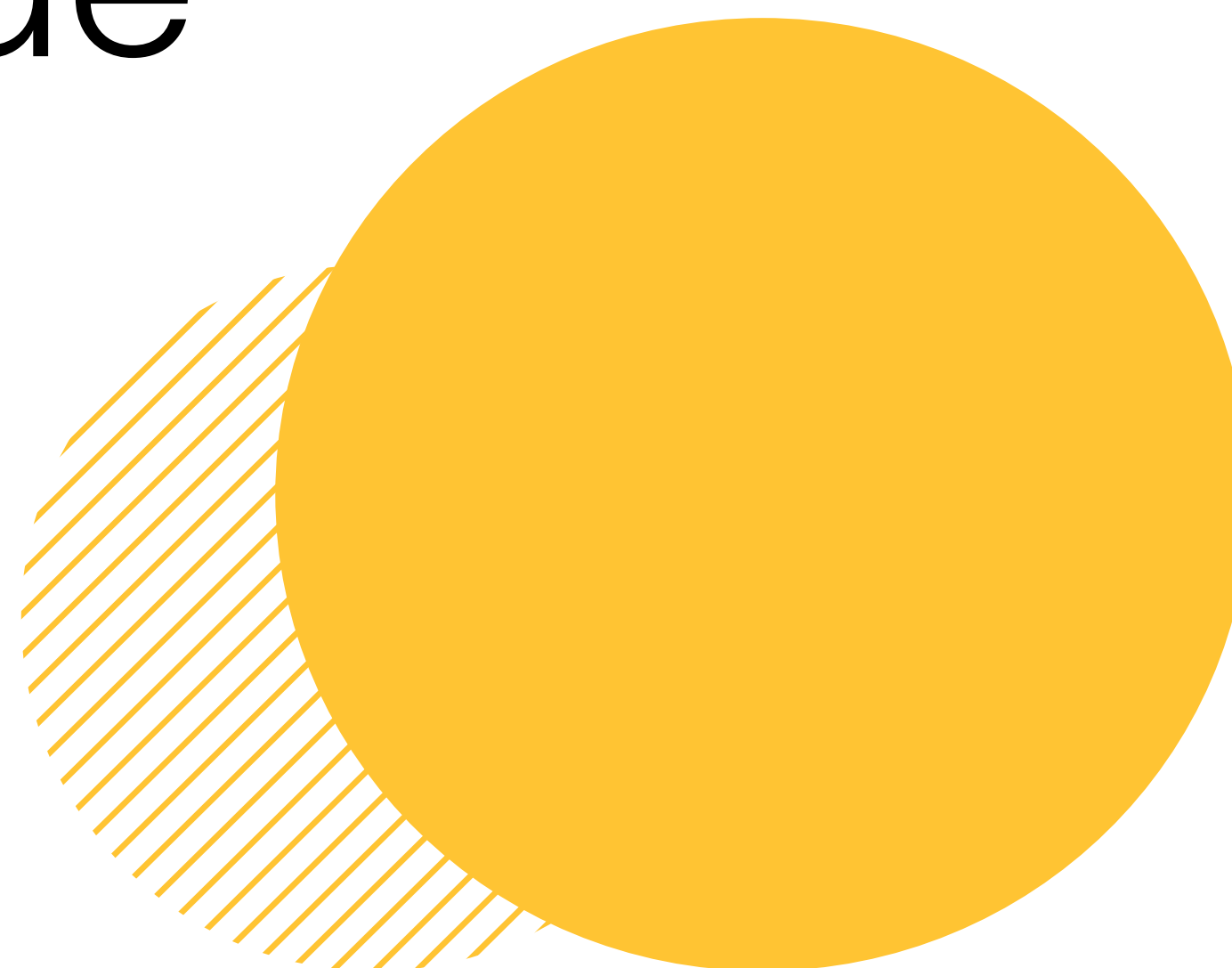




Data collaborations

How-to guide



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Intro

If you have a challenge that could benefit from the use of data, this guide gives you the tools, advice and processes to **effectively plan** and execute your own collaboration project.

Got a challenge that doesn't involve children? No problem.

The work of the Data for Children Collaborative is centred around children and young people, and although this is reflected throughout this guide, its contents are transferable across a range of audiences, industries and social good projects.



We may use new terminology that you've not heard before. Where you see this icon, we will provide the definition.

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Overview

How and why we were formed?

With the belief that data holds significant potential to improve outcomes for children, three organisations with unique expertise came together to look at innovative ways that data and data science could be utilised to solve childhood issues across the globe.

UNICEF, The Scottish Government and the Data-driven Innovation Programme at the University of Edinburgh collectively formed the Data for Children Collaborative, positioning Edinburgh as the place to do data. Through this unique collective of expertise and resources, and by working in a collaborative manner, we help other organisations, charities and governments find ways to use data to improve outcomes for every child.

Why are we sharing a guide?

Central to everything we do as the Data for Children Collaborative is our desire to contribute to social good, but we cannot deliver this on our own – the challenges are simply too vast, too complex and too diverse.

We can bring positive change to children's lives project by project whenever organisations approach us with a data problem. But we also acknowledge that by sharing the models and learnings we have shaped and perfected over time, even more like-minded organisations and collaborators, and ultimately young people, can benefit from the work we do.

By using this how-to guide for your own data projects, you have a tried and tested toolkit of best practice that ensures collaboration and transparency – and most importantly, keeps young people at the centre of any work and solutions.

Common terms

● Data

Information, in whatever form that might come in.

● Data science

The process of turning information into insight.

● Output

Directly tangible deliverables such as a report, tool or method.

● Outcome

The results that come from delivering outputs.

Who is this how-to guide for?

Data challenges can arise anywhere.

That's why data collaboration has the potential to bring **positive change** to a wide range of industries, in both the third and public sectors.

For example, a project owner could be a department lead for a charity, an evaluation lead for a government organisation, or a data/social scientist.

This guide will be a helpful tool for anyone who wants to undertake challenge-led, co-creative collaboration activity.



What is a 'challenge'?

An opportunity or question that can't be solved using traditional methods due to its complexity, that's open to exploration, and that seeks to achieve specific outputs and outcomes.



Could my challenge benefit from this guide?

Every challenge is **unique**.

As a result, our projects are varied in terms of location, sector, data needs and solutions. There is no one right way to approach a challenge, so you may find some tools and processes more helpful than others.

We have encountered a wide range of collaborators and challenges through our work so far, including:

- Helping the **Observatory for Sport in Scotland** build a better view of lived experiences to inform, influence and support policymakers.
- Helping **The Promise** map available data to better inform decisions for the care system in Scotland.
- Helping the **Northern Alliance** access data on the poverty-related attainment gap to plan targeted interventions to reduce it.
- Helping **UNICEF** focus their future climate change efforts by using data to predict where children are going to be the most vulnerable.

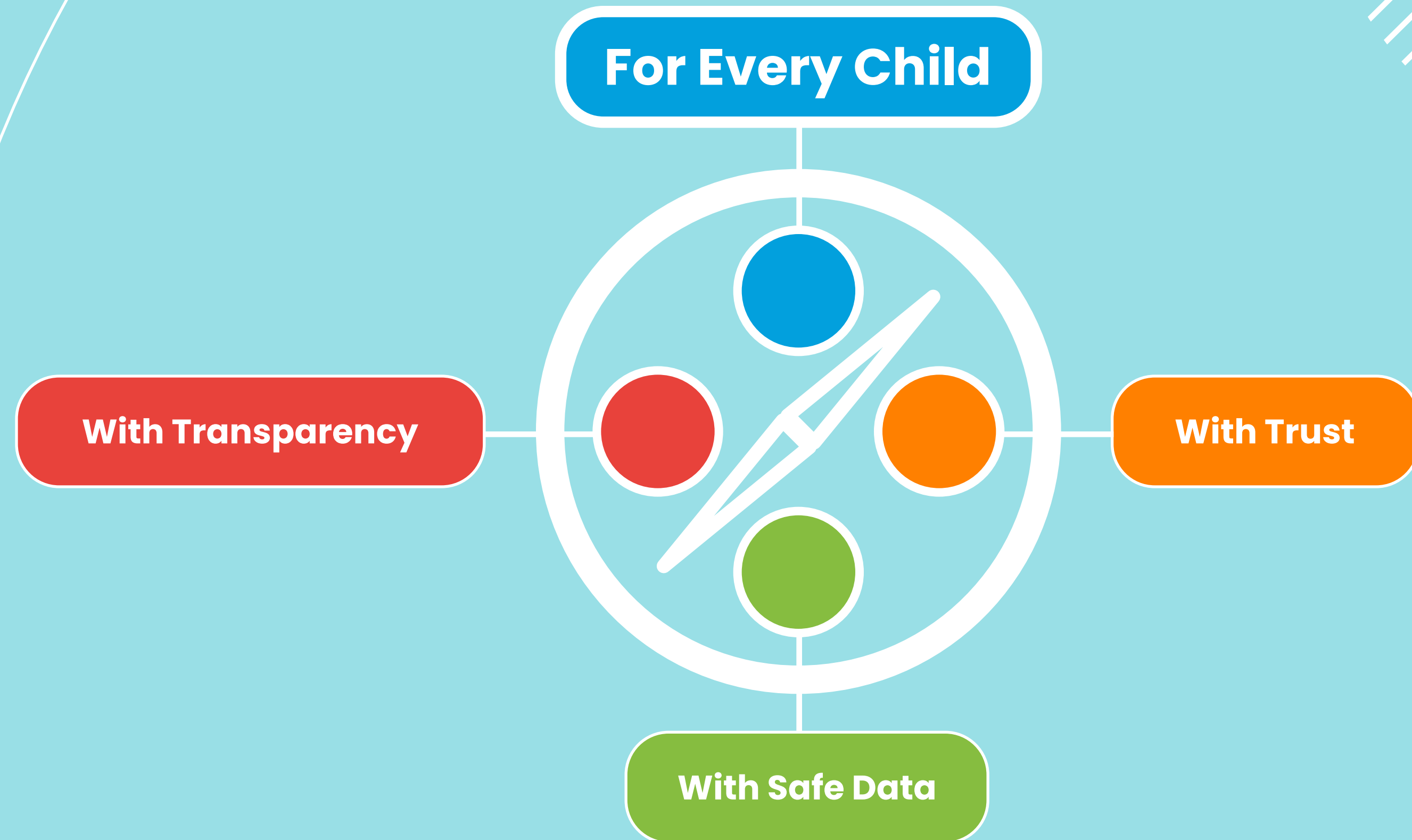
This guide could benefit any challenge-led projects. Whatever your problem, there may be the potential for data to help solve it.



Our Values

When it comes to data collaboration, a foundation of **strong** and **clear values** is highly recommended. When communicated to and agreed by your project team, a shared set of values and behaviours, along with a purpose upon which all collaborators can focus, acts as a stable central anchor.

These are the four values that have shaped all of the Data for Children Collaborative's projects, processes and tools. You can use these as an example for your own project. You may have your own values already in place, or may want to create ones specific to the aims of your collaborative work.



For Every Child

We strive to **positively impact children** by regarding them as our priority stakeholder and treating them, and their data, with respect.

Due to the child-focus that is central to most of our work, we believe that children should always be our priority stakeholder, and everyone involved in our collaborations should be committed to promoting and protecting children's rights.

Your project team should be aware that there is a higher duty of care when it comes to the use and handling of children's data. That's why we recommend following our commitment to have collaborators make a pledge to always put children, their needs and their rights before the requirements of the project.

Think, is there a particular group that you are working for?

With Trust

We use data from **reliable sources** and **protect all personal data** in our projects.

The quality of your project outputs will be dictated by the quality of your data. This all starts by having trust in where any data you have used comes from to ensure accuracy, credibility, and integrity throughout any future decision-making processes. In addition, the safeguarding of data should be given just as much respect. Whatever your project or means of data collection, protecting personal data not only complies with legal regulations, but demonstrates ethical responsibility and fosters long-term relationships with customers.

With Transparency

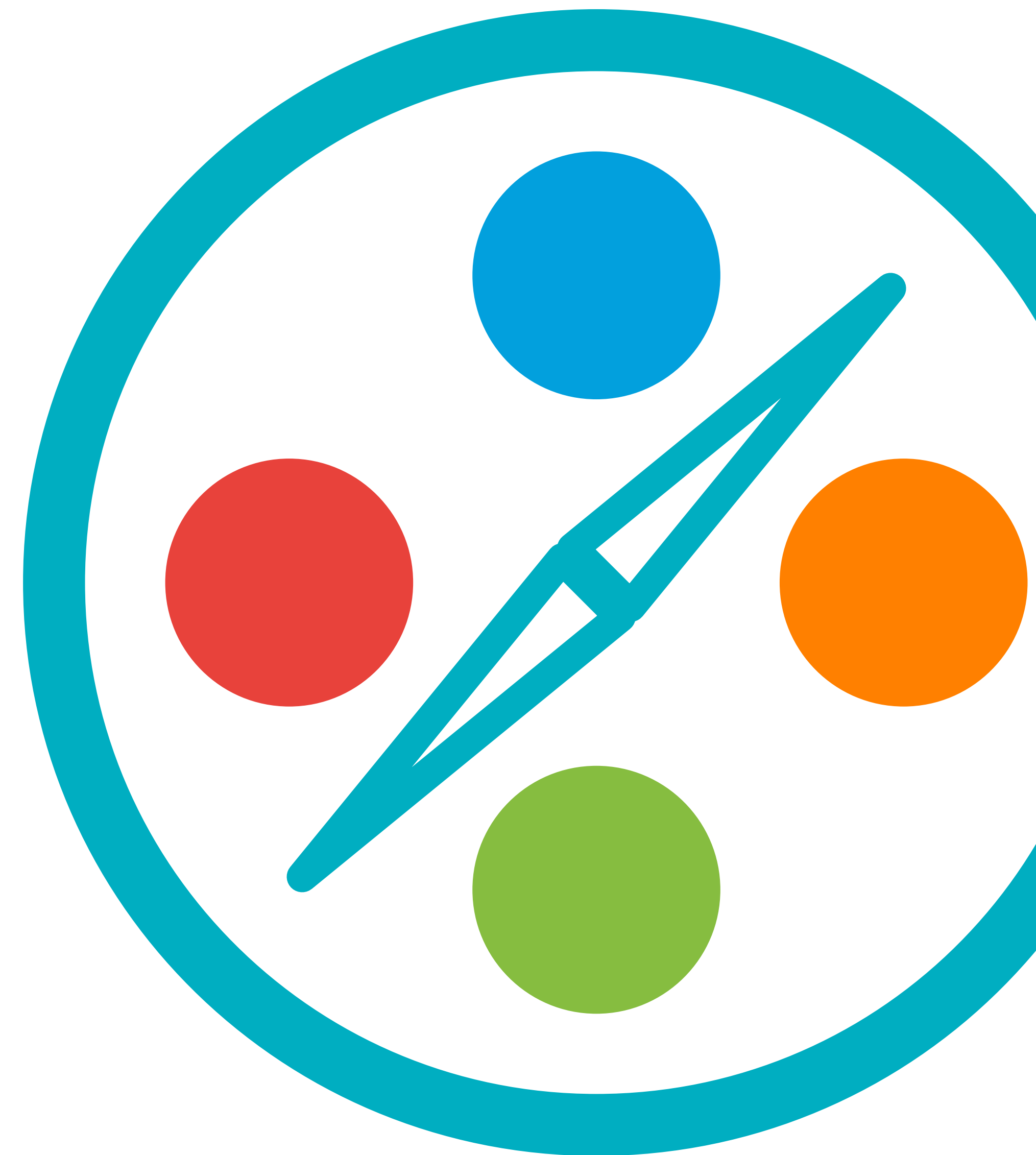
We are **open** in our intended outcomes for children and clearly communicate the goals of all our projects.

Transparency builds confidence in data-driven initiatives, encourages collaboration and facilitates meaningful engagement. By fostering transparent data practices within your projects, you can enable individuals to make informed choices about sharing their personal information and empower them to exercise control over how their data is used.

With Safe Data

We show integrity in our projects by holding our methods to the **highest standards**.

Rigorous data management protocols ensure that any data you handle as a result of your project is done so responsibly, transparently, and in compliance with relevant regulations and industry best practice. Not only will adhering to this value mitigate risks associated with data breaches, but also foster accountability and integrity amongst all your project collaborators.



Responsible Innovation

Effectively bringing together minds, skills and perceptions.

In order to ensure we and our collaborators adhere to our values, we have created an end-to-end approach consisting of a series of tools, processes and learning that enriches our work and helps us all deliver projects with accountability. We have called this our Responsible Innovation Framework.

The framework defines our role, and the roles of our data project collaborators, surfacing and mitigating socio-ethical, legal and regulatory considerations. By encouraging reflective thinking, it gives everyone the opportunity to add value to projects.

It also acts as our leveller. When we bring a group together consisting of different expertise and sectors, many of whom may not have worked on big data or a children's issue before, the framework acts as the middle ground, bridging any knowledge gaps and ensuring everyone knows what is expected from a project.

You can find out more about the Responsible Innovation Framework in the Process section of this guide ([see page 23](#)).



The value of collaborations

Real success comes from **sharing**.

By bringing the right experts and representatives together to address a challenge and creating an environment where they feel comfortable challenging each other, the value of the outcomes increases in return.

Data collaboration can bring:

- High quality, evidence-based insights
- Actionable insights that can influence policy or practice
- People on the ground to implement the changes needed
- An opportunity to share and learn about new methods and approaches
- The opportunity to build a network of future collaborators
- Diversity of perspectives brought together to problem solve



Data collaboration

Bringing together a variety of players to use and share data and methodologies to solve challenges in new and exciting ways.



Key Considerations

What do I need to think about first?

Before you start building your collaboration team and tackling the challenge at hand, there are some key considerations that could apply to your project.

Digital tools

Nowadays, collaboration doesn't have to be in-person. Your collaborators could span the country or the globe. This increases the need for reliable, accessible and convenient digital tools.

In the planning stages of your project, you will want to make sure that such tools and infrastructure have been set up to aid any future communication, collaboration, management and tracking.

Communication

There are a number of widely used platforms available for real-time communication and collaboration such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Slack.

With instant messaging, file sharing and video conferencing capabilities, they can help you facilitate seamless collaboration on project tasks and discussions.

Collaboration

When it comes to real-time collaboration, in person or online, a tried and tested visualisation platform will help you and your collaborators stay focused on the challenge and task at hand.

We have found that real-time online boards such as Miro are an excellent addition to our project work as they allow team members to visualise ideation sessions, map workflows and visualise project timelines. Features such as sticky notes, shapes and drawing tools make it easy to capture and organise insights collaboratively.

Management and tracking

Project management tools allow you to have a central point of truth when it comes to project tasks, deadlines and delegating.

Platforms such as Asana and Trello have been designed to help you assign tasks and set priorities ensuring that everyone stays on track with their responsibilities.

You should have stringent ways of recording and measuring your outputs, your outcomes, your impact and how your project is progressing.

People management

For **innovation** and **progress** in the data space, many data challenges will require the rich perspectives of a wide range of sectors, roles and expertise.

With this comes the added complexity and need for a project owner to manage differences in understanding and personal approaches.

Whether you are managing a data project on your own or as part of a team, there are several skills that should be present to ensure that everyone has the chance to contribute and challenge each other.



Who is usually involved in a data collaboration project?

Whether your project has the potential to span globally or requires localised expertise, there are several key roles that could feature in your collaboration. Depending on the scale of your project, one person may hold more than one of these titles.

Internal collaboration roles

Project Manager

A day-to-day point of contact, responsible for supporting project delivery, running project activities, managing relationships and resolving any issues.

Traits

Structured and organised

An effective Project Manager will be capable of managing multiple different timelines and deliverables efficiently – even across different time zones.

Articulate and a good listener

They should have the ability to clearly and effectively communicate with team members, balancing different expertise and priorities.

Good at simplifying complexity

An ideal person will display the ability to see beyond complex situations and present simple summaries and actionable steps.

Compliance

Collaboration projects may require someone to take responsibility over accountability and advocacy. They would be responsible for ethics, participation activity, safeguarding training and communications.

Traits

Ethical integrity

Compliance depends on an individual's ability to uphold the highest standards of integrity and ethical behaviour, ensuring that the project complies to what's been set out within the project framework.

Attention to detail

An ideal person will have the capability to meticulously review documentation to ensure all aspects of the project meet the correct ethical standards.

Impartial and balanced

They should be able to take a holistic view, respect all opinions and always keep the project focus on positive outcomes.

Facilitator

An unbiased individual who leads the co-creation of workshops and encourages collaboration using design thinking methods. Their key focus will be on purpose and impact.

Traits

Empathic communicator

A facilitator should be able to communicate clearly and concisely across language barriers and cultural differences, ensuring that all team members understand each other.

Solutions orientated

They should focus on the process of collaboration to ensure that the project team works effectively towards their goals. By encouraging creative thinking and helping participants to think outside the box, they can help deliver innovative solutions.

Encourages participation

They should display an ability to create an environment where all members feel encouraged to contribute, ensuring that all voices are heard especially those who may be less inclined to speak up.

Visual thinker

Projects benefit from the effective management of visual tools such as charts, graphs and workflows to facilitate understanding and communication.

Operations

The person responsible for managing any internal infrastructure to measure and record deliverables.

Traits

Big picture thinker

Operations depend on an ability to understand and manage both human and material resources, ensuring that the collaboration team have the necessary information across all aspects of delivery.

Attention to detail

They should be capable of meticulously reviewing documentation to ensure all aspects of the project meets any financial expectations.

Systematic thinker

They should be able to create scalable and replicable processes.

External collaboration roles

Challenge owner

The person or organisation on the front line of delivering services to young people. They will have identified a challenge that could benefit from data-driven innovation.

Expertise network

The sector agnostic domain specialists. Who they are, their sector and specialisms will depend on the individual challenge.

End user

A representative who can support understanding context or support design for adoption.

Data provider

The organisation hosting open or sharable data sets.

Impacted stakeholders

Decision makers that the project outputs and outcomes are aiming to influence.

Legals and governance

Legal considerations

Serving as the backbone of responsible, safe and transparent data management practice, your collaboration project should start with a collective understanding of the guidelines, regulations and standards that each of your collaborators should adhere to.

Data protection laws and regulations will dictate how you must collect, process, store and share data, safeguarding individuals’ privacy rights and mitigating the risk of data breaches or misuse. There are then additional considerations that you must be familiar with if your project involves working with young people.

It is also important to note that an ethical collaboration project requires more than just legal compliance. We want to ensure that every project is being delivered for children in the right way for the right reasons.

Putting governance in place

Creating a governance system at the start of your collaboration and clearly communicating this with everyone involved is highly recommended. This framework will identify who can make decisions, who has the authority to act on behalf of the project and who is accountable for how people behave and perform.

It enables the project management team to run the project legally, ethically, sustainably and successfully.

We have found that the strength of our core values and agreeing behavioural elements to how we work has been critical to grounding all of our activity.

Theory of Change

When it comes to holding ourselves accountable for the legal and governance influences of a project, our Theory of Change framework is something we use to ratify all of our activity.

A key bridging tool to show how change will be effective to achieve intended impact, it ensures that we are capturing the intended impact of all organisations that we seek to deliver for and acts as a guide that we can use to easily architect all of our activities.

Enablers (Inputs)

We have a range of activities and tasks that we focus on that can be categorised under what we term as our eight Enablers. By continually developing the way in which we deliver this set of activities, we will deliver the required Pathways to Success (Outputs).

Pathways to Success (Outputs)

Our eight Enablers then map into our Pathways to Success (multiple Enablers map to multiple Pathways to Success). We think of this as what elements of our capacity do we need to strengthen to deliver our outcomes.

Key Outcomes (Outcomes)

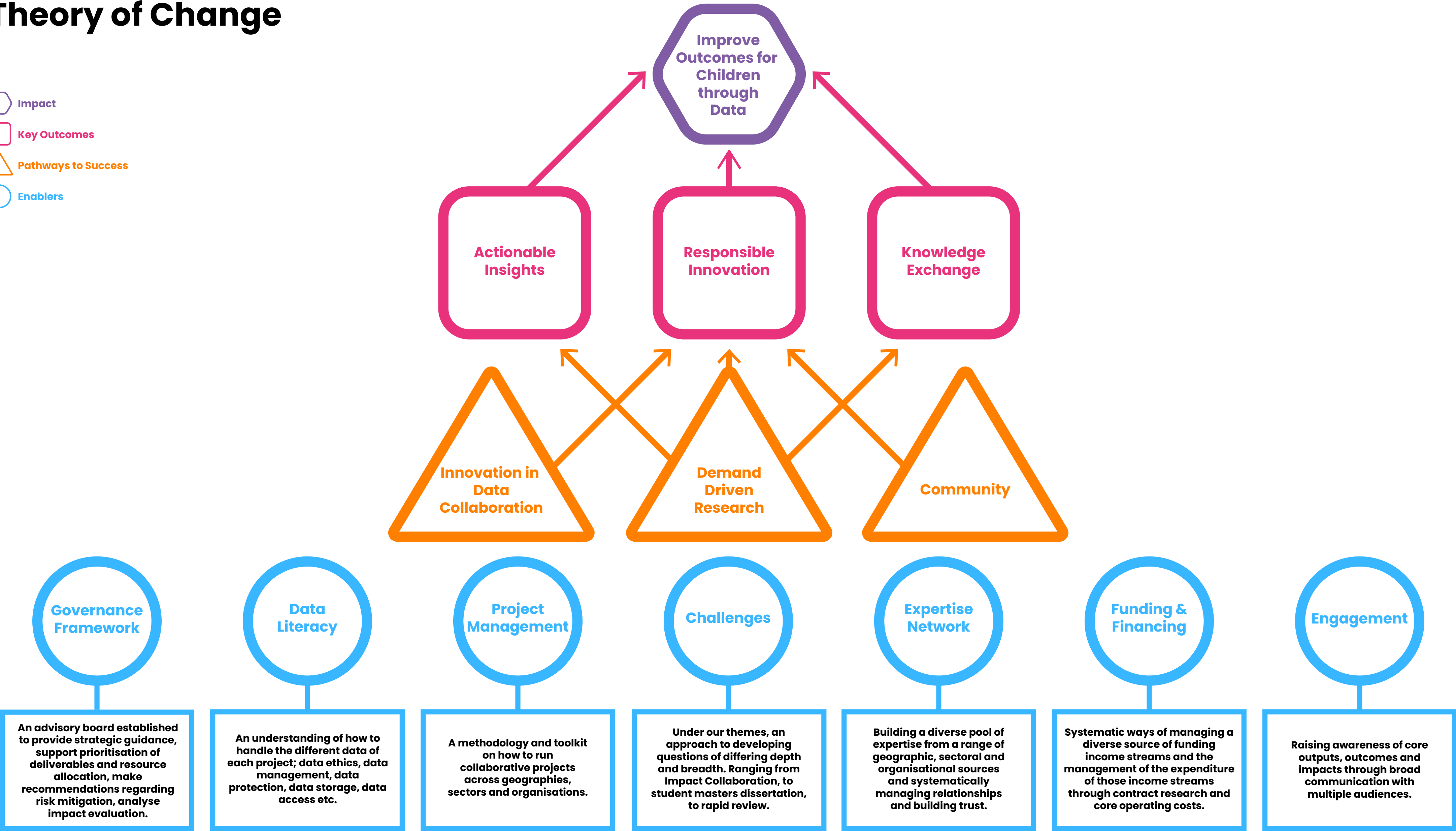
These Pathways to Success then map into our Key Outcomes (again multiple Pathways to Success map to multiple Key Outcomes). These are our core success deliverables to meet our vision.



Governance

A set of activities and framework that are put in place to control outputs, outcomes and impact from an organisation as well as the associated accountability for these activities and decision making on funding and budgets.

Our Theory of Change



The Data Collaboration Process

The nature of many data collaboration projects mean that they involve multiple stakeholders, vast datasets and varying levels of knowledge. A structured approach is essential for managing such complexities and ensuring efficiency.

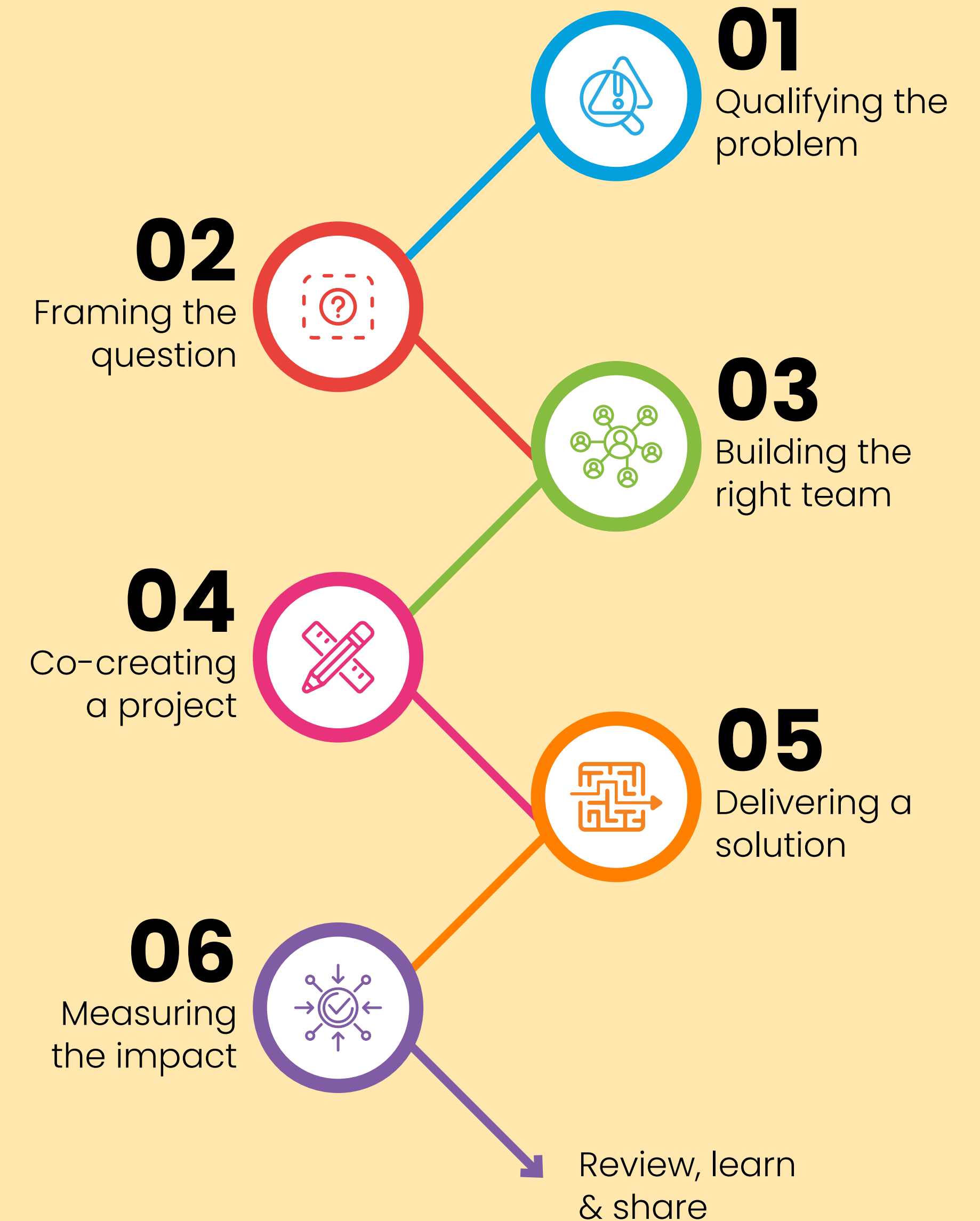
Our Service Catalogue is the end-to-end process that we use when working with our partners. It is composed of the set of approaches, frameworks and methodologies, crafted through our experiences and learnings to best approach complex challenges.

By breaking down your project into distinct stages, your teams can establish clear objectives and responsibilities, allocate resources efficiently and better maintain a cohesive workflow from start to finish.

The following section will take you through each stage of the Data Collaboration Process and inform you how you can use each for your own data challenge projects.

We will also be using one of our past projects as an example throughout to ease understanding.

This project was UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index.



01 Qualifying the problem

Every project starts with identifying a data problem. Ensuring that this is the right problem for the challenge owner, stakeholders and ultimately those who will be using the output is paramount.

Success and the end value of the project relies heavily on the correct decisions being made at this early stage.

When qualifying the problem, we will work with the challenge owner to identify the problem they are actually trying to solve and identify whether we are best positioned to be the one to solve it.

Qualifying the problem allows us to ensure clarity, relevance and feasibility. It also helps set realistic expectations regarding the scope and complexity of the project, enabling more accurate planning and resource allocation.

You may be approached with a complex or broad question. In this case, this stage would involve narrowing down your scope to a specific area.

Qualifying the problem for UNICEF

In the initial stage of our Children's Climate Risk Index project, UNICEF came to the Data for Children Collaborative with several problems and ideas around the wide-ranging issue of climate change and its effect on young people now and into the future.

We assessed each of these potential problems, identifying those that could be addressed by data, those that were most feasible and those where the introduction of academic expertise could add the most value.

We then worked with UNICEF to identify the one chosen problem that posed the most value and potential going forward.



02 Framing the question

This stage of the Service Catalogue allows you to set up your collaboration project with the most potential and enables you to draw the right team in to address your challenge.

A well framed challenge question ensures that everyone involved understands what needs to be addressed and why it's important. It prevents ambiguity and misinterpretation and prevents the team from wasting time and resources on irrelevant issues.

The main purpose of this stage is to break a qualified problem down into the challenge question and identify the required skills and expertise. We will work directly with the challenge owner in this case, taking an in-depth look at the problem to identify the knowledge and skills that would be required to address it. We will then consolidate this conversation into a challenge document, breaking down the requirements into expertise sets based on what the collective determined was required. This challenge document is then supplied to our network.

When we are assessing whether a challenge question is suitable for the problem at hand, we have developed some fundamentals. We use three key factors to consider when creating a good challenge question.

Is the question explorable?

Not all questions are challenge questions. Equally, not all challenge questions resonate with the right audience or deliver the right outcome.

At the Data for Children Collaborative, we know that there is value in building transdisciplinary teams – we have found that by inviting these unique perspectives, we can deliver novel solutions together. Think about whether your question is something that would require further exploration, rather than an immediate answer. If the question does not resonate across a broad spectrum of expertise, you won't attract a range of perspectives to the challenge.

Is there a clear owner?

When it comes to challenge-led projects, it is important to avoid scope-drift while creating environments that enable new ideas and fresh thinking – a challenge owner must be part of any collaboration to maintain this balance. In our experience, a successful challenge owner needs to be clear on the issue that they are trying to solve, but open to having their perspectives tested and questioned. They should be able to balance an open mind and ability to drive change on an issue.

Is the question 'outcome driven' or 'output driven'?

When forming your challenge question, you should reflect on what you hope to achieve, not deliver. We encourage multidisciplinary thinking. For the process to work, a challenge question should be based on a broader issue and the desired outcome, leaving the outputs and solution for the team to develop collaboratively.



Framing the question for UNICEF

This question sets the collaboration's direction, considering the broader issue being solved while using language that translates across disciplines.

In the case of our Children's Climate Risk Index project, we worked with UNICEF, the challenge owner, to rework the initial iteration of the question. The need for this change came from recognising that the project required expertise from collaborators such as theoretical scientists. These were the individuals who were best placed to answer the question, so it needed to be framed in a way that would interest and engage them.

"How are children most vulnerable to the impact of climate change, both now and in the future?"

The newly reworked question and redefined anticipated outcomes allowed the Data for Children Collaborative to reach out to a number of expert sets and position the question in its most attractive form. As a result, the project benefitted from valuable input from a broad range of expertise, including social scientists, data scientists and geoscientists, delivering a richer solution.

03 Building the right team

Having a **well framed** challenge question will create a strong foundation for the building the right team stage of our Service Catalogue.

We use our [Impact Collaborations](#) approach to assemble the right blend of perspectives.

The Data for Children Collaborative has access to a global community of experts. Once a project's challenge document has been shared to this network, those experts who are interested in the question will respond. We then assess these responses alongside the challenge owner before hosting a review panel session with an independent who understands the challenges and the types of organisations we are bringing together on the specific project. Through this process, we can identify those individuals who have the right skill sets and expertise as one of our collaborative partners. It's also important at this stage to ensure you have a mix of individuals to encourage cross-cutting conversations.

When you are carrying out your own collaboration, you may not have similar access to the connections and network that we have built as the Data for Children Collaborative, but by knowing the best places to reach people, you can start to build your own.

The following options act as a good place to start:

- LinkedIn groups related to your project focus
- Pre-existing data communities
- University business engagement teams
- Mail contacts for organisations that have asked to be made aware of opportunities

Then, when it comes to reviewing responses, your decisions could benefit from the use of a matrix such as the one shown in page 21. We chart individuals against requirements, and look at things holistically, rather than focusing on a specific skill. A key consideration at this stage is ensuring that the group you compose are also likely to work well together. Your collaborators should feel comfortable challenging each other and the question – it is through such conversations that some of the best solutions are born.

Building the right team for UNICEF

When we were building our team for the Children's Climate Risk Index project, looking at the challenge through a new lens of focusing on children's voices allowed us to pinpoint specific sector specialisms that would be best placed to answer our challenge question.

We knew that the project outputs required mapping and forecasting – therefore Geographic Information Systems (GIS) skills were an essential requirement.

We reached out in particular to social scientists, climate scientists and geographers, then reviewed our responses alongside UNICEF, the challenge owner, and an independent to determine who would have the right combination of required skills.

Skills Example

What actions can we take to overcome the information and data sharing barriers relating to care experienced by children in Scotland?

Things to consider

- Skills, knowledge & expertise
- Alignment to the expertise asked
- Understanding of the question
- Methods proposed
- Willingness to collaborate
- Realistic deliver plan
- Cost

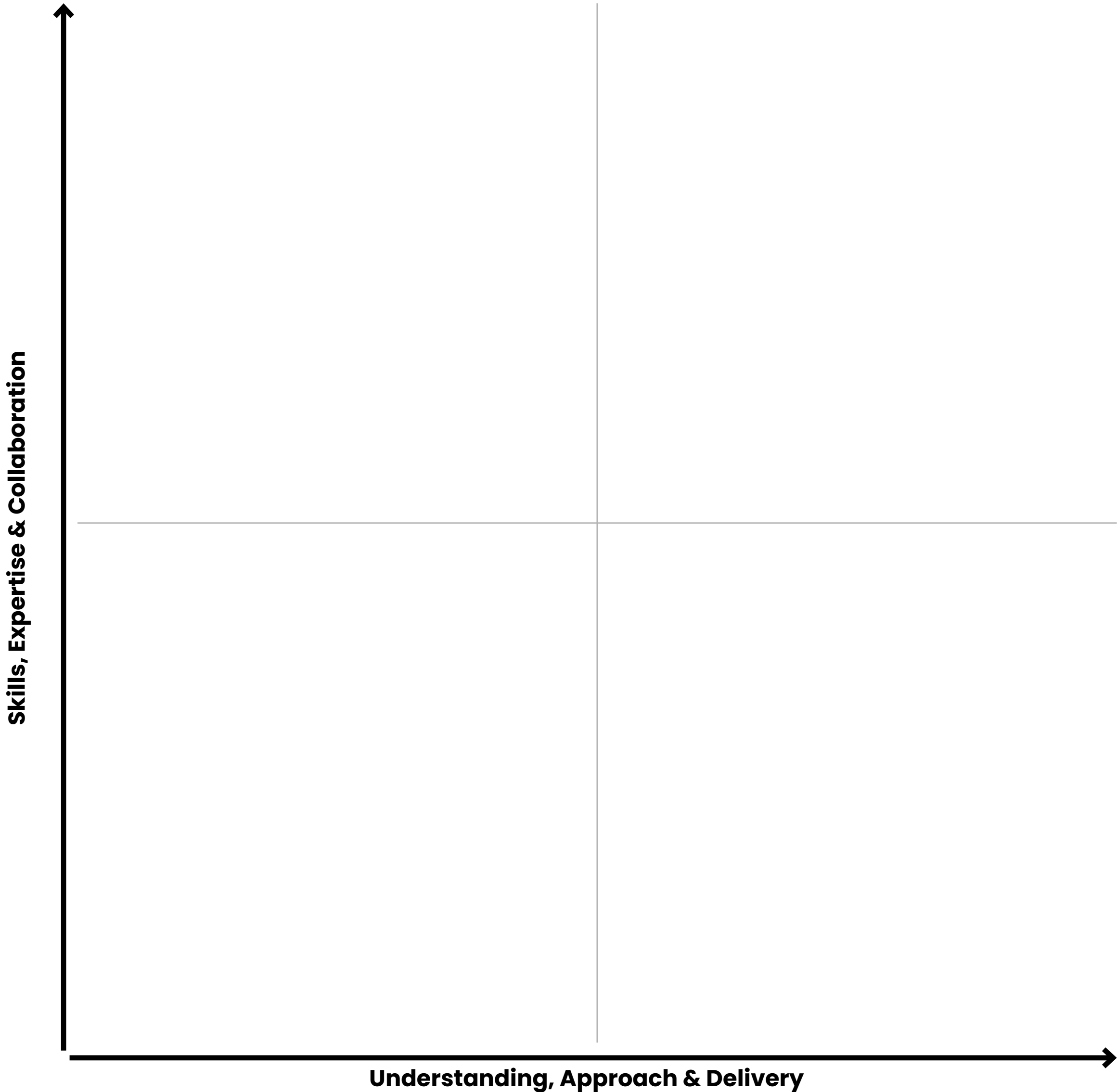
KEY

PRIVATE
SECTOR

ACADEMIA

THIRD
SECTOR

PUBLIC
SECTOR



04 Co-creating a project

The next stage of the process is highly collaborative as we bring the challenge question and team together for a series of interactive workshop-style discussions – either in-person or online.

At this point in our Service Catalogue, the Data for Children Collaborative will take on the important role of facilitator. Every collaboration needs to be governed in a way that enables clear decision making. Our role in facilitating each collaboration is to act as the arbitrator of balanced conversations between the diverse expertise.

At the start of this stage, it's important to ensure that everyone involved is very clear on [our values](#).

You will likely have your own organisational values that you can share beforehand and run through these at the start of the co-creation stage. This can help ensure that those external individuals who are forming part of the collaboration all understand how they are expected to act and that everyone is working towards the same goals.

What happens during a workshop?

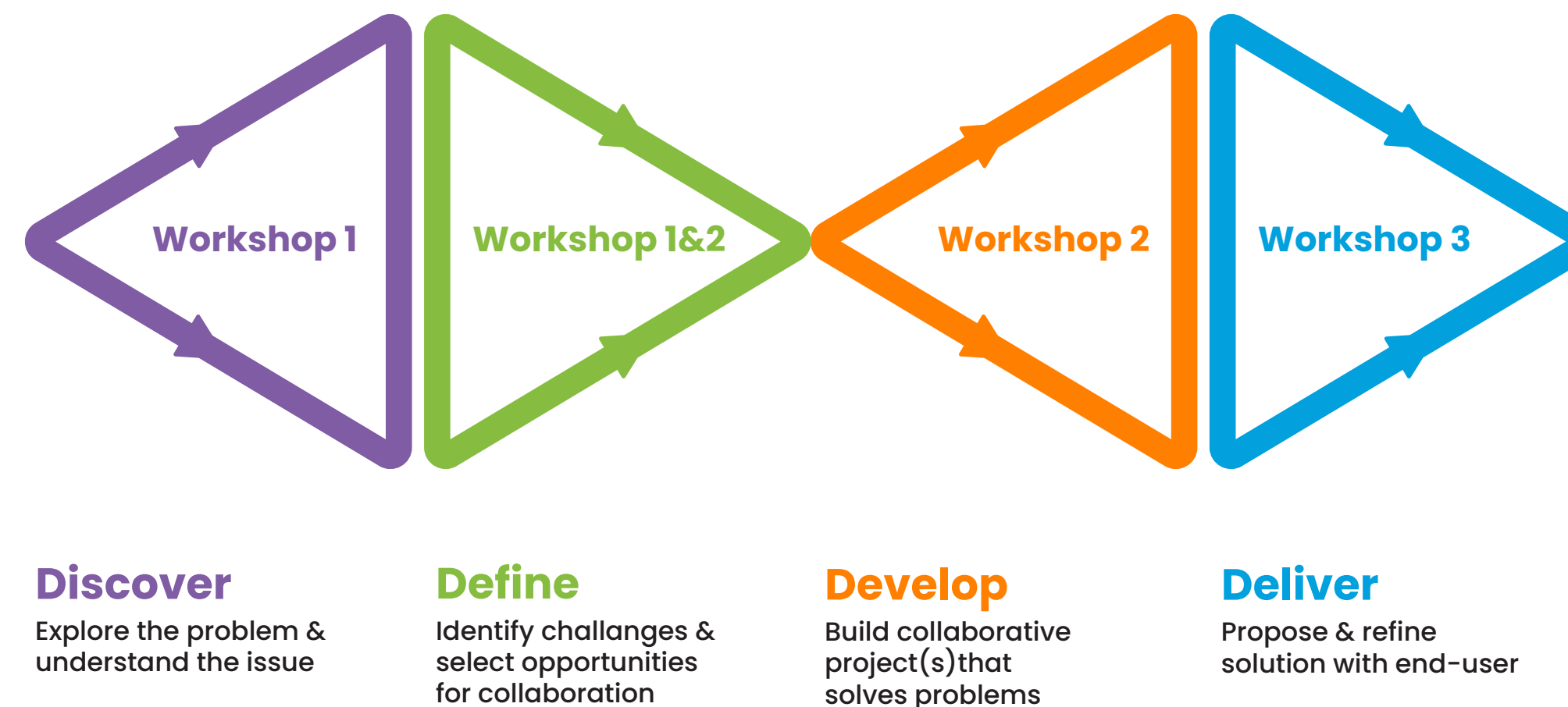
On average, we find it takes 3-4 two-hour workshop sessions to identify deliverables and workflows. When planning your sessions, we also recommend making sure that you allow a few days between each session so that your collaborators have time to digest and reflect upon discussions.

We always take responsibility for note taking during workshops as this encourages free-flowing conversation amongst the project collaborators. We will also prompt when required, for example, when it comes to assigning roles and responsibilities for specific work packages.

We start off by clarifying the shared purpose. Our challenge question gives everyone the direction for the project, but it is also important to address the shared values amongst the collaborators.

Our facilitator will then go around the table of collaborators, asking each individual why they are motivated to address the challenge. We start these conversations by showing some form of connection or vulnerability, encouraging others to follow our lead. By breaking down barriers from the project outset, people will feel more comfortable as they contribute to the discussion.

Then we will pass over to the challenge owner so that they can unpack what it is and why they want to solve it.



Deliverables

A logical grouping of outputs and milestones.

Such discussions are not immune to tensions – you’re bringing a number of passionate people together to solve a problem, with different specialisms and backgrounds, who approach the work in different ways. Welcome these differences in opinion as they force everyone to look at the problem in a whole new way, and potentially solve it in a unique way. However, if you need to steer conversation back on track, we have found that a great solution is to remind everyone of the shared focus – in our case, improving children’s lives.

The real challenge at this stage of the process is getting the cost right. We always give an estimate to the challenge owner at the start of the project which is based on our experience of completing projects of all scales over time. It is during this co-creation stage when deliverables have been identified and agreed that you will have a clear idea and the real ability to cost up the outputs. If at this point our costing is over budget, we will work with collaborators to identify the must-haves and priorities from the deliverables to narrow the scope of the project.

As you start organising your own collaborations, determining costs will likely involve some trial and error.

Ensuring everyone is on the same page

Every project should start with clear communication and agreement across collaborators on a number of key requirements.

We create a collaboration agreement for each of our projects to formally state and communicate the collaboration’s commitments, including those towards data management. This will be approved

by our legal team and distributed to the legal team of each collaborator. This acts as a formal assurance that everyone is signing up to the same challenge together. Sometimes, to aid the smooth running of the project, we may break it down into separate sections in order to streamline some of these legal necessities. The Data for Children Collaborative is always aiming to make our process easier by addressing some of the slower stages and hurdles such as legal requirements. One way we do this is by giving collaborators early sight of the legal details so that they can consider them as soon as possible.

Regular communication with your collaboration team is key, especially if you are delivering a global collaboration across countries and time zones. We set up a cadence of interactions, monthly sprints, weekly sessions and retrospective meetings that give the Data for Children Collaborative and each team member the opportunity to give and get updates on the work to date. During this, we encourage work package owners to conduct mini presentations of their work and findings.

Data projects tend to have a lot of moving parts and we find that having a visual overview can aid everyone involved. By using Gantt charts to plot project work progression, everyone has access to the latest insight into each task’s impact and proposed solutions.



Gantt Chart

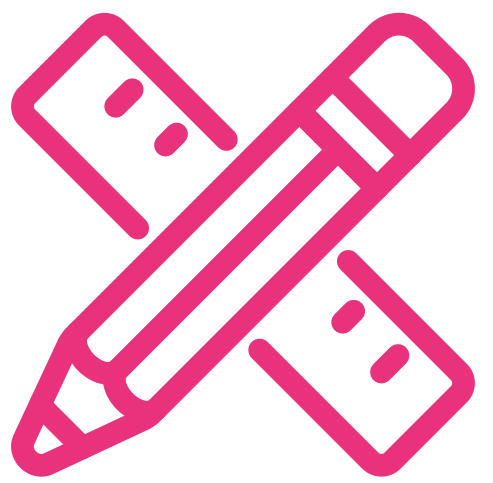
A project management tool that graphs start and end dates, as well as scheduling and deadlines, including how much of a task is completed per stage and who is the task owner.

Co-creating a project for UNICEF

When completing this stage for the Children’s Climate Risk Index project, we were bringing together a number of academic institutions and social scientists. With a variety of expertise and backgrounds, we acted as the much-needed friendly, approachable and balanced independent in the room. We were the voice that could cut through, steering everyone in the right direction, reaching consensus and ensuring all voices and expertise were heard.

The value of this role was demonstrated within our workshops for this project when UNICEF, the challenge owner, stated that they wanted to create new, projected climate outputs. Our question was, ‘Are you sure?’.

This led to the experts in the room pointing out that this was something that already existed and that the time would be better spent addressing different elements of the challenge question. By tackling the real problem, the project took on a whole new form.



05 Delivering a solution

This stage of the Service Catalogue requires significant and efficient project management to ensure that assigned deliverables are achieved.

Following the Responsible Innovation Framework

As a framework for true value-led collaboration in complex environments, the Responsible Innovation Framework is our unique selling point and an end-to-end approach that could also add real value to your own collaborations.

It is particularly beneficial when delivering a solution as it allows us to work collaboratively on new and innovative ideas in a responsible way – creating a safe environment where a project team can challenge and be challenged.

[Find out more about how the framework came about here.](#)

Prioritisation Framework

Are we best placed to answer this challenge?

By scoring a project against our Prioritisation Framework and asking challenging questions of our challenge owners, we can ensure it is aligned to our values by reflecting on intention and purpose.

Firstly, to make sure that resources are invested in the right projects for the right reasons in order to achieve positive impacts for children, part of the framework involves asking a number of questions – we call this our ‘True North’ check.

True North Check

How will this project improve outcomes for children?

What is the strategy that is driving the need for this project?

How and why is data the solution?

Who is the real end user, and are they already invested in this project?



Project Initiation Document (PID)

Who, what, when, how does the project work?

This comprehensive document covers key information such as the data management plan and budget. It is often here that we can advise on more appropriate data methods and approaches.

Governance approval

Do the partner organisations support this initiative?

This project summary of the project scope, plan, timeline, budget and intended impacts is presented to our governance boards for approval.

Legals at a glance

What have we all signed up to?

Our summary sheet of key legal information is circulated across the whole project team. This acts as a leveller so that everyone has the same understanding.

Question Mark Icon Prioritisation Framework

Are we best placed to answer this challenge?

Checkmark Icon Governance Approval

Do the partner organisations support this initiative?

Hands Holding Heart Icon Safeguarding Training

What are our responsibilities towards every child?

Hand Icon Youth Participation

How do we meaningfully engage young people?

Document Icon Project Initiation Document (PID)

Who, what, when, how does the project work?

Magnifying Glass Icon Legals At A Glance

What have we all signed up to?

Compass Icon Ethics Journal And Workshop

Are we doing the right thing in the right way?

Puzzle Piece Icon Impact Statement

What did the project achieve, and what lessons have we learned?

Safeguarding Training

What are our responsibilities towards every child?

Every collaborator has to complete bespoke safeguarding training, regardless of their role in the project, so that they fully understand their responsibilities towards the safety of children.

Ethics Journal and Workshop

Are we doing the right thing in the right way?

For us, ethics is not just a box tick operation, it's much more.

Our Ethics Journal focuses on the actual process, taking a step back and thinking about the real impact and potential conflicts of the work. The journal acts as a valuable tool to guide ethical considerations in every aspect of a project, from data and model development to communicating findings and being transparent. Collaborators are encouraged to reflect on, identify and address potential ethical challenges throughout the project lifecycle.

The Ethics Journal also works in conjunction with our Ethics Workshops, which have been designed to facilitate ethical deliberation, support ethical decision-making, identify risks and suggest mitigations, focusing on impacted stakeholders and those implicated in the work. The Data for Children Collaborative's role in this is to create a safe space to challenge with discussions and prompts to ensure maximum and equal engagement from everyone involved.

Youth Participation

How do we meaningfully engage young people?

There isn't a one-size approach to the projects we work on. [Our Youth Participation Workbook](#) encourages collaborators to establish if and why we involve young people.



Impact Statement

What did the project achieve, and what lessons have we learned?

At the conclusion of a project, we collaborate with all parties to create an impact statement that details achievements, lessons learned and any next steps to action.

Delivering a solution – the Children’s Climate Risk Index

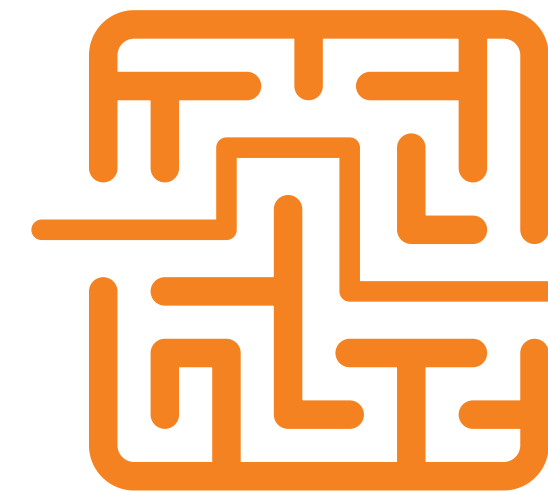
Whilst working on the Children’s Climate Risk Index project, on top of our project management role, came the equal need to act as an independent voice, helping represent the differing views and motivations of collaborators.

The project itself was split into two phases, assessing child climate risk in both 2020 and 2050. The researchers had been tasked with developing a view of climate change and its effects on children in 50 years’ time. An index already existed for different domains covering elements such as cyclones and floods, and the data existed for today – but determining how that looks 50 years into the future is a very complicated task.

The challenge owner, UNICEF, were highly conscious of the challenges of publishing predictions relating to future vulnerability of children. As a result they wanted to focus their efforts on only one climatic stress and show the plausible scenarios relating to heatwaves specifically. As representatives of the Data for Children Collaborative, we had to deliver this understandably disappointing adjustment in scope to the research team.

This is a key example of why it is imperative to bring everything back to our primary focus – remembering why we’re doing this *for every child*.

The political environment may have altered the scope of the outputs of the project, but we took on the mediator role and through understanding and empathy of every collaborator’s position, we were still able to manage the impact of risks and issues. We negotiated on behalf of the researchers who had delivered such valuable and insightful work, allowing them to publish it in an academic paper and delivering the heatwave specific model with UNICEF. A high impact collaborative report was released by UNICEF and taken to COP27.



06 Measuring the impact

Finally, with every data-driven collaboration comes a responsibility to measure the impact of the outputs and outcomes.

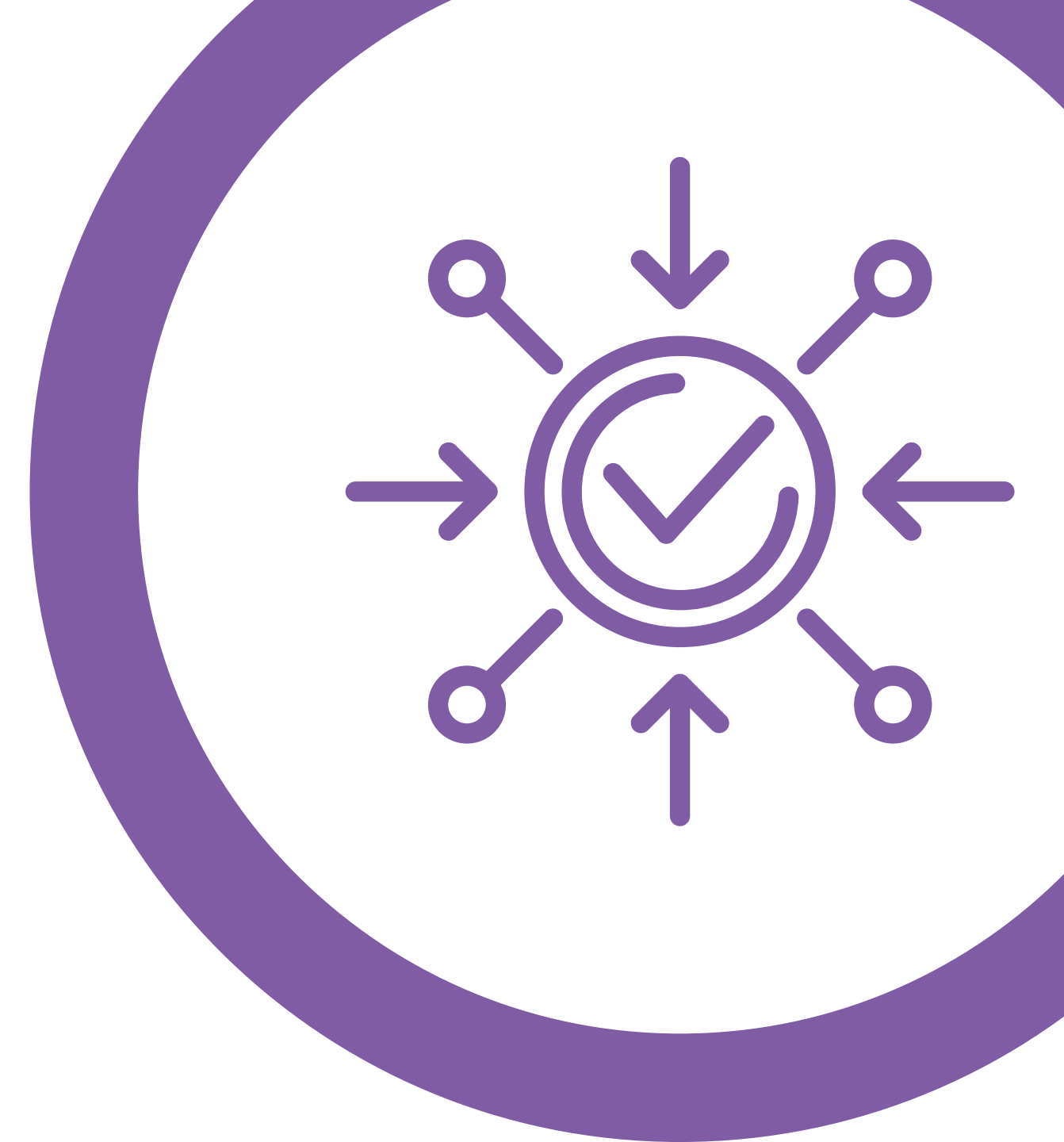
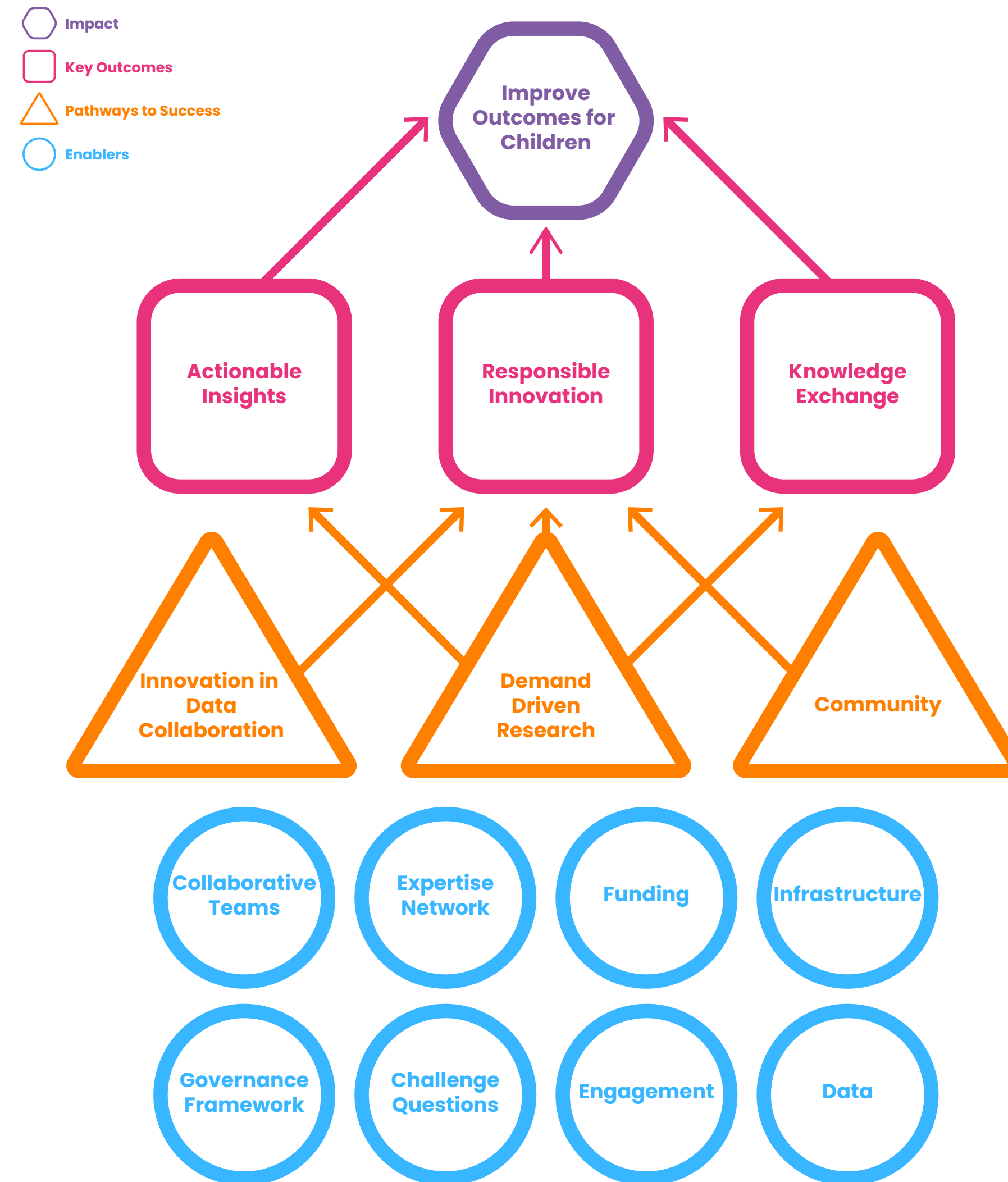
By setting up an impact dashboard, we can create a central home and point of truth for such information.

At this stage, our Theory of Change framework is especially valuable. Mapping the linkage between our activities, outcomes and consequent impacts, it serves as a reference point to ensure that all project objectives align with our core goal of improving outcomes for children.

When it comes to measuring the impact of a project, you will want to determine what the change is and how has it been articulated through stories.

We do this by talking to each of our collaborators, challenge owner and impacted stakeholders to record their personal view of the outcomes. They will be able to note things such as whether the work led to another project, any media coverage or a new interest.

We take each story, identifying and categorising it in regards to scale, duration and depth.



These three questions form the base of our feedback. You can use them as a foundation for forming your own.

Have there been any significant outcomes following this project?

What has the outcome enabled you to do that you couldn't do before?

Who has this impacted the most?

Best practice after capturing information from all our sources would be to ensure that everything at this stage gets mapped and recorded on a CRM.

The process of measuring impact is repeated on a regular basis and impact needs to be monitored over time.

Measuring the impact for UNICEF

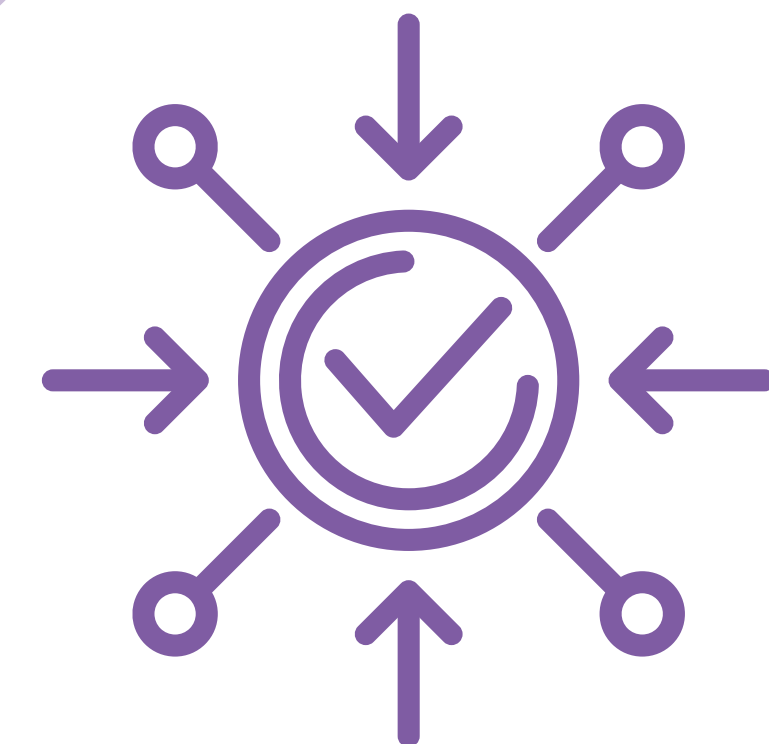
The Children's Climate Risk Index project was an incredibly important and potentially influential one.

The projections are proving to be a powerful advocacy tool, helping organisations across the globe to better understand the scale and scope of children's vulnerabilities to climate change, and by extension, how to tackle them.

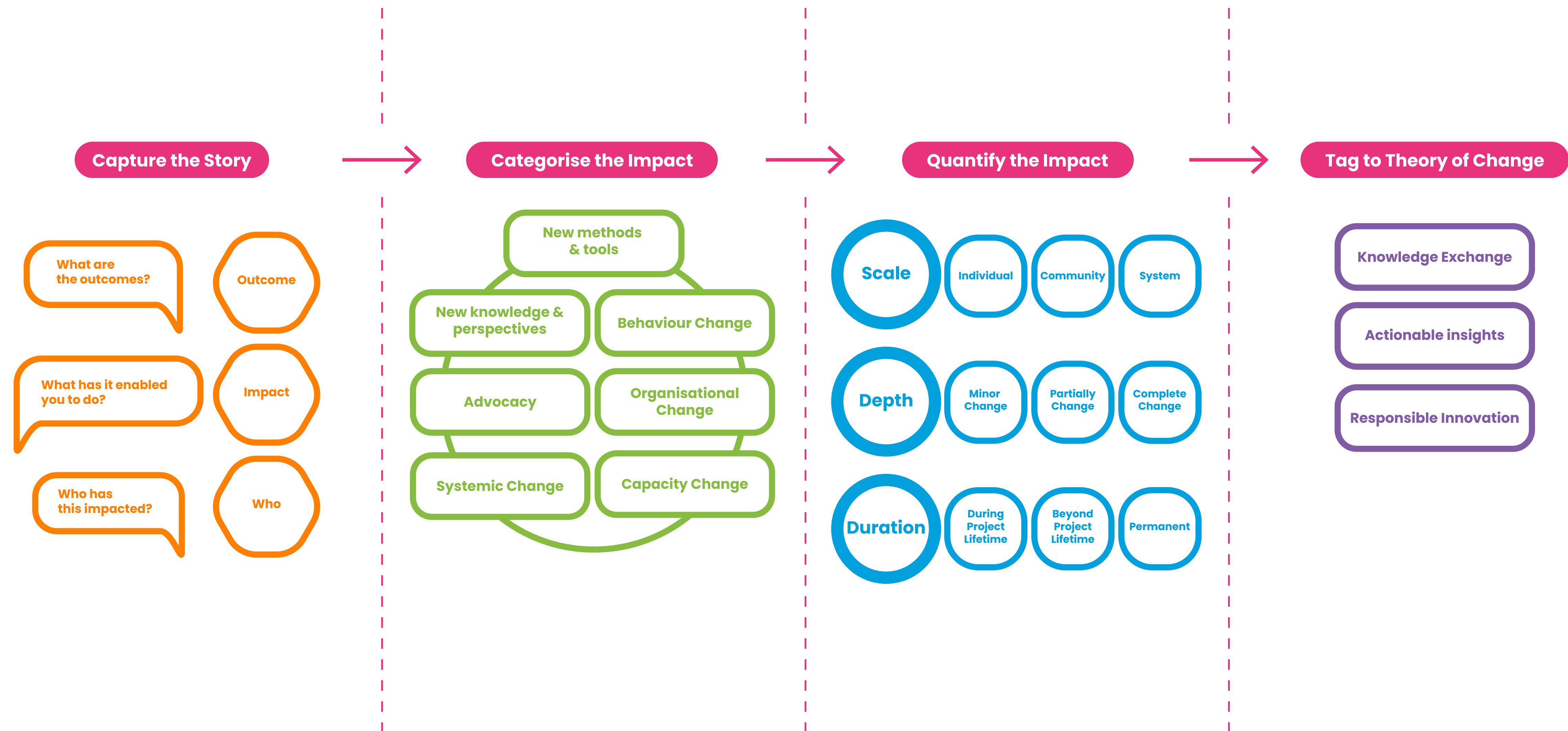


CRM

Customer Relationship Management – a process in which an organisation administers its interactions with people, typically using data.



Impact Evaluation





Ready to start your collaboration?

We hope that this guide gives you the tools, direction and motivation to start your own collaboration project.

Such projects may seem daunting or difficult when starting from scratch, but they are incredibly worthwhile. Combining different perspectives, datasets, skills and expertise can help unlock new intelligence and insight that can have long-lasting positive benefits across society.

By following our values and learnings, you too can draw on the strengths and expertise of others to bring in insights and solve problems using data innovatively and responsibly.

We're here if you need support

If you have any questions about this guide or would like to speak to us more in depth about your future collaborations, you can contact us at hello@dataforchildren.ed.ac.uk.

Share your success

If you've used our guide, we would love to hear how you used it and how the project went.