# UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

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DEPARTMENT OF DATA SCIENCE & ECONOMIC POLICY

DATA CURATION AND MANAGEMENT

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**INTRODUCTION**

Data Policy It is a high level guiding framework for data practices in the institution that codifies how data management, sharing and publication, compliance issues are addressed. Therefore for local government bodies like the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly, an efficient data policy is essential in planning and decision making process as well as another critical issue of transparency and service delivery. Because the Assembly is central to development planning, budgeting, and community engagement; the administration of credible, timely, and accessible data in its control and transmission are therefore significant. In this piece of commentary looks at the Data Policy in AWMA as such; looking into data dissemination in terms of its structure and format, protocols for data sharing guidelines as well as the visibility of data through digital means.

**1. Structure of Data Dissemination.**

In the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly, the structure of data dissemination is mostly coordinated through a few key departments that serve as the hub for data collection, analysis, and dissemination. These include the Planning Unit, Statistics Department, Budget Unit, and the Physical Planning Department. These offices work collaboratively to compile data from various sources such as revenue records, administrative data, geographical information, and field monitoring reports.

Data is mostly shared internally through departmental meetings and planning sessions, and externally through stakeholder forums, budget hearings, and town hall meetings. However, the structure still relies heavily on the traditional systems and face-to-face dissemination, which often delays timely access to information.

**2. Format of Data Dissemination.**

The data dissemination method used by Ahanta West Municipal Assembly are generally traditional, with indications of gradual digital revolution. Common formats are:

- **Printed Reports**: Like Annual Progress Reports, Revenue Performance Reports, and Medium-Term Development Plans, usually presented in Municipal Planning & Coordinating Unit, General Assembly Meetings and forums for public stakeholders.

- **PowerPoint Presentations**: Used during community fora, budget hearings, and district planning meetings to convey developmental outcomes.

- **Charts and Infographics**:  They are occasionally applied to break down financial  and statistical information for wider community comprehension.

Despite the availability of these formats, the absence of interactive, open-access platforms remains a limitation.

## 3. Data Sharing Protocol and Procedures.

Data sharing within the Assembly follows a centralized and restrictive protocol. Internally, departments share data through formal communication channels, often via memos or direct requests to the Municipal Coordinating Director (MCD).

When it comes to **external stakeholders** such as NGOs, researchers, and the general public, access to data is subject to formal application. The requester must submit a written request stating the purpose and intended use of the data. In sensitive cases, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) may be required, particularly if the data contains personal, confidential, or spatial development information. While this approach aims to protect data integrity and confidentiality, it sometimes slows down information flow, especially for time-bound projects.

## 4. Data Visibility (Website, Social Media Handles).

The visibility of data in Ahanta West Municipal Assembly remains limited, especially on digital platforms. Although the Assembly has a website, it is not consistently updated with key datasets or development reports. Documents such as budgets, development plans, and project updates are not always uploaded or publicly accessible online.

In terms of social media, the Assembly operates a Facebook platform which is used mainly for public announcements and sensitization campaigns. However, these platforms are underutilized when it comes to sharing structured or analytical data. The lack of digital visibility weakens public trust and inhibits informed civic participation.

## Conclusion

The data policy practices of the Ahanta West Municipal Assembly reflect a hybrid of traditional and evolving digital systems. While the Assembly demonstrates commitment to structured data management and stakeholder reporting, challenges persist in accessibility, speed, and visibility.

**B.** Ways by improving or implementing the key areas of data curation in the **Ahanta West Municipal Assembly (AWMA)**, based on the four components discussed above:

## 1. Structure of Data Dissemination

- **Establish a Data Coordination Team**:

  Form a multidisciplinary data team composed of officers from Planning, Statistics, Budget, Physical Planning, and IT. This team should meet regularly to streamline data activities.

- **Develop a Municipal Data Management Policy**:

  Create a comprehensive internal policy to standardize how data is collected, validated, approved, and disseminated across departments.

- **Digitalize Internal Workflows**:

  Implement cloud-based platforms (e.g., Google Workspace or Microsoft 365) for internal data sharing, reducing delays and duplication.

- **Assign Dedicated Data Officers**:

  Each key department should designate a data focal person responsible for managing and submitting data inputs on time.

## 2. Format of Data Dissemination

- **Create Multilingual Infographics and Visual Summaries**: Translate budget and development summaries into visual formats (charts, timelines, and maps) and in local languages (e.g., Fante or Ahanta).

- **Adopt Interactive Dashboards**: Use software like Microsoft Power BI or Tableau Public to publish dashboards on key development indicators, IGF performance, and project implementation.

- **Standardize Reporting Templates**: Develop uniform templates for reports and presentations that simplify comparison across departments and reporting periods.

- **Utilize Community Radio & Notice Boards**: Disseminate simplified versions of reports through local radio stations and public notice boards in markets, lorry parks, and assembly offices.

## 3. Data Sharing Protocol and Procedures

- **Establish Clear Data Access Guidelines**: Document who can access what type of data, under what conditions, and publish these guidelines on the Assembly's website or bulletin board.

- **Automate Request Processing**: Introduce an online form where NGOs, researchers, or citizens can request data and track the status of their request.

- **Use Data Classification Levels**: Classify data into "public," "restricted," and "confidential" categories, with corresponding access rights.

- **Train Staff in Data Protection and Security**: Conduct regular workshops on safe data handling, especially with sensitive citizen or spatial information.

## 4. Data Visibility (Website and Social Media)

- **Regularly Update the Assembly's Website**: Assign a staff member within the MIS to maintain the website and ensure the timely uploading of reports, plans, and announcements.

- **Launch a Municipal Open Data Page**: Host downloadable data on IGF performance, infrastructure projects, sanitation statistics, etc., in Excel or PDF formats.

- **Leverage Social Media Creatively**:

  - Share "Did You Know" data tips (e.g., revenue growth, school enrolment rates).

  - Post short videos or animations summarizing project outcomes.

  - Run interactive polls and feedback sessions on services.

- **Promote Community Awareness on Data Access**: Organize community forums or town hall meetings to teach citizens how to access and use data shared online.

## References

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