

The Iceberg of Open Data

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ARGO will host unconference-ey discussion on international open data day 3/2/19 from 8 AM - 10 AM PST. The goal is an open and honest conversation about what has worked in open data, what hasn't and what are the deeper issues we need to address to unlock open data's untapped potential -- the metaphorical huge mass of the iceberg hidden underneath the waterline.

We are using a combination of google hangouts and google docs to enable both talking and writing during the meeting. Please see below for background materials and logistics for the discussion. The goal again is an open conversation so please feel free to add additional resources, questions, and other ideas (even those that break this structure) wherever and however you see fit! Thanks much and looking forward to a great dialogue!

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Background materials

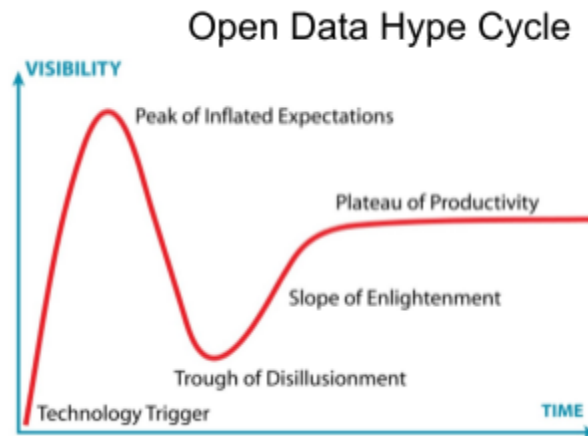
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Historical context on open data:

Below are a couple key articles that illustrate the early excitement and then disillusionment with open data. How do we power through the slope of enlightenment to productively realize the deeper potential of open data?

- (2018) *The Web Foundation*: "A decade into open data, leading governments struggle to make it a reality"
<https://medium.com/@webfoundation/a-decade-into-open-data-leading-governments-struggle-to-make-it-a-reality-8875c3820107>

- (2015) *The Economist*: “The open-data revolution has not lived up to expectations. But it is only getting started”
<https://www.economist.com/international/2015/11/21/out-of-the-box>
- (2013) *Executive Order* -- Making Open and Machine Readable the New Default for Government Information:
<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/09/executive-order-making-open-and-machine-readable-new-default-government->



The Iceberg of Open Data

(Originally shared on [CfA Brigade Discourse](#))



The motivation with this diagram is that the government open data movement has largely failed to live up to its early hype though there's still tremendous potential. That may sound harsh though if we're honest with ourselves the explosion of apps promised in the original Obama open by default EO didn't happen.

There was a lot of consensus at the first CKAN summit in the US in 2018 though that we've gotten through the "trough of disillusionment" in the standard hype cycle and are on to the plateau of productivity. Lots of less sexy though subtle open data wins.

Particularly at the local government level that requires collaboration across municipalities to provide technical capacity (only 0.64% of cities have an open data portal) to deploy the data infrastructure required to make this work not another burden of civil servants.

There's lots of exciting projects to securely share the raw, often PII underlying data (UCLA Policy Lab, CUSP data facility etc) which provides the infrastructure for more meaningful open data as well as lots of research benefits – like ARGO's "California model" for [data collaboratives](#).

Those computational social science research benefits aren't as sexy as a shiny new app though have huge long term benefits in achieving delivery driven government. Getting that deep data infrastructure can also enable streamlining the existing reporting required of muni's. For example:

- See here for the three separate sets of reports that California urban water utilities are required to submit
 - <https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Water-Use-And-Efficiency/Urban-Water-Use-Efficiency/Urban-Water-Management-Plans>
 - <https://drinc.ca.gov/ear/>
 - https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/conservation_portal/conservation_reporting.html
- Every local gov across the country is required to submit a consolidated annual financial report (CAFR) per the government accounting standards board (GASB) rules. GASB is just an NGO though adherence is required by the muni financial markets. The open data work in this space led by Socrata / Open Gov etc (note all private vendors, which is a whole other issue) hasn't gotten as deep as CAFRs yet, they're still doing budgeting data stuff

Those are some early thoughts and greatly appreciate feedback as we'd like to sharpen this notion of the iceberg of open data to be most useful to the community. Thanks much!

Discussion logistics

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Please sign in below and feel free to add comments to the questions before, during and after the discussion.

Attendees

- <Name, twitter handle>
- Patrick Atwater, @patwater
- Tony Castalietto
- Janet Michaelis
 - Co-Captain for CfA
- Nina
- Manushi Majumdarjar

Questions

- a. What is the long term sustainable business model for open data?
- b. Should Chief Data Officer positions be in civil service rather than political appointees?

- i. PA -- my takeaway from this point is the importance of empowering the entire organization and staff directly working with data to share data openly where appropriate.
- c. Tony -- need to make a stronger case for open data solving problems
 - i. PA initially the case was around how open government data would enable new iPhone and web apps. Reality didn't live up to that hype.
 - ii. PA to the point about value there can be a lot value in having data open to better enable staff to do their work
- 2. Only 0.64% of cities across America have an open data portal[1]. How can smaller cities and other municipalities get support in opening up their data?
- 3. How can open data technologies become the new normal for how cities, counties, school districts, water utilities and other municipalities meet their reporting requirements from state / federal law and/or industry rulemaking bodies?
 - a. PA -- nice opportunity to use open data technology to make it easier for staff to meet open data requirements
 - b. What are the biggest wins of open government data over the past decade? What are the biggest wins in open data more broadly (including for example open scientific data)?
- 4. Building outline data
- 5. What can the open government data community learn from the open science community and vice versa?
- 6. How can we reframe open data away from just what is machine readable and on the web? How can we integrate the broader spectrum of open-ness including streamlining how sensitive data is securely shared with appropriate parties (such as academic researchers)?
- 7. How can we ensure that open data is actually used by a community of users and does not sit idle on portals? How can we leverage open (and other) data to support the development of meaningful analyses that inform decision makers?
- 8. How can we build on the tendency for the primary users of open data portals to be staff at the organizations that release the data? One example is making it easier to meet the reporting requirements articulated in question one.

[1] Calculated based on numbers available from the Open Knowledge Foundation Census of US City Open Data Portals and the National League of Cities.

Links - Open Data Policy

<https://sunlightfoundation.com/2018/08/30/introducing-open-data-policy-hub/>

<https://sunlightfoundation.com/2018/09/05/explore-policy-language-meeting-our-open-data-policy-guidelines/>