

Open Data Initiative Best Practices v2

The Open Data Initiative (ODI) works to ensure government finance data is consistent, transparent, and easily available. ODI is administered through Lincoln Network, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. For more information, please visit our [website](#).

Implementation

- Using the best technology available does not necessarily mean the *latest* technology. Instead, it means the tech that your organization can best sustain after implementation.
- Establishing objectives with long-term leadership support to eliminate surprises.
- Including the various internal departments with data to be published very early on, so everyone understands the demands that will be placed on their staff.
- Either public or private Infrastructure must be available and supported. Plan ahead for long term compute, storage, or network capacity.
- Partnering with knowledgeable public groups and government entities that have experienced both success and failure. The Open Data Initiative has put together User Stories ([URL here](#)) and a Best Practices Working Group ([URL here](#)) to provide quality information.
- Hiring qualified people, from full-time employees and consultants to commercial contracts. To support any open financial data implementation, you will need a skilled web engineer with operations experience. To implement a more custom solution, you will need a team of web engineers with Linux, PostgreSQL, Jetty, SOLR, and Python -- or similar -- experience. Depending on the complexity, assume a ratio range of 2 engineers to 100 servers.

Operations

- Establish the publishing practice with all the internal departments. The demands on staff can be minimized with procedures and automation.
- Consistent publishing of financial data will be expected by the public.
- Publishing historical financial data is a low priority compared to establishing a solid practice of publishing financial data for the future. Have separate engineering teams work on the current and historical data publishing.
- Maintain your own self transparency survey with scoring. Compare your score with other public transparency scores. Grading your progress will keep you honest.

- Maintain internally shared operations documentation, scripts, and code so that all engineering teams have access. A single person or team that does not work with the broader engineering teams is a liability.
- Create the practice of continuous deployment (automated updates) with tools, scripts, and code. Automation of production changes makes it possible to roll back mistakes as well as test changes.

Additional Materials for Future Best Practices Documentation

Public Support

- Raise awareness of the benefits of open financial data through [public workshops](#) and marketing campaigns
- Encourage public support of statutory changes and the elected officials who support them

Elected Official Support

- Connecting government entities supporting open financial data implementations with interested groups
- Connecting public awareness campaigns with elected official promotion
- Statutory changes through policy and/or laws
- Eliminate the need for financial FOIA requests
- City Council meetings, using improved financial reporting, can develop new budgets that can be publicly reviewed

People Costs

- Every open data implementation requires headcount. A simple open data implementation will require at least one skilled web engineer to be on staff to manage the website content and work with the vendors. A complex open data implementation will require a team of web engineers.
- What planning and support is required to support for these types of day 0 implementations?
- What operations scripts, practices, and training is required for day 1 operations?
- What complexities can be avoided and or planned around for day 2 upgrades?

References

<https://govex.jhu.edu/open-data-how-much-does-it-cost/>

<https://govex.jhu.edu/open-data-measuring-what-matters/>

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