



About mySociety

mySociety is a not-for-profit social enterprise with a mission to invent and popularise digital tools that enable citizens to exert power over institutions and decision makers. We are based in the UK, but support partners who deploy our technologies across the globe, in about 20 countries so far.

mySociety was founded in 2003 and is recognised as a pioneer in the use of digital technologies to help citizens to do key civic and democratic tasks, such as discovering the identity and record of their politicians, or getting common municipal problems like broken street lights fixed.

mySociety is fundamentally concerned with making citizens capable of demanding better from governing institutions, especially where those institutions are inefficient.

We use digital technologies because we believe they have the ability to change expectations about what is normal for citizens to do (for example, making it more normal to ask questions and expect answers from a government agency).

We have followed a digital path primarily because of the prospects for reaching scaled impacts relatively cheaply: our UK services attracted over 10 million visitors in 2013.

We are an open source organisation, with a commitment to freely reusable code, open data and open standards. We employ about 25 staff, plus volunteers.

How we support partners

When mySociety started, we did not work through partners. We built websites under our own name that were directly for use by the British public. Several of these sites are still thriving, such as [TheyWorkForYou](#), which people use to find out about their MPs, and [FixMyStreet](#) which people use to report and problems like broken street lights.

Over time we discovered that groups and individuals around the world had been inspired by our UK sites, and had tried to set up similar sites in a variety of countries. Following this development, mySociety changed as an organisation, becoming primarily concerned with providing software and advice to help partners in other countries to run sites and apps. Today we provide software and advice to an ever expanding range of partners in countries from Kenya to Chile.

We support this work through major grants from organisations like the Omidyar Network and the Open Society Foundation, and via profits from our trading arm, mySociety Ltd.

Examples of the tools we provide

Alaveteli: Freedom of Information

One of our most popular tools has been Alaveteli, a tool that enables people to set up powerful freedom of information websites in their own countries.

Spun-off from our highly popular UK site [WhatDoTheyKnow](#), Alaveteli enables partners to set up and maintain sites that make it much easier to ask governments questions under Freedom of Information or Right to Information Laws.

What makes the service truly powerful is that it automatically publishes both requests and responses online for other people to see, which makes the site into a public resource of potentially wide interest (the UK site has about 400,000 visitors a month). In Hungary, for example, [there is a website](#) based on Alaveteli that has over 2000 different FOI requests on it, so far.

FixMyStreet: Fault Reporting with Transparency

Traditionally, when a problem is reported to a local government, anywhere in the world, that report and its repair status is de facto secret. FixMyStreet was the first service to turn this around, encouraging people to send reports to governments that were simultaneously made public.

After succeeding in the UK as [FixMyStreet.com](#), we have worked to make it easy to set up and customise for use in other contexts and languages. See, for example, the Sinar Project who have [made a deployment](#) of FixMyStreet in Malaysia.

Poplus Components

Not everyone who wants to use technology to give citizens powerful tools will want to copy an idea that has already been built somewhere else. Often groups or individuals will have ideas that tie into unique local contexts and opportunities that mean an off-the-shelf tool like Alaveteli or FixMyStreet won't make any sense.

To support groups with new ideas like this, we collaborate with other groups on bits of technology called Poplus components. These are smaller, pluggable pieces of technology that can be used to build entirely new kinds of website. mySociety invests in these because we are keen to lower the considerable technical barrier that exists for people who are thinking about building entirely new services to help citizens. This is what Poplus components do.

An example of a site built using Poplus components is [this South African Parliamentary Monitoring site](#), which uses some components to help power this complex service.

Learn more about mySociety at [mySociety.org](#), or follow us on Twitter [@mySociety](#)