STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Get started with public data

1 Issue

Define the problem or question.

What is important?
What do you want to achieve?

- What is important for our organisation in the coming period?
- What do we want to measure?
- What are our challenges and potential obstacles?
- What do we **not** want?

2 Data

Map out the organisation and the available data.

What are we currently doing with public data? What is working well and worth keeping? What is the next step?

- Experience level
- Define focus
- Available data
- Select Data

LEARNING
Strategy focused on data, limited experience.

BEGINNER
No data-focused strategy, limited experience with data.

3 Action & evaluation

Take action, assess the impact, adjust if necessary.

What are you going to do? How did it go? What needs to change?

- Formulate actions
- Connect goals to the issue
- Evaluate results
- Adjust plans

4 Implementation

Implement your insights and translate them into policy.

What is the policy? What is the best way to implement? What do you need to implement?

- Organisational aspects
- Practical aspects
- Example approach

Step-by-step guide: Get started with audience data

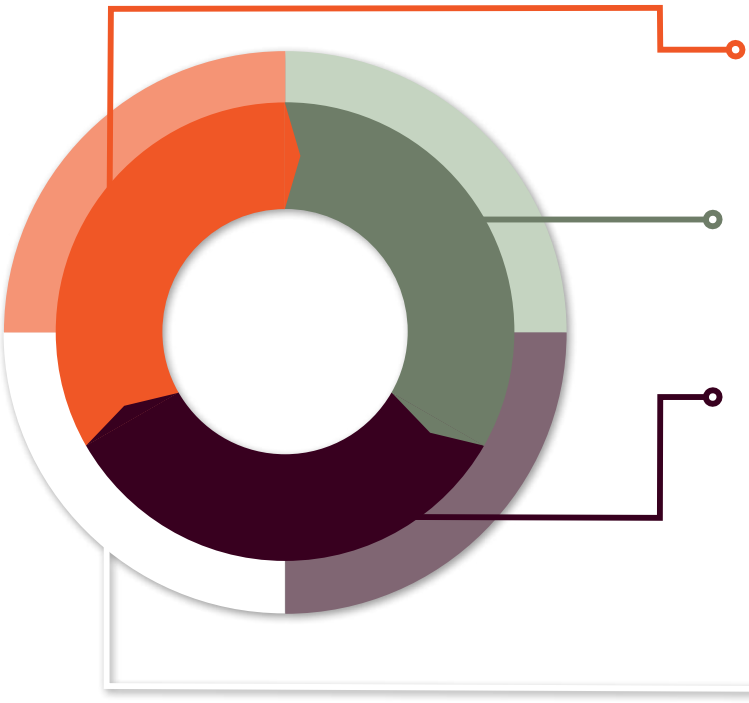
The step-by-step guide to connect your (potential) audience to your organisation with a data-driven focus.

Today's audience is always on the move, increasingly inhabiting the digital space. The regular, familiar visitor is gradually being replaced by a new generation.

A data-driven approach within your organisation helps you and your colleagues understand and even predict changes in your target groups. Decisions are based on facts, not just intuition. In this digital transformation era, working with audience data is crucial for every cultural institution. Your audience is closer than ever, now that you can set goals and actions based on facts, your audience is closer than ever.

This concise guide explains how to start with a data-driven focus through a **circular** four-step plan, although the last step may not always apply.

Circular step-by-step guide: get started with audience data



1 Issue
Define the problem or question.

2 Data
out the organisation and available data.

3 Action & evaluation
Take action, assess the impact, adjust as needed.

4 Implementation
Implement your insights and translate them into policy.

1. The issue

Define the problem or question. What is important? What do you want to achieve?

A strong data analysis starts with framing your question and gather the data needed to answer the question. Are you curious about new audiences? Or are you wondering how far your reach is with a certain group? It may help to frame your question based on a problem or from your mission and vision.

Use the following guiding questions

- What's important for our organisation in the upcoming period?
- Is there an issue we want to measure?
- Is this a question relevant my department, or are other departments involved?
- Who do I want to involve in this matter?
- Who do we want to reach? And why?
- What are our challenges and potential obstacles?
- What do we not want?

Tip Use sources like your mission and vision, policy plans, and marketing plans.

Tip Ask yourself 'why' five times to get to the core of your goal.

In short: **What is the question that the available audience data should answer?**

Best practice
Innovation:Lab (Theater Utrecht)

The Innovation:Lab explores the artistic impact of technology on theater and uses it to promote diversity, inclusion, and digital transformation in the field.

During the experiment phase, analyzing audience data plays an active role. Abdelhadi Baaddi notes, "*In the past, audience data was often collected afterward, leading to a reactive approach. By gathering data during the creation and performance process, we can use it proactively.*

The audience becomes more involved in the creative process without compromising the artist's autonomy. It also allows us to compare different audience groups, such as existing and new viewers. By separating these groups, we can conduct A/B testing to understand their varied reactions to the performance."

Is the goal still hard to define? Keep it broad for now. The questions and goals that audience data can address are endless. If you're just starting with a data-driven organisation, begin small. Focus on one topic, like 'connecting with new audiences,' or concentrate on a specific area within the organisation. Here are some potential starting points.

- **Strategy**
  ensure continuity, develop strategic partnerships, identify market trends.
- **Programming**
  reach new audiences through programming, digital programming, test programming.
- **Marketing communication & sales**
  direct audience flow, increase attendance numbers, boost visit frequency.
- **Audience & customer experience**
  measure audience impact, test customer satisfaction, guide engagement.
- **Operations**
  improve cash flow, assess operational risks, set up and maintain e-commerce.

Tip Choose one area to start with, and it's okay to address the others later.

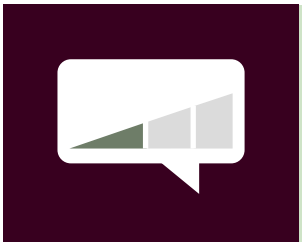
2. Data

Map out your organisation and the data you have. What are we already doing with public data? What's working well and worth keeping? What's the next step?

Now that you know your destination, it's important to explore where you currently stand. We identify three experience levels for working with public data: beginner, learning, and executing.

Ask yourself the following questions.

What's my level of experience?		Beginner	Learning
1	Is a strategy focused on public data available?	no	yes
2	Is (at least) a vision for public data clear?	no	yes
3	Is a clear owner assigned for the public data project?	no	yes
4	Is knowledge about using public data available?	no	yes
5	Is a customer database being used?	no	yes
6	Are the possibilities for using public data clear?	no	yes
7	Are multiple systems involved, and are they connected?	no	yes



If you mostly answered 'no,' your experience level is '**beginner**.'
Start small, set short-term goals, prioritize 1-3 tasks, and assign a few people to lead this project.

If you mostly answered 'yes,' your experience level is '**learning**.'
Expand involvement and knowledge within the organisation, consider future projects, set both short and long-term goals, and make a group responsible.

Is your experience level 'learning'? Ask yourself: 'Is using public data insights a natural part of every aspect of the organisation?' If the answer is yes, you're not just learning but already **executing**, which is beyond this guide's scope.

Available data

You often have more data than you realize. Explore data sources for insights, like your website, ticketing data, or existing segmentation models such as the Cultural Audience Model, or dive into the DEN dossier 'Audience of the Future.'

Selecting data

When choosing data, it's important to check the quality. With public data available, it's easy to get overwhelmed by excess information that confuses rather than helps. Make some critical decisions on which data to use, starting with basic quality factors:

Use the checklist below...

Basic hygiene factors checklist

Relevant	Is the data still relevant? Make sure it effectively supports actions toward achieving a specific goal.
Timeliness	How up-to-date is the data? Verify to ensure decisions or actions aren't based on outdated information.
Usability	Is the data content and structure useful within the systems in use, so it adds value?

Curious about your data's usability?
Explore how usable your data is.

3. Action & evaluation

Take action, assess the impact, and adjust if necessary. What are you going to do? How did it go? What needs to change?

Move from questions and data to actions and evaluations. Each action affects the data, and you don't need to reach your entire goal with a single step. By taking various small actions, you can test multiple methods, especially if you're a new organisation. In this phase, you can clarify the issue and connect goals. Define your goals based on the problem you've identified and make them SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound). This makes it easier to evaluate them using data later.

Example

Broadly stated: Increase visitor numbers..
SMART goal: Increase the number of 25-year-old visitors from Utrecht for show x by 10% before December 2023.

Adjustments

What are the outcomes of your action? Use your insights to formulate a new action, make it SMART, and evaluate the results again. Data-driven work means gaining insights into your process. By using data to explore what is and isn't working in achieving your goals, you can take more targeted actions. Be open to learning points, as data-driven work involves continuous adjustments and optimization. Don't be afraid to take a step back if needed. You might discover missing data and need to reassess. It's a circular process: from question to data to action, evaluation, and back again.

Below is an example of how this process can unfold, with insights that lead to specific actions, sometimes resulting in implementation or more often, evaluation and adjustment.

Best practice
Mariniersmuseum

Het The Marines Museum, part of the Royal Defense Museums Foundation, began expanding its audience in 2020. In addition to their existing audience from the defense community, they now also focus on families with children.

Online offerings were adjusted, collecting zip codes and house numbers to segment the audience using the Cultural Target Group Model. Combined with targeted marketing, online visits from social media and the website increased by 400%. Physical visits also rose by 163%.

With the increase in visitors, more data became available to better understand and reach the audience. Zip codes and house numbers were collected and converted into audience segments using the Cultural Target Group Model. This model allows linking the reached and unreached audiences to different city neighborhoods. Based on these data insights, it became possible to target specific audiences by location, further boosting visitor numbers. For the first time, the museum was completely sold out during the Saint Nicholas weekend and continues to see a large number of families even in the warm late summer.

4. Implementation

Put your insights into action and translate them into policy. What is the policy? How do you implement it effectively? What do you need?

Building on previous steps, develop a policy that aligns with the identified issue and meets several key requirements.

Best practice
Theater De Schalm

Theater De Schalm is a medium-sized theater in Veldhoven. Director Sjoert Bossers explains: "We're just outside Eindhoven and also the capital of the Kempen region. This shapes us: we have a small-town friendliness with a touch of city flair. This means our reach is wide and varied, but it wasn't reflected in our audience. That's why we started researching our (potential) audience."

Bente (**marketer**): "We examined the journey of our current visitors, from their first website visit to their theater experience. We're also creating new journeys for potential visitors."

Nancy (**programmer**): "We used to ask on Facebook: 'Which artist would you like to see at De Schalm?'. It rarely yielded useful responses. With research and audience segmentation, demand-driven programming became real. If we don't have a group yet, I'll look into what they'd enjoy. For example, 'Local Leisure Lovers' tend to be older, enjoy culture during the day, and see visits as social activities. This led to the idea of a monthly Sunday matinee just for them."

Sjoert (**director**): "We're dedicating time and budget to innovate and explore programming that aligns with our audience research."

Organisational aspects

Every organisation varies in size, structure, and culture, but certain principles generally apply once a minimum size is reached. These principles help in successfully setting up, developing, and implementing a policy approach. Here are eight key points that are likely self-explanatory:

1. Clear ownership of the overall project and its parts. The responsible person or people must accept accountability for progress and results.
2. A clear mandate for exploration and development.
3. Defined agreements on collaboration, decision-making, and reporting.
4. Support from the top of the organisation, if they are not the project owners.
5. Smart collaboration with external entities (freelancers, partners, suppliers, experts, etc.).
6. Sharing outcomes and informing the entire organisation to build support for innovation and understanding of important contributions during implementation.
7. Evaluating and updating the policy approach for public data in an ever-changing work environment (market, technology).
8. Using output for new follow-up actions.

Together, these points not only create a structure and culture where innovation thrives but also foster a data-driven environment that supports and encourages creativity.

Practical aspects

While the earlier sections of this chapter focus on outlining possibilities and encouraging action, the final section emphasizes essential conditions. Some of these are fixed, while others can be influenced, providing support and motivation.

This guide divides the conditions into four categories:

- **Regulations**
- **Ethics**
- **Knowledge and skills**
- **Technology**

Regulations

In recent years, the GDPR has become a prominent regulation regarding data ownership and management. It outlines rules about data retention periods, security responsibilities, data sharing in chain processes (like processing agreements), and what data can be collected (generally limited to necessary and legitimate interests). It also addresses the purpose of data use and third-party rights to view and request deletion of personal data.

Want to know more?
Visit www.den.nl/kennis-en-inspiratie/avg-proof-werken-wat-komt-daarbij-kijken

Besides the GDPR, additional regulations from local authorities or funding organisations may apply.

Some actions regarding GDPR

- **Create a privacy policy and cookie statement**
  It's important for entrepreneurs to draft a clear privacy policy and display it on their website, as the GDPR requires you to provide this information.

- **Maintain a processing register**
  When working with third parties who receive personal data (like external suppliers or your hosting provider), agreements must be made and recorded in a data processing agreement. Additionally, keep a processing register detailing which personal data you handle, why you use it, how long you keep it, and how you secure it.

- **Develop a data breach protocol**
  In case something goes wrong, having a data breach protocol is crucial, as you're required to document any breaches within your company. If the breach is serious, it must be reported to the Data Protection Authority within 72 hours.

Ethics

It's important to consider the ethical aspects when working with public data. This article explores the topic and offers practical tips.
https://www.den.nl/kennis-en-inspiratie/hoe-gebruik-je-data-op-een-ethische-manier

Knowledge and skills

Knowledge and skills are essential for shaping vision and goals. The less knowledge or skill available, the more you'll need to rely on outside help. It's crucial to decide how much you want to depend on external expertise in the long run or if you want to develop this expertise internally. Factors like size, resources, and continuity are important considerations.

Action If it's not possible to maintain expertise within the organisation, it's important to establish strategic partnerships that ensure continuity and development without creating undue dependency.

Technology

Gathering, storing, managing, analyzing, and applying public data requires technical tools. As noted in the previous section on 'knowledge and skills,' it's often wise to seek external expertise and experience to avoid reinventing the wheel. External knowledge is available in various forms, such as consultants, training organisations, and system suppliers who offer support.

Choosing a system (or supplier) can significantly impact how you can use the data (technically and legally) that is registered and generated within the software.

Consider technical tools like applications such as Excel, CRM systems, analytics dashboards, social media tools, as well as data standards and structures to connect or combine data.

Questions to consider when choosing a system (or supplier)

- Does the system allow connections without deep technical knowledge, or is support from the supplier or a consultant needed?
- Does the structure in which data is stored provide flexibility for connections and use outside the primary application?
- Are there legal restrictions on using data generated by the system user?
- What are the user capabilities for the process the application is designed for?

If your organisation has little to no data experience, these questions might arise later— and sometimes too late.

Attachments

Test the usability of your data

When there's an abundance of public data available, it's easy to get lost in a sea of information that might confuse more than help. It's wise to make some critical considerations when deciding which data to use. Here are four basic hygiene factors to guide your decision.

Test the usability of your data

What is the source of the data: internal, external, or partner?		
Internal	Full access	Data from CRM systems, web analytics, social media analytics, email marketing applications
External	Limited access	Research data from third parties, data from value chain partners that cannot be shared
Partner	Access in accordance with collaboration agreements	Research data from third parties, data from value chain partners that can be shared

What kind of public data is it: anonymous or individually personalized?		
	Anonymous	**Personalized**
Strategy	Highly usable	Not very usable
Programming	Highly usable	Not very usable
Marketing communication/sales	Highly usable	Highly usable
Audience/customer experience	Not very usable	Highly usable

Colophon

Taskforce Public Data

This guide is an initiative by the Taskforce Public Data. It's designed for anyone in a cultural organisation who works with or wants to work with audience data, as well as for urban and regional groups focused on cultural participation. The Taskforce Collaborative Public Data LT NL consists of seven cultural field institutions: Cineville, CJP, Digital Information Platform Performing Arts (DIP), Kunsten '92, Platform ACCT, Rotterdam Festivals, led by DEN Knowledge Institute for culture & digital transformation. The Taskforce is supported by the Ministry of OCW and will continue through the end of 2024.
For questions or comments, feel free to reach out at publieksdata@den.nl. For more information about the Taskforce Public Data's activities, visit www.publieksdata.nl.