Open data – Frequently asked questions

What is open data?

Open data represents information that is freely available for others to access and use.

What kind of open data exists?

There is a wide range of open data available from many organisations, for example: - local authorities publish monthly spreadsheets of all the items they've spent over £500 on – the office for national statistics release data on a whole range of demographic and community data – funding bodies are increasingly publishing the data on the organisations they provide grants to.

What's so special about open data?

Quite often, open datasets are made available to the public for the first time. Previously, they could have been locked away with special access rights or needed certain knowhow. In some cases the information might already exist as word documents or PDFs, for example. The difference with open data is that it is published in "data formats" (such as spreadsheets) that make it easier for people to access, analyse and – sometimes – mix with other datasets.

What do people do with open data?

Maps, apps, websites, charts, reports and many more! Quite often, teams of people make interesting projects based on open data.

Who uses open data?

The open data movement is wide ranging. It can involve technical computer scientists, through to journalists, activists and researchers. Many people are interested in open data, for varied reasons and motivations – it is a worldwide movement.

Why is it relevant to the voluntary sector and community sector?

Open data is linked to many of the issues that are key to the sector – transparency accountability and openness. Open data can assist VCS organisations to access insights and information that may have previously been out of reach.

Do Two Ridings Community Foundation open any data?

Yes – Two Ridings Community Foundation publishes data on all the grants we make to charities and community groups. This started for the financial year 2017/18 and will be updated on an annual basis. There is data published each time a panel is held, this is however in PDF format, it can be found on the page of the relevant grant scheme.

Do I need to be technical to talk to anyone about open data?

No, members of the Two Ridings Community Foundation team can help and assist you with open data.

Should our organisations use open data?

Of course! You can see some examples of open data on our website or on GrantNav. Think about how you could use open data in your organisations. It can help you find funding, find other groups to collaborate with or to find areas of greatest need for your services or funds.

Should our organisation publish data too?

If you can. Try and identify any key aspects of your organisation that others may be interested in. We believe that the more of the sector that publishes data, the easier it will be for us to get a true picture of the charitable sector and to support it to become more efficient and effective.

Key things to think about

It must be remembered that publishing open data requires responsibility and diligence. At Two Ridings Community Foundation we take care to ensure that all our data is anonymised and cannot identify individuals. We also have an Open Data Policy that describes our approach to open data.