## Achieving impact with open data

The goal of any open data project or initiative is to have some kind of impact, be it political transparency and accountability, social benefit or economic growth. Creating, finding and promoting [examples of open data being used to improve our daily lives](http://opendatabarometer.org/3rdEdition/report/#impact) is one of the most challenging aspects of leading an open data project, programme or initiative.

In this module we'll explore:

* Why is achieving impact is important?
* How can we achieve impact?
* How can we measure the impact we’ve achieved?
* Overcoming barriers to achieving impact

## Why is achieving impact important?

Impact is a key part of measuring the effectiveness of an open data policy, programme or initiative. It is hard to argue for a programme of work to continue if it cannot demonstrate the return on investment (ROI) by way of impact.

This ROI might not be financial in nature, as there are wider political and social impacts to be gained from open data.:

You can find out more in the module: '[Unlocking value from open data](https://www.europeandataportal.eu/elearning/en/module2/#/id/co-01)'.

## How can we achieve impact?

Achieving impact, and measuring that impact, is one of the most challenging aspects of leading an open data project, programme or initiative. There are a number of techniques that you can use to help you to achieve impact.

### Identify shared goals

The first thing to think about is what you are trying to achieve. What is your end-goal for publishing your data openly? Having a clearly defined vision is crucial to the success of an open data initiative, programme or project.

Next, think about your potential data users. What are their goals? How would your data help them to achieve these goals?

The most successful open data initiatives align the goals of providers with users. It's rare that everyone starts out with identical goals, so look for areas where goals may overlap. The more closely aligned the goals are, the more successful the publication tends to be.

### Seek out and foster stories

A good method to help demonstrate impact is seeking out and fostering stories. Sometimes stories manifest themselves easily but more commonly they need to be cultivated.

Perform, commission or identify research into the impact of your organisation’s current or potential activities so that you can very clearly communicate the impact that your programme, project or initiative has achieved.

### Reflect, iterate, reiterate

It can be hard to look back at what has already happened as a result of the project, and the reasons why it has or hasn't been successful.

Give yourself the time to reflect, so that you can be flexible and iterative in your approach. If something isn't working, don't be afraid to remove it from the scope of work.

Iterating and refining your approach means that your open data project, programme or initiative is much more likely to achieve impact.

## How do we measure impact?

There are a number of assessment tools that can help you assess the impact of an organisation or country's open data policy, programme or initiative. Each assessment tool uses slightly different methodologies and measurements, so find the one that works best for your context. Think about which criteria are important for your organisation.

This module looks in detail at the European Data Portal's [Open Data in Europe tool](https://www.europeandataportal.eu/en/dashboard), which compares the open data initiatives of European Union countries.

You can also look at [Global Open Data Index](https://index.okfn.org/) and [Open Data Barometer](http://opendatabarometer.org), which compare countries internationally.

Open Data in Europe looks at three areas of impact: **political, economic and social.**

### Political

The factors that make up the political impact indicator are: impact on government efficiency and effectiveness, and impact on transparency and accountability.

In 2016, the highest scoring countries for political impact were Slovakia, Ireland, Bulgaria, France and Greece.

[Get the data](https://www.europeandataportal.eu/en/dashboard)

In Bulgaria, government departments no longer need to request data from other departments as that data is now published openly, therefore saving the time and cost involved in requesting data.

In Ireland, [myplan.ie](https://www.google.com/url?q=http://myplan.ie&sa=D&ust=1496165737909000&usg=AFQjCNGEgrOgEEPPmZOGBCpte6ZzCrutug) help local authorities to standardise the publication of planning data. This helps the publishers to coordinate their efforts, but also results in more usable and comparable data.

### Economic

The economic impact indicator is based upon the implementation of multiple macro-economic studies assessing the market value of open data and studies regarding better service delivery or looking at related subjects.

In 2016, the highest scoring countries for economic impact were Slovakia and Spain.

[Get the data](https://www.europeandataportal.eu/en/dashboard)

A Spanish study discovered that the reuse of meteorological data in the electricity sector could [reduce costs by over €1000 million](about:blank).

A 2015 study found that UK companies using, producing or investing in open data have a combined [annual turnover of over £92 billion](https://theodi.org/open-data-means-business) and employ over 500,000 people.

Read more about the [economic value of open data in Europe](https://www.europeandataportal.eu/en/highlights/creating-value-through-open-data).

### Social

The social impact indicator includes impact on environmental sustainability and the inclusion of marginalised groups in policymaking and in accessing government services.

The two highest scoring countries in 2016 were Spain and the UK.

[Get the data](https://www.europeandataportal.eu/en/dashboard)

In Spain, one example of including marginalised groups is [Sin Barrera](http://www.sinbarrera.es/), a tool for finding car parking spaces that are accessible for wheelchair access.

## Overcoming barriers to achieving impact from open data

Open data is a relatively new concept, and for some that raises automatic barriers. In this section we explore some of the main barriers to achieving impact from open data, as well as ways to overcome them.

### Users don't know about your data

You may have excellent data that could achieve positive impacts, but that is only possible if potential users know that the data exists.

One way to promote your data is to set specific challenges around it. A [challenge series](http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/open-data-challenge-series) is a nice way to bring people together around your data. By offering a cash prize and setting out an open innovation process, you can motivate others to reuse your data and get some great impact stories.

Showcasing use cases alongside your data will also help to encourage reuse.

### Fear of breaching data protection

Another barrier to achieving impact is when people don’t use the data out of fear. Some licences are unclear, particularly around the use of third-party or personal data that is found in the dataset. Often ‘no warranty’ clauses can make it seem that the user would be liable in this case.

In order to overcome this barrier, publishers should be clear about the legal underpinning of the data and what users can do with it.

Clearly explaining the licence terms will help this. Providing information on the privacy control process and privacy impact assessment if dealing with individuals’ data, and publishing the process that was followed to anonymise the data, will help to reassure users.

### Data quality and usability concerns

Another barrier to the reuse of open data is the fear that it may not be of a good quality.

There are a number of community-based standards that can help you, both as a publisher and a user, to assess the quality of your data and its usability.

Making sure that your data is useable, from a legal, practical and social perspective will encourage reuse and achieve impact.

Find out more in: '[What makes quality open data](https://www.europeandataportal.eu/elearning/en/module5/#/id/co-01)'

## Are you ready to achieve impact with open data?

## Why is achieving impact important?

**Achieving impact is important because...**

* it justifies why a programme should continue
* it shows where you should focus all your efforts
* you can draw unexpected conclusions

**That's right!**

Achieving impact is important because it provides a justification for why a programme of work should be continued as it demonstrates the return on investment.

Impact is also a key part of measuring the effectiveness of an open data policy, programme or initiative.

**Are you sure?**

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## How can we achieve impact?

**We can achieve impact through...**

* identifying shared goals
* keeping some data closed
* commissioning research into the impact
* reflecting and iterating on your initiative
* sharing your methodology

**That's right!**

Impact can be achieved though identifying shared goals of data publishers and users, seeking out and fostering stories through research and reflecting and reiterating on an initiative.

**Are you sure?**

Impact can be achieved though identifying shared goals of data publishers and users, seeking out and fostering stories through research and reflecting and reiterating on an initiative.

## How do we measure impact?

**The social impact indicator for the Open Data in Europe assessment tool is based on the impact on...**

* environmental sustainability and inclusion of marginalised groups
* studies assessing the market value of open data
* government efficiency and transparency

**That's right!**

There are two factors that make up the social impact indicator: impact on environmental sustainability in the country and on increasing the inclusion of marginalised groups

**Are you sure?**

There are two factors that make up the social impact indicator: impact on environmental sustainability in the country and on increasing the inclusion of marginalised groups

## Overcoming barriers

**One key barrier to achieving impact is if there is no engagement with your data. How can you overcome this?**

* By promoting your data, clarifying how users can reuse your data and making your data usable
* By publishing as much data as possible
* By charging for your data

**That's right!**

You can encourage reuse of your data by promoting it, clarifying how users can reuse it and making it more usable.

**Are you sure?**

You can encourage reuse of your data by promoting it, clarifying how users can reuse it and making it more usable.

## Achieving impact

Achieving impact with open data is an essential part to ensuring the sustainability of open data projects and initiatives. Creating, finding and promoting [examples of open data being used to improve our daily lives](http://opendatabarometer.org/3rdEdition/report/#impact) is one of the most challenging aspects of leading an open data project, programme or initiative.

There are a number of assessment tools that can help you to measure the impact of an organisation or country's open data policy, programme or initiative. In this module, we focused on the European Data Portal's [Open Data in Europe](https://www.europeandataportal.eu/en/dashboard).

There are barriers to achieving impact, but there are ways to overcome those barriers. Find out more about leading an open data initiative in '[Managing change in open data](https://www.europeandataportal.eu/elearning/en/module15/#/id/co-01)'.

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