



PHASE I: A FRAMEWORK | MAY 2015

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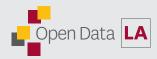




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About this report

The purpose of this report is to propose a framework for tracking the status of open data initiatives throughout the greater Los Angeles region.

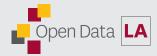
Cities and other government jurisdictions, large and small, have started many open data initiatives over the past two years. This flurry of activity, while admirable, raises several questions. Do governments have open data strategies and goals? How much progress have they made? Will their open data initiatives be sustained beyond the next round of elections?

Government data has long been "open" in the sense that governments are required to make public information, such as expenditures and property tax records, available on request. However, governments sometimes make it difficult for the public to actually get the information it seeks. And analyzing and otherwise using the data to understand government actions requires technical skills and subject–matter expertise that only a few, such as news organizations, possess.

Because a major part of an open data initiative is getting datasets online to make them accessible, we sometimes think governments believe open data is just a trendy technology project in which colorful web portals and hackathons take precedence over providing usable, relevant datasets.

We want governments to think critically about how they measure open data success and allocate scarce resources. We believe we should hold governments accountable for building a sustainable foundation, and for evaluating progress based on the breadth and quality of the datasets themselves.

For more about what open data is, go to our website at opendatala.org





OVERVIEW

Our framework is built with measurable indicators of a city's level of open data expertise and leadership.

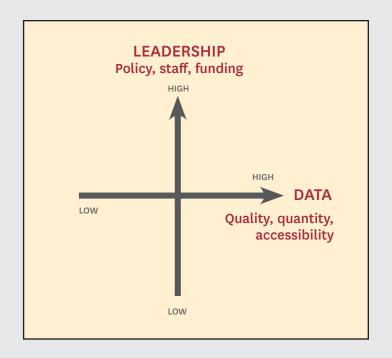
DATA

We blended two sets of scoring criteria to give each city an overall data score: the U.S. City Open Data Census ratings, and the detailed financial transparency criteria developed by CALPIRG, a public interest research group. Financial data is just one of many types of open data, and arguably one of the most important. Future phases of our research will include examining or developing similarly detailed criteria for other categories.

LEADERSHIP

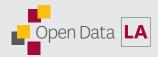
Next, we developed criteria for assessing whether a city had the leadership infrastructure in place to integrate open data into its culture. We identified three essential components:

- · An open data executive policy or city legislative action
- Full-time open data staff
- · Dedicated open data funding



APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK

We rated eight incorporated cities in Los Angeles
County, selecting those that already had U.S. City
Open Data Census scores. We then analyzed each city's
leadership score vs. its overall data score. Our framework also
incorporates insights from interviews and a survey
of officials in 50 of the 88 incorporated cities in
Los Angeles County.

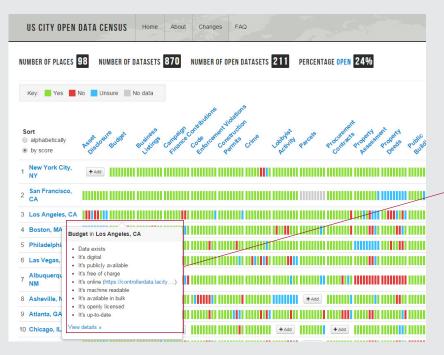


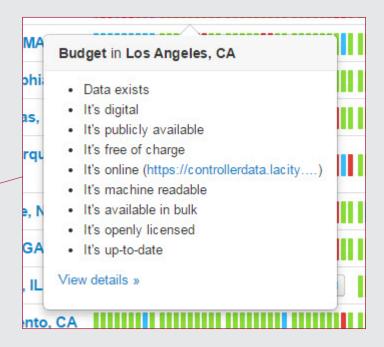


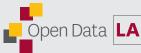
Data: How much does a city have? And is it open?

Cities have hundreds of datasets. Each crime report filed, check written and building permit granted is kept and is public data. Robust open data portals have a wide variety of datasets that are easily available online.

The U.S. City Open Data Census (us-city.census.okfn.org), a partnership between the Open Knowledge Foundation, the Sunlight Foundation, and Code for America, is a crowd-sourced rating system based on datasets in 19 categories. The census scores cities based on a simple count of the datasets available and whether each dataset is truly "open" according to criteria such as whether a dataset is free and in a digital format.







The census score mainly indicates breadth. It is limited in its capacity both to define the overall success of a city's open data initiative and to provide actionable information for city officials. For example:

- All of the 19 categories are weighted the same. The maximum score is 1,900, 100 for each category, e.g., crime data is given the same weight in the overall score as web analytics, and property and zoning-related datasets together are worth 700 points.
- Cities are scored for providing datasets that they neither collect nor maintain. For example, the census rewards the city of Los Angeles for publishing property tax data, which is the responsibility of Los Angeles County.
- The scoring is crowd-sourced. The scores may be incorrect, outdated, or inconsistently applied.

U.S. City Open Data Census Categories

(grouped by type)

See us-city.census.okfn.org/about for category descriptions.

Campaign Finance Contributions
Asset Disclosure
Lobbyist Activity

Budget
Spending
Procurement Contracts

Business Listings

Crime

Restaurant Inspections

Code Enforcement Violations

Construction Permits

Parcels

Property Assessment

Property Deeds

Public Buildings

Zoning (GIS)

Service Requests (311)

Transit

Web Analytics

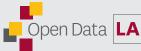




U.S. City Open Data Census scores for eight cities

COMPOSITE SCREENSHOT FROM US-CITY.CENSUS.OKFN.ORG (APRIL 20, 2015)







Data: Does a city have high quality open data?

The U.S. City Open Data Census gives an overview of the amount and "openness" of a city's open data, but it doesn't speak to the quality of the datasets. To use a dataset, a user needs to know the source, how the data was gathered, and what it includes or doesn't - and why. Incomplete, inaccurate, or otherwise incomprehensible data leads to misuse and misinterpretation, and can result in poor decisions by government and the stakeholders who use it.

Each category of city data will have different definitions of "quality" and thus needs to be rated differently. Developing 19 sets of detailed criteria was beyond the our scope for this first phase of our research, so we assessed the eight sample cities on only their "public purses," using criteria outlined by CALPIRG in its January 2013 report on "Transparency in City Spending" (calpirg.org/reports/caf/transparency-city-spending).

CALPIRG, a non-profit public interest research group, graded 30 major U.S. cities on the availability of the budget, procurement contracts, service requests (311) and spending databases, and on the accessibility of the financial data on each city's website. The

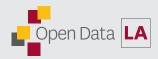
CALPIRG criteria also gave points for the availability of past data, an essential component to understanding trends in spending.

CALPIRG gave the city of Los Angeles a score of 68, or C-*.

After the Open Data LA team updated the 2013 CALPIRG score, the city of Los Angeles scored 77 or a grade of C+. Culver City and West Hollywood scored slightly above Los Angeles, with 80 and 79, respectively. However, the other five cities in our sample scored below 50, indicating gaps in the availability or accessibility of their budget and spending datasets.

Open Data LA CALPIRG ratings for eight Los Angeles County cities									
CITY	FINANCIAL	SERVICE	WEBSITE	TOTAL	GRADE				
Max Score	85	8	7	100					
1 Culver City	73	3	4	80	B-				
2 West Hollywood	70	5	4	79	C+				
3 Los Angeles	72	1	4	77	C+				
4 Bell	53	1	3	57					
5 Pasadena	46	7	3	56					
6 Santa Clarita	41	4	3	48					
7 Santa Monica	41	4	3	48					
8 Manhattan Beach	41	3	3	47					

* Note: At USC, a 68 is a D+!

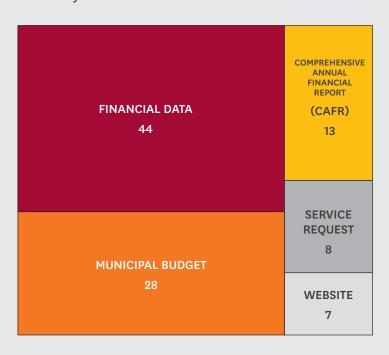




An Analysis of the CALPIRG Financial Transparency Scoring Criteria

The CALPIRG framework includes detailed scoring criteria that are relevant indicators of the quality of the datasets; it gives city officials actionable information.

Eighty-five points are given for three different types of financial data. However, 15 points are for non-financial categories: service requests (8 points), and website branding (7 points). As we've seen from the U.S. City Open Data Census, service requests is a separate category and warrants its own set of comprehensive criteria. Giving it only 8 points in the CALPIRG score means that a city could ignore doing it and still get a passing CALPIRG grade. Similarly, a city should be scored on its overall open data portal, and not just whether the financial data is included and accessible.



FINANCIAL DATA: AN ONLINE "CHECKBOOK"

- line-by-line amounts and descriptions of every payment a city has made
- copies of contracts
- data from previous years

Points are deducted if a user has to open up individual documents to get detailed info, e.g., how much was paid, to whom, and by which department.

BUDGETS

- 25 points for having the current year's budget
- Up to three additional points for previous years

COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT (CAFR)

- assets and liabilities
- 10 points for having the current year
- Up to three additional points for previous years

SERVICE REQUESTS (311)

- List of requests for city services, e.g., trash pick-up, potholes, that shows the status and completion dates
- Continuously updated
- Downloadable

WEBSITE

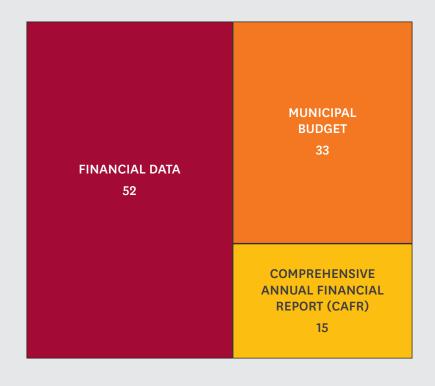
- Includes the checkbook, tax expenditure data, budgets and CAFRs in one place
- Clearly branded as financial transparency open data

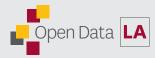




Data: Overall scores of eight cities in Los Angeles County

For open data initiatives to live up to their power and promise, it is far more important for cities to provide the type of detailed, contextualized datasets called for by CALPIRG's scoring criteria (see the next page) than it is to provide a large amount of raw data. Thus, each city's overall data score in our framework consists of its CALPIRG score of only the financial data weighted at two-thirds plus its U.S. City Open Data Census score weighted at one-third.





Open Data LA data ratings for eight Los Angeles County cities

by overall weighted data score

	CALP	PIRG	U.S. City Open Data Census		OVERALL DATA SCORE				
СІТҮ						U.S. City Open Data Census	TOTAL WEIGHTED	Quadrant	
	FINANCIAL SCORE	INDEXED	SCORE AS OF APRIL 2015	INDEXED	weighted financial score		weighted score	DATA SCORE	
Max Score	85	100	1,900	100	67	33	100		
1 Los Angeles	72	85	1,485	78	57	26	83	High	
2 Culver City	73	86	485	26	58	8	66	High	
3 West Hollywood	70	82	485	26	55	8	64	High	
4 Santa Monica	41	48	965	51	32	17	49	Low	
5 Pasadena	46	54	480	25	36	8	45	Low	
6 Bell	53	62	165	9	42	3	45	Low	
7 Santa Clarita	41	48	190	10	32	3	36	Low	
8 Manhattan Beach	41	48	165	9	32	3	35	Low	





Does a city have the leadership to build a robust and sustainable open data culture?

The benefits of open data - greater efficiency in responding to information requests, empowering citizens to help solve city problems, and generating new jobs, to name just a few - are long in coming.

They also require substantial and focused efforts from visionary leadership, assisted by an infrastructure that demonstrates that open data is part of a city's DNA. An open data initiative's progress shouldn't be affected by changes in city leadership.

We rated cities as "high" in the level of leadership if they had at least two of the following three factors in place:

■ A policy: An executive policy or city legislative action. The ultimate indicator that an open data initiative would be sustained would be a change in a city's charter (if a city were a charter city).

• Full-time staff: At least one full-time, permanent open data staff member (i.e., not full-time temporaries or fellows assigned to open data for one or two years) who would not be reallocated to other city priorities as they flare up.





Abhi Nemani City of Los Angeles' first Chief Data Officer

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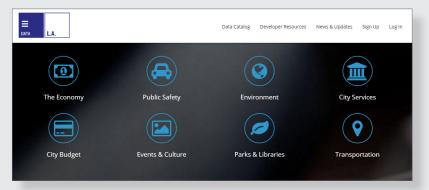




Open Data Intitiative effective December 2013

Dedicated funding: Funds specifically allocated to implement an open data initiative, as demonstrated by a city's use of a portal run by Socrata, Junar, OpenGov or other fee-for-service vendor that requires an ongoing development and maintenance resources.

With all three components, the city of Los Angeles was the only city in our sample to be rated "high" in leadership. The other seven have only portals, or dedicated open data funding.



DATA.LACITY.ORG



CONTROLLERDATA.LACITY.ORG



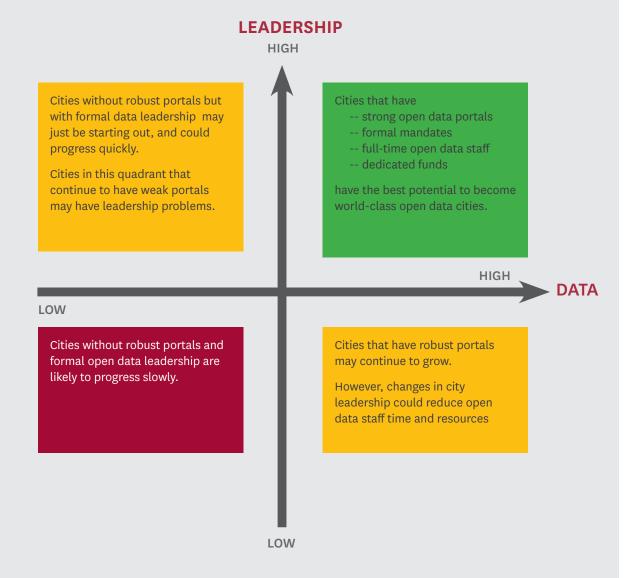


The crossroads of data and leadership

Single dimensional scoring, such as we've seen with the U.S. City Open Data Census and CALPIRG methodologies, is limited in helping us understand where a city currently stands and what our expectations should be when tracking its progress going forward.

By plotting the level of leadership vs. the level of data quality, we argue that we can get a fair overview of:

- the pace at which we expect a city to develop open data infrastructure, and
- the likelihood that a city's open data initiative will be sustained.







Applying our frameworkto eight cities in Los Angeles County

While Los Angeles has a solid foundation, Culver City's and West Hollywood's data scores are perhaps the result of strong but informal leadership that will continue to propel their open data initiatives. The data scores for all of the cities - and thus their quadrant positions - may change significantly when the Open Data LA team adds criteria for other datasets and website usability.

QUADRANT 1: Los Angeles

Los Angeles is the only city in our sample to have both an executive policy and at least one full-time open data staff member. The city's data score of 83 reflects the substantial resources that both the mayor's and the controller's offices have spent.

The challenge for Los Angeles will perhaps be in expanding strategically based on city issues and priorities rather than just churning out more datasets and improving website usability.

OUADRANT 2: No cities

We hypothesize that no city will be in this quadrant for long. With strong leadership, a city should be able to build a robust open data portal quickly.

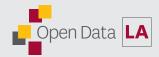
QUADRANT 3: Santa Monica, Pasadena, Bell, Santa Clarita, Manhattan Beach

These cities have internal champions mostly in the finance and information technology departments. Progress is uncertain, as resources are dependent on particular individuals.

QUADRANT 4: Culver City, West Hollywood

Both cities have strong informal leadership. West Hollywood has an interdepartmental "Innovation Catalyst Group" that is mentored by the city manager.







Next steps for building an open data assessment framework

Here are the key questions that the Open Data LA team will be tackling in future phases.

Aside from financial transparency, what datasets are the most important?

The datasets in a city's open data portal should address its priorities. In other words, a portal shouldn't just include datasets that are the easiest to prepare, the "safest" for public distribution, or the most fun or popular for hackathons.

We believe that the promise of open data leading to more civic participation will only be fulfilled if it's used to bring more transparency to more people around relevant topics and problems. Having only low priority datasets in portals could lead to indifference, or the perception that a government isn't as open as it claims.

• What are the relevant criteria to assess the quality of each type of dataset?

The U.S. City Open Data Census and other organizations have identified key criteria that can be used to evaluate any dataset's usability and accessibility. However, each dataset type needs the same level of specific, detailed and weighted criteria that CALPIRG has for financial transparency datasets.

U.S. City Open Data Census Categories

(grouped by type)

See us-city.census.okfn.org/about for category descriptions.

Campaign Finance Contributions

Asset Disclosure

Lobbyist Activity

Budget
Spending
Procurement Contracts

Business Listings

Crime

Restaurant Inspections

Code Enforcement Violations
Construction Permits
Parcels
Property Assessment
Property Deeds

Zoning (GIS)

Public Buildings

Service Requests (311)

Transit

Web Analytics



• Where do the other cities and government jurisdictions in Los Angeles County fall in our preliminary framework?

Issues and problems cross many jurisdictions, especially in the greater Los Angeles region. In addition to the 88 incorporated cities in Los Angeles County, we aim to track the status of open data initiatives in Los Angeles County government, school and water districts, and other jurisdictions. Most current assessments of open data initiatives cover only the city of Los Angeles and only well-established, best practices open data cities such as New York.

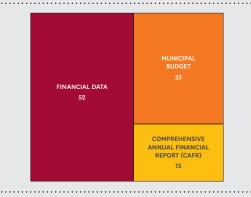
Our framework could be used to establish standards across the region so that:

- the datasets can be more easily used to analyze regional issues, and
- the internal open data champions in governments can help support each other in developing best practices and more sustainable initiatives.
- What role do news organizations play in the development of open data initiatives?

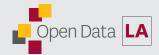
A data dump is no substitute for journalism. Reporters are needed to synthesize data and provide context. While open data initiatives allow non-journalists to do this as well, we believe news organizations have a new role: to hold governments accountable for proactively releasing complete and relevant datasets. And, news organizations can increase the accessibility of government information by continuing to make their own vetted and synthesized datasets available online.

The next phase of Open Data LA will include leveraging the knowledge and expertise of journalists to further develop our assessment framework. Our goal is to establish a research center to help expand journalism's watchdog role so open data initiatives can truly thrive, and thus have more impact on government transparency and civic participation.



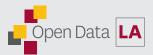








The purpose of Open Data LA is to foster open data initiatives in the greater Los Angeles region through multidisciplinary research and other activities. We welcome your input and ideas for collaborations at OpenDataLA.org.



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