Understanding the "Who, What, and Why" of an open data opportunity

Looking to launch an open data project? To make sure your work is grounded in your community's needs, you'll need to investigate "Who" is out there, "What" they might need, and "Why" they care. Try out some of these methods:

Finding "Who":

- ☐ Review the city's partnerships (e.g. grantees, contractors, coalition partners with whom the city has MOUs, volunteers, etc.) to find a partner you could help.
- ☐ Identify residents who have submitted formal or informal records, data, or information requests, and try segmenting types of requesters by need.
- ☐ Find examples of groups that cities have helped to use open data and explore whether you can help similar types of users in your city.
- ☐ Identify frequent attendees or participants at public meeting or public testimonies to identify types of community members who want to get involved.
- ☐ Identify who in your community is currently excluded from conversations around tech and data who could benefit from public information.

Finding "What":

- ☐ Analyze public records, informal requests, or other information demand signals to find what data is most highly requested.
- ☐ Find successful examples of how other cities have leveraged open data to identify specific datasets relevant to problem solving around local issues.
- ☐ Analyze your open data portal to see which datasets are most commonly downloaded or viewed.
- ☐ Choose a dataset that has a high "public impact" rating based on your internal governance committee's publishing schedule.
- ☐ Consult with local data user groups and ask them kinds of information would be helpful for solving a specific problem.

Finding "Why":

- ☐ Attend public meetings or review online public forums and document which issues residents commonly reference.
- ☐ Analyze past survey results that demonstrate clear public interest in a specific issue area or conduct a new survey on residents' information needs in potentially important issue areas.
- ☐ Analyze results from past focus groups to find priority issues, or conduct new focus groups to find which issues could benefit from greater transparency.
- ☐ Identify instances where city information is required or used (i.e. grant applications) and engage stakeholders in how they use that information.
- ☐ Identify stated city or community goals and strategic priorities for which data and information may be relevant.
- ☐ Identify an important and/or city or community project or initiative for which data and information may be relevant.

What's next?

Once you try out some of these methods, take our quiz to see if you have gained a solid understanding of your community's information needs.

▸ sunlightfoundation.com/tde/focus-quiz

Tactical Data Engagement

This sheet is part of the "Finding" stage of Sunlight's Tactical Data Engagement framework.

▸ sunlightfoundation.com/tde

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