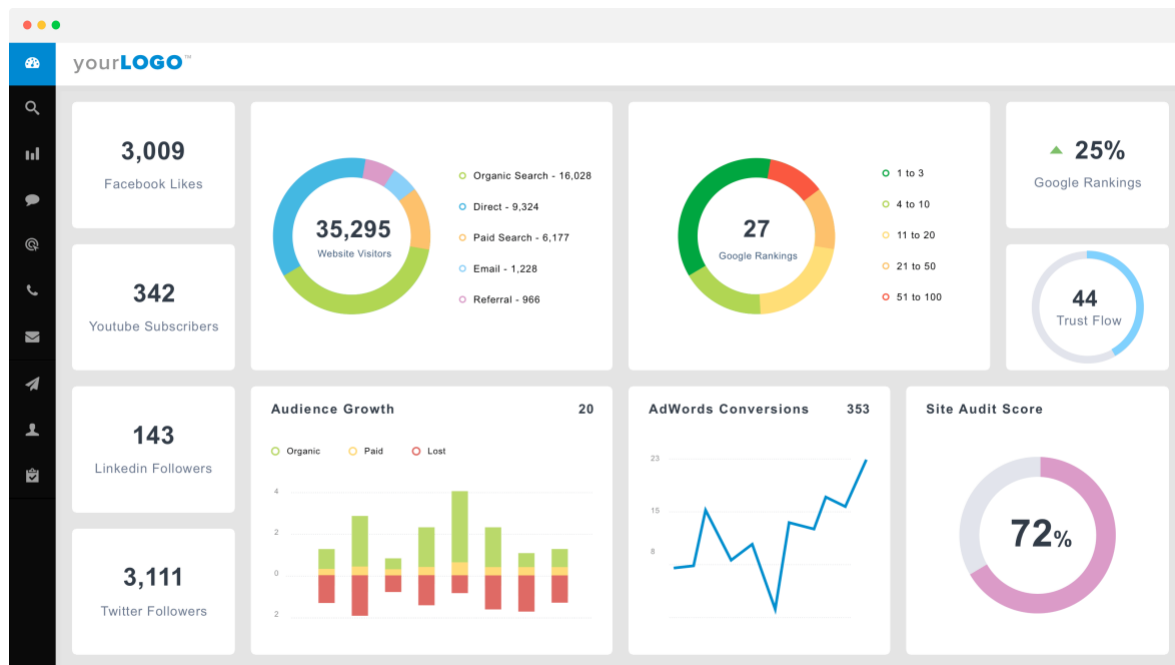
What is included in a Dashboard?

That is up to you! Dashboards can be created using **any data collected**. A Child Care Management Software (CCMS) vendor might offer standard dashboards that display typical business metrics like, enrollment, collections, etc. In some cases, you can work with the software company, or an outside entity to configure customized dashboards.

To determine what should be included in a dashboard, Network staff should begin by asking – what is the **IMPACT** my project is trying to have? What changes did we promise to support provider members in making? A good dashboard will give you information to determine if you are having the impact you intend. For example, Networks with the goal to help providers become more sustainable by **increasing income** and **reducing work hours** will want to track the following data points:
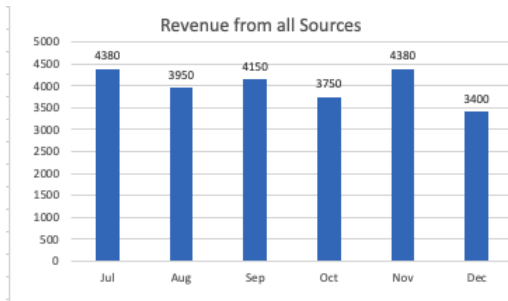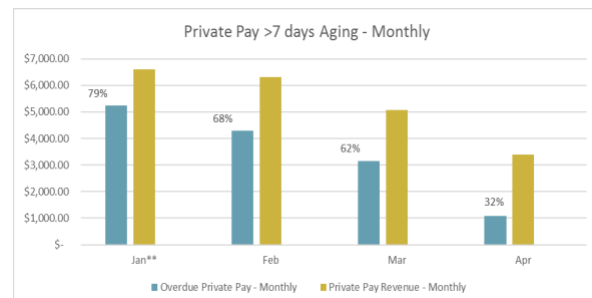

Because we understand the impact of collections and enrollment on revenue, we may also want to look **enrollment rates** and **collection rates** to understand more clearly what is driving revenue.

Enrollment by month   Accounts Receivable

If your Network offers marketing supports to help member programs stay full, then you will want to follow the success of those efforts. For example, you might track:
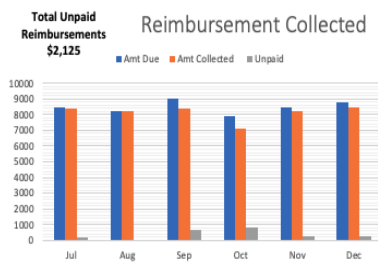
- Visits to the provider's website
- Number of tours scheduled
- Feedback from tours
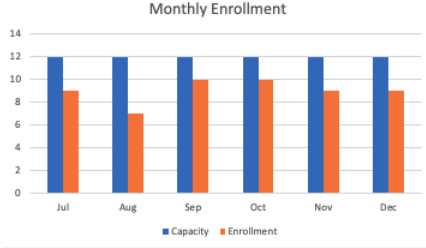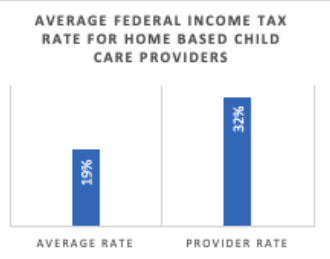
Actionable Data

Once we have identified critical data to be collected, the Network coach's role is to work with the provider to use this information to identify and address both opportunities and challenges. Data dashboards offer a treasure trove of information for coaches with which to dig deeper into **business intelligence using questions such as:**

- *What is the story this information is telling me about the sustainability of this program?*
- *Where are they challenged? Why are they challenged?*
- *How does this one program compare to the Network as a whole?*
- *What might explain how one program's data trends veer from the norm?*
- *And most importantly, what can be done about it?*

In the sample below, critical business needs are identified, goals offered, and action steps outlined based on provider data and the trends depicted.

| Data Point/Rationale	Performance	Goal	Action Steps
Payment from subsidy: expected vs. collected There are many ways that reimbursements can be reduced from what is actually owed to the provider, therefore it is critical to monitor subsidy payments so that what is expected is actually received, and re-invoicing can occur in a timely way	Provider is consistently receiving less than expected 	100% collection of reimbursement due	-Nightly check for parent sign in/out with corrections made the following day -Review report of payment for inconsistencies -Corrective action taken within 5 days of payment

Enrollment rate Unless the program is consistently operating at full enrollment, income will be below acceptable levels	Enrollment rate average = 75% **Monthly Enrollment** (bar chart showing Capacity and Enrollment for Jul–Dec)	95% average enrollment annually	-Review marketing efforts and identify new opportunities -Develop incentive program for families to refer new students -Review feedback from tours and address issues of concern
Effective tax rate too high As a business that uses the home for work, family child care providers are entitled to deduct shared home/business expenses (using time-space percentage) and business expenses. It is important to capture these costs in order to reduce the amount of federal income tax owed (and maximize income)	Provider is paying significantly more in federal income tax than the average home-based provider **AVERAGE FEDERAL INCOME TAX RATE FOR HOME BASED CHILD CARE PROVIDERS** (bar chart: Average Rate 19%, Provider Rate 32%)	Effective rate < 20%	-Review/revise calculation for time-space percentage -Establish consistent and manageable systems for tracking expenses, miles, hours worked in the home -Review system for tax prep (find new tax preparer)

Using Dashboards at the Network Level

Dashboards are critical tools for coaching individual providers. They can also be highly valuable in helping Network staff support a healthy and **sustainable staffed family child care network.**

Dashboards that provide business intelligence at the Network level might look at the following data points:

- Provider use of Child Care Management Software. This information can help Network staff to see trends in use of features and determine if more training or support is needed to ensure that provider members make full use of the automation available.
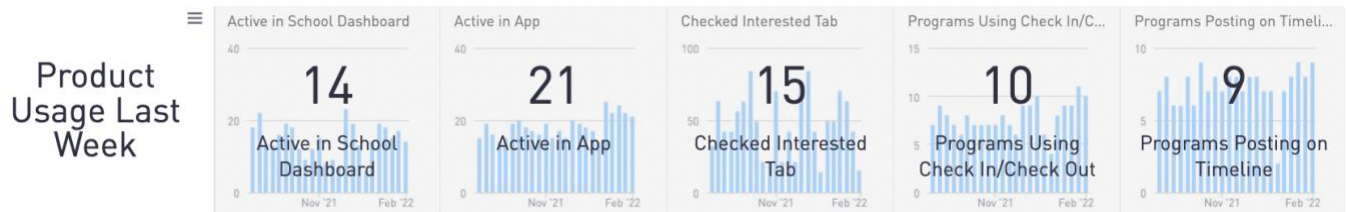

Network staff not only want to understand provider use of CCMS across the Network and over time, but also the impact that provider membership in the Network is having on business operations.

Network staff can use a dashboard to view vacancy trends over time. The examples below track vacancies from April 2021 through early February 2022 in terms of the Network as a whole and at more granular levels of seat availability among various age groups served. The dashboard presents available spots or seats in total and by age group and also the number of programs with any available seats and the number of programs with each type of available seat.
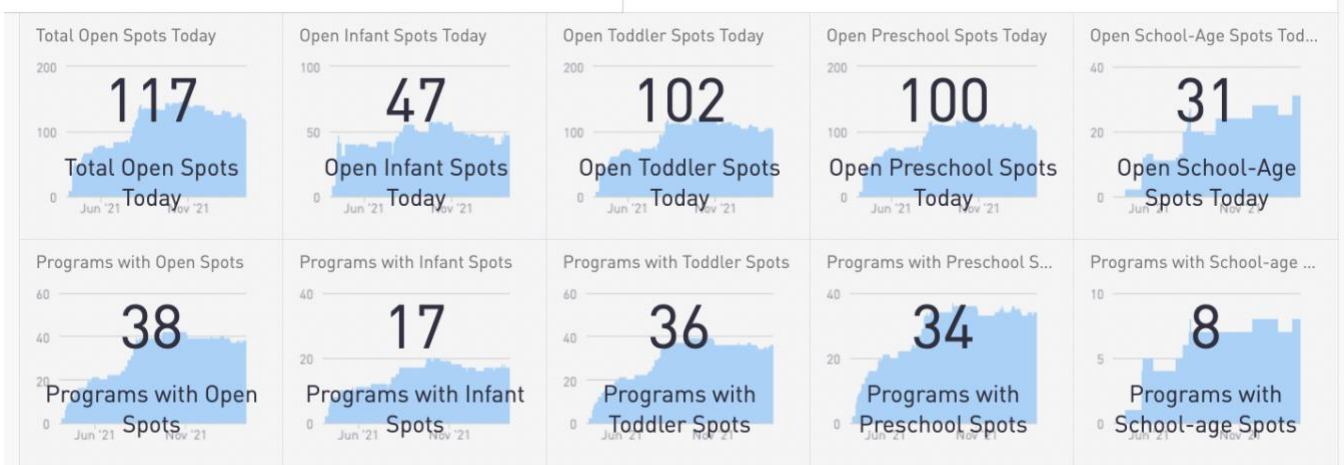
Summary

Operating a high quality early childhood education program requires a significant level of skill in both business and pedagogical work. The use of business automation, collection of data, and using that data to make sound business decisions are all crucial components for operating a program that can deliver consistently good results. **Business intelligence, made clear through well designed dashboards, are an important tool for this work.**