PRIMER #4:

SUPPORTING NEW DATA INTERMEDIARIES

Engaging actors who can lower transaction costs in data collaborative relationships

WHY

Matching the supply of data with those who demand it can be costly in terms of time, resources, and staff. Organizations need to identify relevant partners, develop the data infrastructure and capacity necessary to handle new information flows, and negotiate legal agreements. Any one of these actions can be difficult for an organization— especially a small one—and can dissuade data collaborative efforts. Consequently, third party organizations devoted to facilitating collaboration can be useful in addressing some or all of these issues. Data intermediaries can be important actors in the Third Wave by making the data value chain more fluid, working to facilitate data collaboration and lowering transaction costs between those supplying the data and those using it.

HOW

Assessing Challenges in Matching Supply with Demand: To realize the potential of data re-use and data collaboration, it is important to ensure that data supply is aligned with the user demand for it. Given that resources are often limited, it is important for organizations to identify priority areas where open data can provide the most benefit. This prioritization can involve engaging with relevant stakeholders to understand their needs. Open innovation challenges, public events, and data education programs are some of the mechanisms which organizations might use to engage with those involved in demanding data.

Determining What Types of Capacity Could Add Value: Organizations often exist in a world of constrained resources, lacking domain expertise, available funding or institutional connections. Understanding these gaps in capacity can be instrumental for data collaboratives as it can help organizations know what resources they need to seek out. Data intermediaries can empower organizations and support this work by providing necessary resources, whether that be secure platforms to collaborate and share data or support in drafting a data-sharing agreement.

Identifying Trusted Third Parties: Third parties who can create, mix, source and curate data from various sources can be useful in any data effort. However, these parties cannot support data collaboration if the participants in the data collaborative do not trust them to deliver requested work. Organizations might consider conducting due diligence on potential intermediary partners to ensure they possess the requisite experience, capacity, and ethical grounding.

MORE

What Are Data Institutions and Why Are They Important?: An overview from the Open Data Institute on benefits, models, and examples of intermediary institutions enabling the re-use of data in the public interest.

Guide to Starting a Local Data Intermediary: A step-by-step guide from the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership on defining needs, opportunities, funding streams, and sustainability strategies for subnational data intermediaries.

Understanding MyData Operators: MyData's introductory paper which discusses the characteristics and roles of data operators, one type of data intermediary.

Open Data Intermediaries: Their Crucial Role: A piece from the Web Foundation explaining what open data intermediaries and the value they can provide.