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Where not-for-profits go for help

This resource is part of [Data Projects from Go to Whoa!](#) – a guide produced by Our Community's [Innovation Lab](#).

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## Three things to keep in mind as you kick off your data project

The wheels are in motion: you've launched your first data project. Well done! As with any project, you should expect to face obstacles and changes along the way. Here are three things to consider during this process to set yourself up for success.

### 1. Revisit your project brief

Revisit your project brief often to stay on track and adapt to changing priorities and resources. Roles, requirements, budget constraints, delivery deadlines and more may change over time, and these changes will have a cascading effect on your original timelines and intended outcomes. Don't see this as a failure – it's a normal part of the iterative process. Think of your project brief as a living document, with as many iterations as necessary (within reason!).

The size and scope of the project and the stakeholders involved will determine how often you need to revisit the project brief. But it doesn't need to be an onerous task: every so often, simply scan it and check that it still aligns with your organisation's aims. Starting now!

### 2. Keep your audience in mind

It pays to be mindful of your audience and stakeholders from project design through to delivery. Why? Because this awareness should frame your thinking, and it will save you time in the long term.

Who will you be presenting the results of your project to? Presenting to a potential funder requires a different reporting process than one used for an internal project. That said, don't waste time on a fancy interactive dashboard or data visualisation unless it's necessary – a document or simple graph to communicate your message may be all that the funder requires.

Does your project have beneficiaries or people who will be affected by the project's outputs? If it does, you'll need to consider whether they should be involved or consulted throughout the project.

What about your data owners, the people whose data is being used for your project? Data owners can be staff, contacts, beneficiaries, funders or other supporters. They provide a vital part of the story because when it comes to their data, they are the subject matter experts. They should be informed about the project (at the very least), asked for consent, and, if necessary, involved in the project.

### **3. Strive for good data governance**

The decisions you make at the beginning of a project will have implications further down the line. If you have designed your project well, with clear aims and outcomes, you are more likely to collect good quality data because the questions you ask will be aligned to your desired outcomes.

Storing the data securely will ensure the privacy of data owners, and the integrity of the data itself, while maintaining transparent practices throughout data collection and storage will build your organisation's reputation as trustworthy.

At the data analysis stage, where you might be building dashboards to enable data visualisations, consider licensing and future maintenance before committing to any one dashboard tool. And if you're building models, you'll want to keep your metadata shipshape to aid explainability and comply with a fast-moving regulatory landscape.

Now that your organisation has all the tools it needs to build a strong foundation for data projects, it's time to get to it. Good luck!

#### **More information:**

[Download our project brief template](#)