

This checklist can be used by a variety of people, across different sectors. This tool sets out barriers you may encounter when scaling with data, and a checklist of things to consider in overcoming them. You can find a more extensive checklist at theodi.org/scaling-checklist

What does scaling mean?

As part of the ODI's Scaling data innovation project, we explored how to help local data-enabled projects scale up or scale out.

A project or initiative can 'scale' in two ways:

It can scale up. A project or initiative that has worked well at a small scale can be scaled up to improve systems, ensure sustainability, or cover a wider geographic area or larger population base. This could be managed by the original project team, in collaboration with partners, or by another organisation.

It can scale out by being repeated, repurposed or re-deployed across sectors, organisations or areas. The project team can share insights and allow others to build on and reuse their work.

Around the UK, we have found that there are many ways that data – especially open data – and open approaches to design can be used to deliver more efficient and effective public services.

However, data innovation in public services is not being effectively reused across local government or in the wider public, private or third sectors. Solutions often remain local and innovations do not benefit as many people as they could. By designing services to scale, we can increase the impact of these innovations.

Working more openly can help to overcome many of these barriers. Sharing what you are working on with peers – and your ideas, frustrations and solutions – can lead to better collaboration, transparency and services.

Barriers to scaling

We have identified a number of barriers which can hinder the ability of a project to scale. (There will be other factors which can affect a project, such as regional differences, that are not included below.)

How can you design to scale?

Follow these steps below, when designing your project, or finishing a pilot. This will help others to replicate your work elsewhere.

For a more detailed dive into things you may need to consider, see the full set of checklist questions at: theodi.org/scaling-checklist

		Barriers	Checklist
Data	Data availability	A project may collect and use a dataset that other organisations do not have access to	<p>Have you helped others to understand what data is necessary?</p> <p>Have you documented any technical, legal and ethical challenges in using that data?</p>
	Data licensing	Access to non-open data may be costly or difficult for others	
	Data quality	The data collected may not be fit for purpose, therefore costs will be incurred in cleaning it or making it suitable for a new area or team	
	Different data formats	If data is stored in different ways and using different formats then a project may struggle to be replicated	
	Legal issues	The legal landscape may have changed since the original project was run	
	Ethical issues	A project may have run as a small pilot where explicit ethical issues could be managed effectively but would be harder to manage at a larger scale	
Technical	Proprietary software	Services developed using proprietary software minimise the scope for sharing, due to a lack of access for others, and increased financial costs	<p>Have you documented the technical aspects or dependencies of your project?</p> <p>Have you published your code under an open licence, so it can be accessed, used and shared by others?</p>
	Closed source	When relevant source code or tools are not openly available, a new team must develop a new version rather than use something that already works	
Resource	Initial funding	The need to secure initial funding – through proposals, grants, or winning competitions – may act as a barrier to organisations replicating work	<p>Have you described how your project was funded?</p> <p>Have you described any identified costs to replicate your project?</p> <p>Have you described the skills needed to replicate your project?</p>
	Sustainable funding	Projects need sustainable funding for ongoing costs, procuring help, accessing data etc. A sustainable project can grow or be replicated more easily.	
	Skills or resources	Interested parties need skills, time and resources to redeploy projects or initiatives	
Knowledge	Awareness and communication	A project's successes or failures are often only known to the teams, and not to others	<p>Have you published documentation about your project so outputs can be easily found?</p> <p>Have you shared your learnings, impact, successes and challenges?</p>
	Different users	Users for a service might be specific to one location or problem, and not exist elsewhere	
	Documentation	Without clear documentation it can be difficult or risky to replicate similar projects	
	Evidence of impact	Pilots and projects can be short, with little evidence of their success, failures or viability on a larger scale	
Collaboration	Engagement and collaboration	A reluctance for different organisations to work together can mean that risk and reward is not shared	Have you considered how you can work with others to help them to create a similar project or improve your own?