Sustainable Data Access Workbook[BETA]

Supporting organisations that steward data to make better decisions about their revenue models

Methodology and training tools

About

The **Sustainable Data Access Workbook** is a practical set of activities organisations can undertake to make more informed decisions about their current and future revenue models.

We think the workbook is particularly useful for data institutions – organisations that steward data on behalf of others, often towards public, educational or charitable aims.

Organisations that steward data require sustainable sources of revenue to underpin their core activities.

The workbook contains six canvases which seek to practically support organisations to reflect and evaluate their current situation, imagine a new path forward and decide on the next steps needed to bring it to life.

The workbook is still in a beta stage, and we welcome feedback from organisations who have used the workbook. Please see the feedback page for more information.

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Data institutions and sustainability

Access to data is a crucial enabler for innovation. There are various types of data access initiatives which help to support access to data. These include open data initiatives, data portability initiatives and data sharing initiatives.

In each case, there are organisations that support the initiatives and carry out activities including scoping, designing, operating, evaluating, and sometimes closing down said initiative. When done well, in ways that are trustworthy and promote the use of data, the activities they engage in can be costly and require funding.

Organisations looking to collect, maintain and share data will need to identify and adopt a business model that sustains these activities.

How we got here

In 2020, we conducted research into the sustainability of data institutions. We have defined data institutions as organisations whose purpose involves stewarding data on behalf of others, often towards public, educational or charitable aims.

In our first report on 'Designing sustainable data institutions', we proposed a framework for thinking about the sustainability of data institutions. We identified some tensions, some common patterns in how data institutions are approaching sustainability, and some broad issues around accessing and using different sources of financing and funding. In our second report on 'Data institutions: reducing costs and improving sustainability', we investigated the costs involved in running data institutions and existing approaches to reducing those.

Our research and engagement with data institutions helped us identify organisations' needs for guidance and support around financial sustainability, and led us to develop this workbook.

What is this workbook for?

The Sustainable Data Access Workbook has been designed to help organisations to make better decisions about their revenue models. The workbook helps you to reflect on and evaluate the current state of your organisation, before encouraging you to think through alternatives.

This workbook can be particularly useful for organisations who are in a state of change. Whether that means coming to the end of some grant funding, building your first revenue strategy, or wanting to evolve and expand your organisation, this workbook can help you to plan for the transition.

This workbook is for those who are:

- Scoping and designing a sustainable revenue model
    - eg a CEO using the workbook to select a sustainable revenue model appropriate for her startup
- Reviewing a current revenue model
    - eg a business development manager or CEO of a growing or mature organisation using the workbook to reflect and evaluate the current business model of the organisation

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How do you use the workbook?

We suggest completing the workbook as a team – make sure to have a variety of roles, experience and responsibility in the room.

We recommend spending some time thinking and adding notes to each canvas independently, before widening out and discussing as a team. Each canvas has explicit instructions on how to use it, and we suggest aiming to add up to six notes per box.

Key terms in this workbook:

- **Business model**: the structure used to create, deliver, capture and distribute value.
- **Revenue model:** how the organisation generates income.
- **Revenue stream**: sources of revenue.

There are two versions of this workbook:

- **Collaborative online version**: copy the Jamboard to your Google Drive, and add sticky notes to each canvas. If you haven't used Jamboard before, please check out this guidance and view our demo version.
    - If you don't have a Google account, please use the images of the workbook and integrate them into your collaborative whiteboard of choice (such as Miro or Microsoft Whiteboard).
- **Printable version**: if you'd prefer a physical version of the workbook it is available in pdf format. Print out A4 versions of the workbook, and add comments collectively in person.

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Roadmap: How to navigate the workbook

This workbook is particularly suited to organisations at a crossroads. The workbook can be broken up into three main parts: setting the scene, reflecting on the present, and thinking about changes in the future.

We suggest taking as much time as you need to work through the workbook. In each box below is the suggested share of the total time you should use on each section.

Before using this workbook, it can be helpful to use the ODI's Data Ecosystem Mapping tool to map out the data and stakeholders in an organisations ecosystem. Understanding this can help organisations to better answer questions in the following sections.

Following completion of the workbook, we advise organisations to complete a Business Model Canvas to flesh out their new revenue ideas in the broader context of how the organisation creates, delivers and captures value.

PREPARE 30%

Understand your organisation

Describe your existing business model

REFLECT 20%

Evaluate your current revenue model

IMAGINE 40%

Explore new revenue streams

Evaluate new revenue streams (x3)

NEXT STEPS 10%

Compare impact and next steps

Timeframes and mindset

Timeframes

You can complete the workbook in different timeframes depending on the time you have available, the size of the team involved in the process and the extent to which you'd like to have in-depth conversations about your revenue options:

- The first option is a quick version, where a team goes through the whole workbook in one session.
- The second option is to spread the sessions over a week (or longer), splitting the workbook into three parts.
- Alternatively, you could do it as a solo thought exercise which is then reviewed by the wider team.

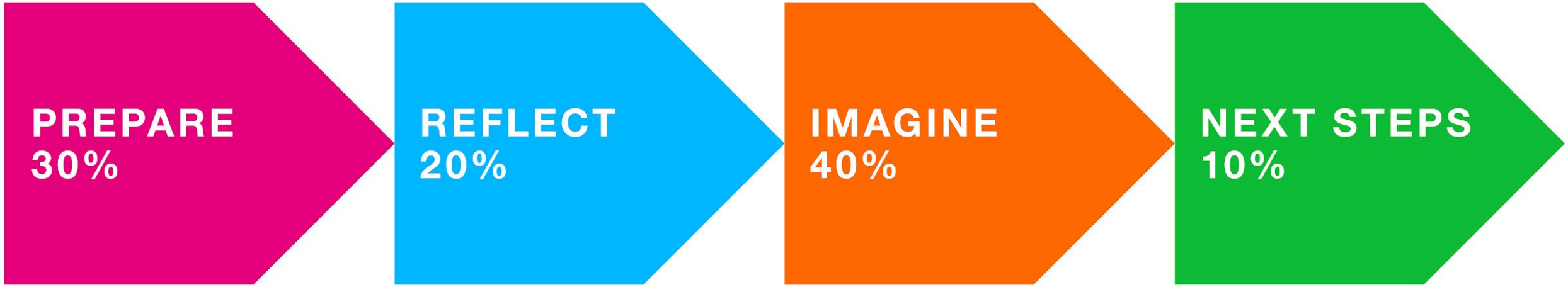
Mindset

The workbook encourages discussion, reflection and creativity. There are no wrong answers, and we encourage a diverse team to work together to fill in each canvas, with each input considered equally, regardless of the experience.

Setting aside a decent chunk of time to discuss and think through the workbook together as a team is helpful in bringing a diverse set of perspectives together and making informed decisions about future revenue models.

The process is as important as the end 'result'. Having the broader team involved creates ownership of the evolution of the organisation.

Roadmap: How to navigate the Sustainable Data Access Workbook



Understand your organisation

Describe your existing business model

Evaluate your current revenue model

Explore new revenue streams

Evaluate new revenue streams (x3)

Compare impact and next steps

Section 1: Understand your organisation

What is this canvas seeking to achieve?

This canvas sets the framing for the rest of the workbook, and helps you to reflect upon the core aspects of your organisation that might affect your revenue strategy.

It's important to understand your legal structure, values, strategy and role in the data ecosystem, in order to make decisions about revenue models. The prompts will help you to consider all of the revenue sources available for later in the workbook.

Example: Some funding is only available to registered charities, or some organisational values may impact an organisation's ability to earn revenue from providing access to data.

How do you complete it?

1. Nominating one person to take the lead, read out each prompt and add notes to the canvas as the team discusses. Aim to have up to six notes in each box.
2. When you have completed the canvas, spend a few minutes reflecting on what each of these prompts might mean for your organisation and how it generates revenue.

Remember: The aim of the activity is to make sure everyone is on the same page for the following canvases – make sure every member of the team has their voice heard.

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Canvas 1: Understand your organisation

Name of organisation:

What to do

- Reflect on the core aspects of your organisation that might affect future revenue generation strategies.
- Review the questions, discuss as a team and add up to six notes to each section.

Core ideas and values

What principles guide your organisation? What do your various stakeholders expect from your organisation?

Role in ecosystem

Who do you steward (collect, maintain and share) data on behalf of, and what do you bring to the sector or broader ecosystem?

Mission

What was your organisation set up to do?

Governance model

What is your governance model? Think about decision-making responsibilities, board, advisory and ethics groups.

Legal structure

What is your legal structure and what implications does it have on your organisation?

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Section 2: Describe your existing business model

What is this canvas seeking to achieve?

This canvas helps you to articulate the revenue streams, key activities and data sources to help you to reflect on the current operational model of your organisation.

Take time to consider each of these prompts. Reflecting on them now will help you to consider what is working well and where there is space for improvement.

Example: Thinking through the stakeholders involved in your operations may help to identify an opportunity to create a paid subscription model.

How do you complete it?

1. Nominating one person to take the lead, read out each prompt and add notes to the canvas as the team discusses. Aim to have up to six notes in each box.
2. When you have completed the canvas, spend a few minutes reflecting on what each of these prompts might mean for your organisation, and its business model.

Remember: This is an opportunity to step back and reflect on your organisation – try to not get caught up in the details too much.

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Canvas 2: Describe your existing business model

What to do

- Describe your current business model to better understand how revenue is generated, what activities and costs need to be covered, and your stakeholders.
- Review the questions, discuss as a team and add up to six notes to each section.

Value proposition

What do you offer to your ecosystem? Think about data providers, data users, funders, decision makers and the wider public or groups benefiting from your work.

Activities and costs

What activities does your organisation invest the most time and money in? For example, data collection, cleaning and publishing, community management, and marketing.

Revenue generation

How do you currently generate revenue? For example, one-off services, grant funding, membership or subscription fees and more.

Stakeholders

Who are the key stakeholders in your ecosystem? For example, data providers, data users, funders, and decision makers.

Staff

Which staff are involved in shaping your business model?

Section 3: Evaluate your current revenue model

What is this canvas seeking to achieve?

This canvas helps you to evaluate your current revenue model setting you up to plan for the future.

This section uses a simple SWOT analysis – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats – to prompt reflections from your team. Strengths and weaknesses are internal, while opportunities and threats are external.

Example: There may be some tweaks that could improve your model, such as an untapped area of your organisation suitable to develop further. Or there may be an upcoming threat, such as the expiration of funding.

How do you complete it?

1. Nominating one person to take the lead, read out each prompt and add notes to the canvas as the team discusses. Aim to have up to six notes in each box.
2. It is common to work through strengths and weaknesses first as they are internal to your organisation, before moving onto opportunities and threats which are external.

Remember: Keep your SWOT analysis short and simple, and avoid unnecessary complexities. Using a TOWS analysis can help you to move from a SWOT analysis to making decisions about the way forward.

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Canvas 3: Evaluate your current revenue model

What to do

- Evaluate your current revenue model and think about how internal and external factors impact your organisation's work.
- Review the 'Think about' prompts, discuss as a team and add up to six notes in each section.

Think about…

Strengths

Think about the strengths of your revenue model. What does it allow you to do that other revenue models could not?

Weaknesses

Think about the weaknesses of your revenue model. How does it restrict you?

Opportunities

Think about the external factors that could improve your revenue model. What could positively impact what you offer to people?

Threats

Think about any external threats that your revenue model may face. What could negatively impact how you operate?

Section 4: Explore new revenue streams

What is this canvas seeking to achieve?

Now that you have evaluated your existing revenue, this canvas is an open space for considering the need for new revenue models, and coming up with some new ideas based on your reflections so far.

The revenue streams explored in this canvas should be based upon the learnings from the previous SWOT analysis – what are you good at? What opportunities are there? What weaknesses and threats do we need to mitigate against?

Example: We have included five example revenue streams from our research on the next page, which you can use for inspiration.

How do you complete it?

1. Bring forward the three most important opportunities or threats identified in the previous canvas into the box provided.
2. Come up with at least three new revenue stream ideas in the 'Explore' area. These should be based on the opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis.
3. Use dot voting to collectively decide on three revenue streams to take to the next canvas and evaluate.

Remember: This process should be collaborative, creative and ultimately fun. There are no right or wrong answers here, so don't spend too long getting stuck thinking about how realistic these ideas are – rather focus on the opportunities that stand out.

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Five examples of different revenue streams as inspiration

These revenue streams should be used as inspiration – you don't need to use them if they don't fit your organisation's vision for the future. For more information and inspiration, please refer to our 'Designing sustainable data institutions' report.

Subscription or membership fees

Could include fees for:

- access to services or data
- use of infrastructure
- access to a higher-level service

Example: HiLo Maritime Risk Management

Usage fees

Could include fees for:

- depositing, submitting or updating data, via a standard API, a submission form or a bespoke format
- accessing data, be that in bulk format, or in a more timely manner
- consultancy, or advisory services and training

Example: OpenCorporates

One-off services

Could include:

- bespoke consultancy or training based on insights from the data collected, and the lessons learned
- tailored datasets, reports and analytical services

Example: HESA

Grants

Could include:

- grants-in-aid provided as general support for the institution in meeting its objectives
- general grants awarded in anticipation of the institution using it for a specific agreed purpose – for example, to carry out a project or invest in infrastructure

Example: UK Biobank

In-kind donations

Could include:

- donations of hardware or other physical resources
- provision of staff time to provide support during setup and operations
- technical infrastructure to support operations of the institution, for example hosting of services

Example: ROR

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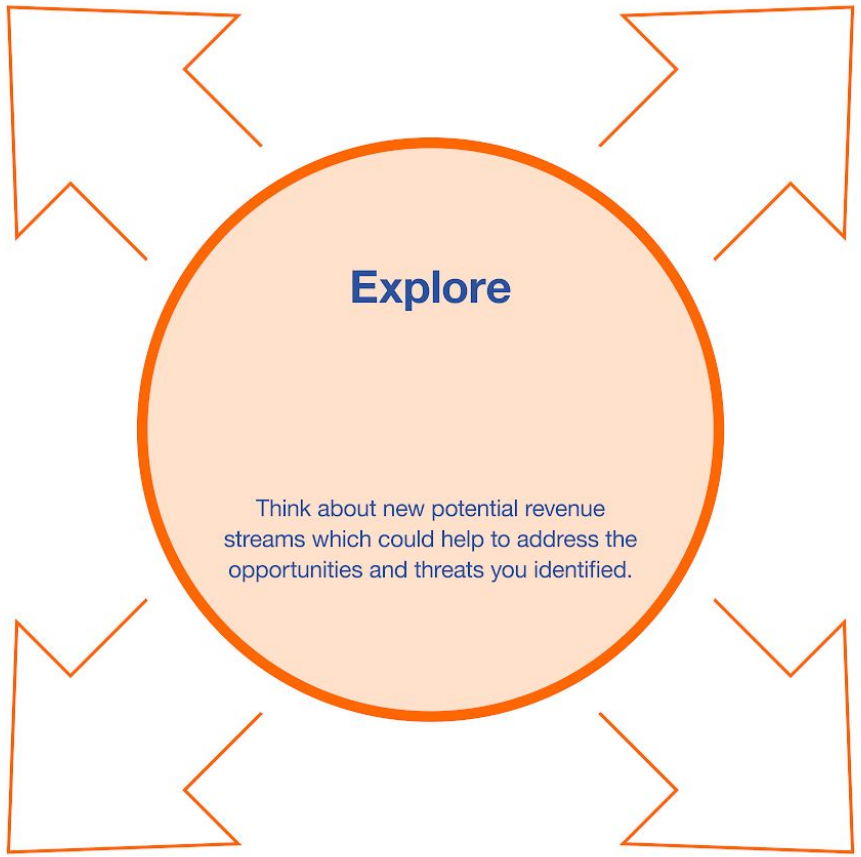
Canvas 4: Explore new revenue models

Priority opportunities and threats:

1.

2.

3.



What to do

- Opportunities and threats: Bring forward the three main opportunities or threats from the previous canvas.
- Explore: Use this as an open space for thinking about new potential revenue streams.
- Next: Choose three new revenue stream ideas to take forward to the evaluation stage.

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Section 5: Evaluate new revenue streams

What is this canvas seeking to achieve?

This section uses another SWOT analysis to prompt reflections from your team and helps to assess how each chosen revenue stream idea from the previous canvas will impact your organisation in the future.

This section purposefully repeats the SWOT analysis from Canvas 3, as it will help to understand the differences between any new options and your current model.

Example: A membership model rather than a subscription model might result in members contributing – not only financially but also through their time and expertise – to the work of the organisation.

How do you complete it?

1. Open up to three copies of this canvas.
2. Bring forward up to three chosen revenue models from the previous canvas.
   Use the space provided to describe the new revenue model, the reason why it was chosen, and the new value proposition. Aim to keep these to one sentence each.
3. Nominating one person to take the lead, read out each prompt and add notes to the canvas as the team discusses. Aim to have up to six notes in each box.
4. Repeat this process for each revenue model idea on a different canvas.

Remember: Do not overestimate the strengths or underestimate the weaknesses of the new revenue model – be realistic in your analysis.

Canvas 5: Evaluate new revenue streams (x3)

What to do

- Describe and evaluate one of the chosen revenue streams from the previous canvas. This should be repeated for up to two other ideas.
- Think about the effect that these new revenue streams will have on your organisation using the 'Think about' prompts on the left.

Describe the new revenue stream:

Reason for the new revenue stream:

Describe the value to your stakeholders:

Think about…

- Data
- Users
- Resources
- Technology
- Funders
- Governance
- Sector
- Society

Strengths

Think about the potential strengths of the revenue stream. What could it allow you to do that other revenue streams could not?

Weaknesses

Think about the potential weaknesses of the revenue stream. How could it restrict you?

Opportunities

Think about the external factors which could impact the success of the revenue stream. What could positively impact what you offer to people?

Threats

Think about any threats that may impact the success of the revenue stream. What could negatively impact how you operate?

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Canvas 5: Evaluate new revenue streams (x3)

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CC BY

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Threats

Think about any threats that may impact the success of the revenue stream. What could negatively impact how you operate?

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Section 6: Compare impact and next steps

What is this canvas seeking to achieve?

The final canvas helps you to think through which revenue model you could prioritise moving forward by comparing the anticipated financial, technical and societal impact of each one.

The ODI's Data Ethics Canvas can be used for a more thorough ethical analysis.

Example: One of your new revenue models may have the potential to deliver larger financial returns, but requires re-writing your entire website or codebase.

How do you complete it?

1. Using the evaluation you completed on the previous canvas, bring forward the three new revenue models into the table.
2. Nominating one person to take the lead, read out each prompt and add notes to the canvas as the team discusses. Aim to have two notes in each box.
3. Think about the steps you need to take to bring this revenue model to life. Consider preparing a paper for the board, completing a business model canvas, or doing more research into how you might implement your chosen revenue model.

Remember: This is a light-touch decision-making process – you can always repeat the process at a later date.

Canvas 6: Compare impact and next steps

What to do

- Conclude your evaluation of your three new revenue models by considering their impact and the next steps needed to take them forward.
- Review the questions, discuss as a team and add up to two notes to each section.

Revenue stream

Financial impact

What would this revenue stream cost to implement? What additional value would it bring?

Technical impact

How will this revenue stream change the data you steward or the technology you use?

Societal impact

What positive benefit would this bring to your sector and to society? Would it have any negative impacts?

Next steps

What are you going to do to pursue this idea further?

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Where you should be after completing the toolkit

After completing the workbook, you should feel confident in moving forward to the next stage. We would recommend completing a Business Model Canvas for any of the ideas that you decide to take forward, as this will help you to iron out the details and decide how to implement your new model.

If you're interested in further tools and guidance developed by the ODI, check out:

The Trustworthy Data Stewardship Guidebook – aimed at organisations looking to perform an internal assessment of their trustworthiness as stewards of data, build their trustworthiness where necessary, and demonstrate their trustworthiness to others.

The Data Landscape Playbook – primarily aimed at organisations involved in, and especially leading, data access initiatives that are planning to build or strengthen data infrastructure.

If you'd like to learn more about our work on the sustainability of data institutions at the ODI, please check out the following:

Reports

Designing sustainable data institutions

Data institutions: reducing costs and improving sustainability

Podcasts

Making data institutions financially sustainable

Sustainable access to data

Putting the Sustainable Data Access Workbook into action

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Feedback and credits

Credits

We would like to thank all individuals and organisations who supported us with our research and tool development. We would like to give a particular mention to the following individuals who have consistently responded to our requests for interviews and feedback:

- Graham Faiz from DNV
- Polly Hudson from Colouring London, hosted at the Alan Turing Institute
- Christina Drummond from the Educopia Institute and Open Access eBook Usage data trust

Design by Philpott

Feedback

This workbook is still in beta form, meaning that we're hoping we'll be able to improve and update it in the coming years. We'd love to hear about your experience using it:

- What was the context you used the workbook in?
- What worked? What didn't?
- Is there anything missing?
- Did you like the design, content and format?

Please forward all written feedback or questions to datainstitutions@theodi.org

We are happy to have a chat if you are interested in an ODI facilitated workshop or partnering on a project.

Thank you.

For more information about the ODI's 'Data institutions' programme, get in touch at datainstitutions@theodi.org

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