

<h1>Joined-Up Data:</h1> <h2>Building Blocks for Common Standards</h2>		<h1>2013</h1> <p>October</p>
		<p>Development Initiatives exists to end absolute poverty by 2030</p>
	www.devinit.org	

Overview

During the summer of 2013, Development Initiatives commissioned the Open Knowledge Foundation to conduct a scoping study into the intersections between five different transparency initiatives. The aim of this project is to take a first step towards enabling users to easily combine and repurpose information from different sources to meet their needs. The scoping study recommends:

- **Three building blocks:** Initial focus should be placed on seeking common political and technical solutions to three areas of concern to a range of initiatives: organisational identifiers, sub-national geodata and contracts.
- **Shared learnings:** Initiatives have much to learn from one another's diverse expertise and experience in the governance and implementation of standards.
- **Joined-up for all:** Collaboration on the above will provide lessons, experience and a common platform to engage and advocate for the adoption of joined-up data and common standards for all publishers committed to transparent and accountable procedures.

Why this matters

For transparency to deliver real change, it is vital that the information that is disclosed can be used. It is clear that different users seek information for many different purposes, and they often want to combine information from different sources to make it meaningful to them. This could be, for example, by enabling users to trace financial flows throughout a complicated implementation chain. To do this effectively, there needs to be sufficient interoperability between different transparency standards so that users can easily combine and repurpose information from different sources to meet their needs.

Understanding resource flows and their impact will also only come about through connecting spending data to contextualising information from the world outside finance – to socioeconomic indicators, global pricing data and more. Such contextualisation will only be made possible by standardising the intersections to facilitate comparisons. These connections will join each initiative to what Homi Kharas has called the “data revolution”, contributing to an emerging global picture of resources available to address sustainable development and global poverty.

Who is involved?

The study explores the standardised disclosure requirements of five multi-stakeholder transparency initiatives: Construction Sector Transparency Initiative, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency, International Aid Transparency Initiative and Open Contracting.

The Joined-Up Data project reflects a growing interest in cooperation by organisations working on fiscal transparency. Other collaborative efforts include the [Follow the Money](#) campaign, which seeks to bring together advocacy organisations from different sectors to develop a joint public campaign that supports citizens' efforts to "follow the money". The Joined-Up Data project complements these efforts at policy and political level by focusing on the data and exploring where technical collaboration could underpin these efforts.

Why now?

The gains of the open data movement in recent years have led many transparency initiatives to formalise and standardise their disclosure requirements. These crystallisation processes, still underway, have taken place in relative isolation. If they continue to do so, there is considerable danger not only of time wasted through duplication of effort but of severe and artificial limitations on the usefulness of each initiative's disclosed information.

Findings

The five initiatives covered in this preliminary study have much to discuss. The overlaps between their disclosure requirements are numerous, and the opportunities for collaboration around key building blocks are rich.

Three building blocks stand out as particularly vital, simultaneously offering the most serious challenges and promising the greatest benefits. These building blocks should serve as the focus of the next stage of discussion around Joined-Up Data.

- **Government entity organisational identifiers:** technical specification and in-country implementation.
- **Sub-national administrative geodata:** best practices and implementation challenges.
- **Contracts:** clarifying initiatives' needs to Open Contracting.

The different governance structures underlying the disclosure standards of the five initiatives considered in this study suggest a particular manner in which the initiatives can learn from one another.

- Country-oriented initiatives like EITI and CoST are intimately familiar with the implementation challenges that transparency initiatives face "on the ground", and they also have a unique and valuable perspective on possible local use cases for transparency data. These initiatives can take the lead in ensuring that building blocks are designed in response to local capacities and needs.
- Initiatives with a more technical orientation like IATI and Open Contracting bring a wealth of experience in translating policy decisions into concrete designs, as well as a familiarity with the wider world of existing building blocks. These initiatives can provide guidance on the concrete form taken by standards at a later and more advanced stage in the collaboration.
- GIFT, as a higher-order policy-oriented initiative, is in a good position to provide guidance on the organisation of the Joined-Up Data project itself and the coordination of its activities. The Joined-Up Data project can indeed be seen as an implementation of GIFT's goals in the arena of data standards.

Much work remains to be done on constructing a comprehensive map of transparent data standards. Further scoping research for the Joined-Up Data project can broaden the project's scope by considering a more inclusive range of transparency and governance initiatives, and deepen its impact by looking more closely into the shape of data collected in initiatives already considered. There is also an urgent need to cover the same ground covered in this study from the data user (rather than the publisher) point of view.