**User Engagement Strategy for Statistics**

Top-Tips for User Engagement

User engagement is about building a sustained and ongoing dialogue with those who use our statistics to ensure they continue to meet society’s needs. As part of the [User Engagement Strategy for Statistics](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/user-engagement-strategy-for-statistics-ensuring-official-statistics-meet-societys-need/), we have developed ten top tips to help improve user engagement. These build on the themes set out in the [Office for Statistics Regulation’s guidance on user engagement](https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-on-user-engagement/).

|  |
| --- |
| 1. **Understand your users**  * Find out who your users are and consider who could use your statistics. Write down a list of users that you are aware of. Don’t forget secondary producers who may reuse or republish your statistics and potential users you’re not yet in contact with. * Discover more users by snowballing – hold a workshop with colleagues to brainstorm and collaborate. Do you have different users or are there common users? * Find out what your users need. Run a [discovery workshop](https://dfedigital.blog.gov.uk/2018/07/31/how-to-run-a-discovery-for-any-project-not-just-digital-ones/) with groups of your users to establish their needs. How would they like you to engage with them? Discover what your users want to hear, rather than what you want to say. * Create [user stories](https://www.nngroup.com/articles/user-story-mapping/) using these insights to help tailor your engagement. You could use the format – “As a [type of user], I want to [goal], so that [benefit/outcome].” For example: * “As an academic, I need to know when the datasets are released, so that I can analyse the data myself”. You might engage with these users more frequently to keep them updated on when the data is available. * “As a parent, I need access to headline figures so that I can know how my child’s school is performing”. You might send an annual newsletter to these users when new data is published. |
| 1. **Engage early**  * Set up regular meetings with stakeholders to build sustainable relationships and understand each other’s perspectives and requirements. * Map out some [user journeys](https://www.nngroup.com/articles/journey-mapping-101/). Identify the steps users take, highlight potential points of contact, and look for opportunities to interact and gather feedback. |
| 1. **Listen**  * Run workshops, focus groups, or survey different groups of users. Make sure that you reach out to all types of users, not just those with the loudest voices. * Identify the “quiet” users. Discover what they need to become more engaged. |
| 1. **Collaborate**  * Hold information sharing events to discover how your colleagues and other analytical teams currently engage with different groups of users. This might include using the expertise of your communications department, your Press Office and/or policy colleagues. * Identify any established stakeholder engagement networks and link into their activities. Don’t forget we are all working towards the same goal of understanding users’ needs. * Speak to other statistics producers working on a similar topic. Look for opportunities to join up your engagement activities and share user intelligence and any lessons learned. * Contact [Best Practice and Impact team](mailto:gsshelp@statistics.gov.uk) or your [user engagement champion](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/about-us/champion-networks/user-engagement-champions/#list-of-champions) for support. |
| 1. **Tailor the engagement to your users**  * [Be consistent, but not uniform](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-design-principles#be-consistent-not-uniform) in how you engage with users of your statistics. Different forms of engagement are likely to be needed to reach different audiences and to understand their different needs. * Take the user needs which you have discovered and use these insights to tailor the content and format of your statistical products, so they target the different audiences. The ONS [user personas](https://style.ons.gov.uk/category/writing-for-the-web/personas/) are a helpful guide to different audience types and the [Government Digital Service Standard](https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/service-standard) provides a useful framework for ensuring our work is underpinned by user needs. |
| 1. **Be proactive**  * Build a mailing list. * Send regular updates and communications. Don’t wait until your users come to you. * Actively seek feedback from your users. Make it easy for them to engage with you.   + Use technology to discover what users are looking for. For example, use Google Analytics or your survey hosting software to collect [paradata](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/labourmarketsurveytechnicalreport#paradata) about how users are interacting with your online products.   + Consider how social media is used – are particular posts or topics being retweeted or are different users engaging online? How can you use this information? * Review queries that come in. Seek patterns in Freedom of Information requests, Parliamentary Questions/ Assembly Questions and ad-hoc requests. Consider if it is appropriate to address requests more widely with a webinar or blog, for example, or review the content of your statistical publication. |
| 1. **Keep talking**  * Focus on building lasting relationships with users through regular contact and having open and honest discussions to help build trust. * Adopt a “you said, we did” approach. This means seeking feedback at regular intervals and ensuring that the user knows their feedback is welcomed and valued. Report back on the impact of their contribution. * Recognise and build on the engagement that you’re already doing. Regular calls, emails, newsletters, and webinars are all forms of engagement. Consider how you can do more to get the most value out of these. |
| 1. **Be realistic**  * Realise that you cannot do everything. Embed and build on your current engagement activities in a proportionate way to uncover additional user insight. Be realistic about what is achievable and honest with users about what is not. * Ask questions in user surveys that you can act on and be specific about the options and scope for change. Offer alternatives when requests can’t be met. |
| 1. **Be inclusive**  * Always use Plain English and conversational language, with a professional tone. Avoid jargon. * Be accessible, clear, and concise. Use the correct accessibility standards in all communications. * Use multiple platforms to engage with your users and be open to new approaches and technologies. * Make yourself easily approachable. Where possible, provide contact details for users and encourage them to get in touch with you. |
| 1. **Learn and reflect**  * Seek feedback on your engagement activities from both your statistics users and other producers of statistics. * Regularly conduct retrospectives to review your process and reinforce good behaviours and activities. Ask yourself, “what is going well?” and “how can we improve this?”. Often engagement techniques are inherited and may not always be as impactful as they could be. * Regularly review and update your user lists – keep adding to these as you continue to identify users of your statistics. |