

# Benefacts

A sustainable data infrastructure for  
Ireland's social economy

July 2021

# Ireland's nonprofit sector – part of the European social economy

- 2m social enterprises in Europe
- 10% of all businesses in the EU
- 11m+ people – 6% of the EU's workforce – work for social economy enterprises

[https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy_en)

## Benefacts Analysis 2021

- **34,331 Organisations**
- **164,922 Employees**
- **93,451 Directors/charity trustees**
- **€13.9bn Turnover**
- **€6.2bn State funding**

<https://www.benefacts.ie/insights/reports/2021/>

# Thanks to Govt/philanthropy co-funding, Benefacts 6-year proof of concept project has

- sourced and catalogued Ireland's full population of civil society organisations
- cleaned, classified and amalgamated data from many sources – few of them machine-readable
- analysed, digitised and stored 50,000 analogue files (financial statements)
- maintained the database live with daily updates to the Irish Government's Open Data Portal [data.gov.ie](http://data.gov.ie)



# Benefacts approach is aligned with public policy

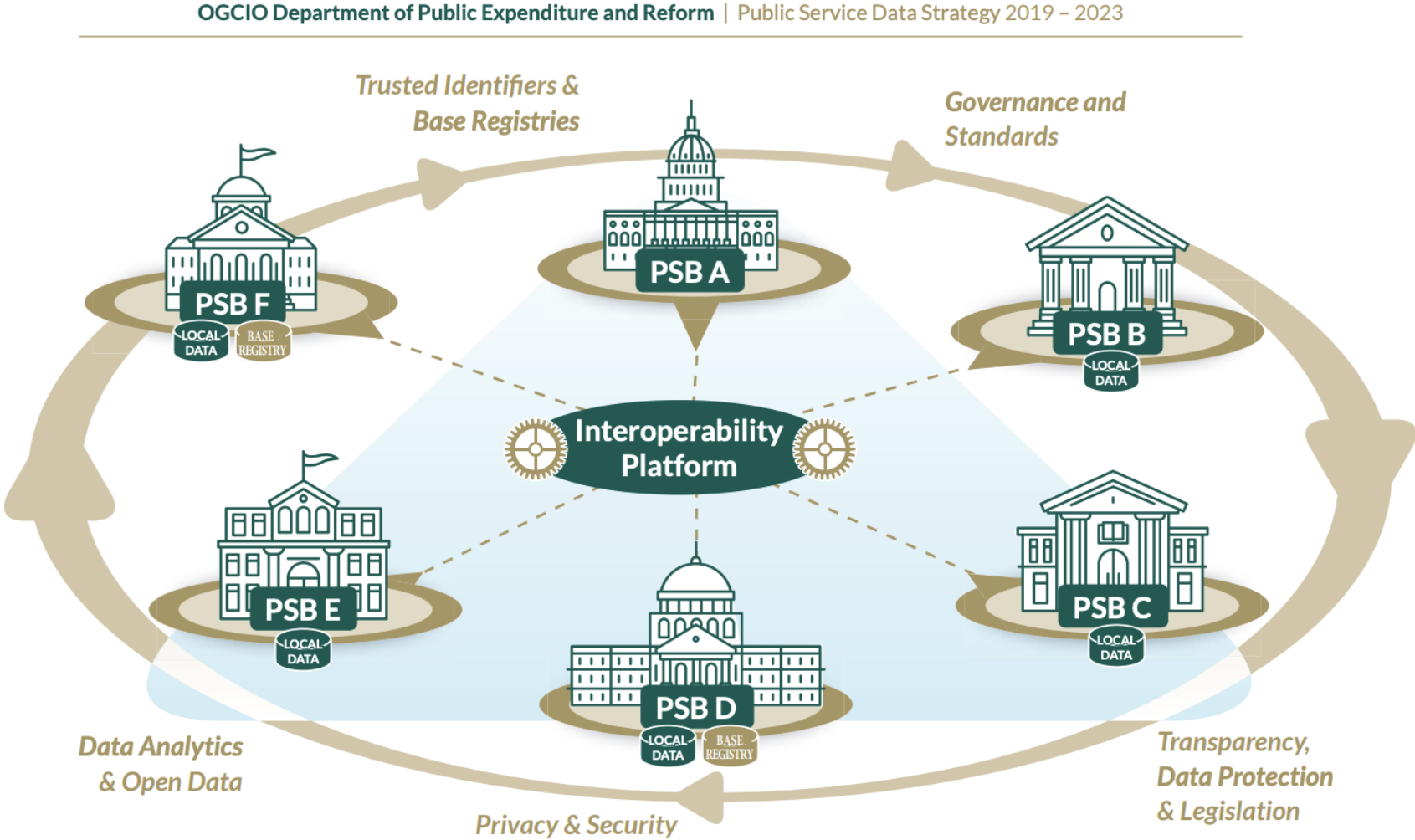


Figure 2: Target State Data Ecosystem for the Public Service

# With termination of DPER funding, Benefacts needs to transition to alternative steady state

Continuing to serve the needs of nonprofits, donors, policy-makers, funders, regulators, analysts and the public with

- **datasets** for statisticians/researchers
- bespoke **analysis** reports web services/APIs providing data, analysis, **analytics** for decision-makers
- free public **information** and sectoral **reports** (on nonprofits, charities, philanthropy) for everyone

# Some recent users of Benefacts services

Carmichael.



An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage

 The Community  
Foundation for Ireland

 An  
Phríomh-Oifig  
Staidrimh

Central  
Statistics  
Office

the  
wheel



An Roinn Caiteachais  
Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe  
Department of Public  
Expenditure and Reform

Revenue   
Cáin agus Custaim na hÉireann  
Irish Tax and Customs

RETHINK  
IRELAND

TÚSLA

pieta 

 DATA.GOV.IE



National Federation of  
Voluntary Service Providers  
*Supporting people with intellectual disability (CLG)*

**Benefacts**

# How to maintain this infrastructure for the benefit of all stakeholders, with

1. a new Government sponsor
2. a resolution to the procurement question
3. an equitable funding model

Better data  
Better data  
Better data  
Better data  
Better decisions

# Benefacts is exploring

1. Government lead sponsorship (with central departments)
2. A procurement solution (based on the exemption already in place for the ESRI, IPA, Pobal)
3. a co-funding model that involves
  - charging for the data provided to the CSO (at cost)
  - **a subscription service including base register, unified grant expenditure database and shared data repository to the sector and its funders**
  - providing customized governance, compliance and risk solutions to large funders based on its Analytics service
  - philanthropic contributions and fees for services

# A subscription service for funders: a) already built

- A **digital directory** of all nonprofits directly or indirectly funded by each Department, with
  - base register identifiers, Eircode, sector classification
  - current regulatory status
  - partial compliance report DPER Circular 13/2014
- **Online State funding database (Who Funds What)** with the latest available State grant and fee payments to ~4,000 nonprofits, including
  - The latest reported grants/fees paid to nonprofits as reported by all participating PSBs
  - Analysis of expenditure by grant programme
  - Analysis of receipts from all sources to each individual nonprofit

# A subscription service for funders: b) for discussion

- A new **digital compliance repository** for Irish nonprofits and their funders and regulators, for sharing routine governance and compliance data (tell-us-once/compliance “passport”) including at minimum
  - a. Registered name, address(es), Eircode and URL
  - b. Regulatory numbers and status
  - c. Legal/charitable objects
  - d. Constitution (document)
  - e. Latest available full audited financial statements (document)
  - f. Names, terms of service of directors/charity trustees

# Benefits of shared/subscription approach

- Multiple funders (+ all the bodies under their aegis)  
(Revenue; Departments of Arts; Children & Youth; Foreign Affairs; Further & Higher Ed.; Housing; Health; Justice; Rural & Community Devt.; Social Protection)
- Same cost to all @ €50,000 per annum (assumes 10 participants)
- Interoperable, in line with Government strategy
- Fulfills key deliverables under DPER Circular 13/2014 (compliance) and new Open Data regulations (disclosure)

# Other services (outside scope of subscription)

- **Datasets/data feeds** (e.g. nonprofits involved in social housing services/nonprofits in specified geolocation)
- **Bespoke data capture** (e.g. purposes for which grant provided)
- **Bespoke analysis reports** (e.g. profile of employment, turnover, governance, in a given set of nonprofits)
- **Analytics reports** (compliance appraisal, risk management)

# Benefacts proposal: consider in-principal agreement to subscription contribution

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- Same cost to all @ €50,000 per annum
- Interoperable, in line with Government strategy
- Helps Departments deliver on key requirements of DPER Circular 13/2014 and new Open Data regulations

# FAQs

- Q.** Will my Department have access only to the data on nonprofits directly funded by it?
- A.** All of the data for 4,000 State-funded nonprofits will be stored together. It will be a matter for the project oversight group how it is to be consumed, presented and shared among the Departments or more widely.
- Q.** Presumably this necessitates inter-departmental data sharing agreements?
- A.** None are required. Your Department will be asked only to ensure that the portfolio of nonprofits receiving your funding (and funding from bodies under your aegis) is up to date.
- Q.** Can I access data from Benefacts Analytics through this subscription payment?
- A.** No. Benefacts will work with individual departments and agencies to understand and meet their specific advanced data needs, and these services will be charged at the cost of delivery.

# FAQs

- Q.** How does the “compliance repository” differ from what is already available freely on benefacts.ie?
- A.** Small nonprofits including charities are free to publish abridged and unaudited accounts to the CRO: up to 20% of State-funded nonprofits do so. Benefacts proposes that as a condition of grant aid, nonprofits be required to file full accounts in public.
- Q.** How does the “compliance repository” save administrative duplication?
- A.** Once they have made their mandatory regulatory returns, nonprofits’ files and the data extracted from them will be digitally accessible by all their funders, together with a compliance report.
- Q.** Who will lead the project?
- A.** It’s not yet clear to Benefacts which Department will take over as lead funder. If there is no funding lead, the subscription data sharing and other projects will not go ahead. Benefacts will be wound up in Q4 2021 and all of its services will be extinguished.