



4.1 Organize a co-development workshop

Organizing a collaborative workshop to create a shared FAIR goal for your investment

Why should I do this?

To create buy-in and commitment to the FAIR journey requires a shared goal. You can decide on a shared goal through co-development, using a collaborative workshop, where partners and other stakeholders can engage in open discussions.

In this setting, stakeholders can decide, through a 'bottom-up' approach, how FAIR they want their data assets to be. The collaborative process ensures that everyone has a voice, fostering alignment, trust, and ownership of the FAIR Principles.

In this activity you will:

Facilitate discussions to explore how the four principles—findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable—can be realistically applied to project data assets.

Document key insights, challenges, and motivations expressed by stakeholders to guide future FAIR-related activities.

Begin drafting a shared FAIR goal or aligning principles for the project, reflecting a collective vision.

Before you start, it is worth spending some time quickly reviewing the key data asset inventory you created in Step 3 – especially if you completed that exercise a while ago.

Checking in on your data inventory will provide a comprehensive guide for evaluating and enhancing the findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reusability of your data assets.

Staying up to date with your data inventory will allow you to consider additional data assets, prioritize or de-prioritize them, and isolate which ones will be the focus for any FAIR implementations.



- 1) If you are a Program Officer (PO), you may want to share this page directly with your grantee, so they can act on it.

 - 2) Use the workbook (and supporting factsheet) for Step 4 here. We recommend using the same document throughout this step, so you have a single document that captures all your workings.

 - 3) Workshops should be tailored to best suit the needs and preferences of the stakeholders you are convening.
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Setting the stage for collaborative FAIR implementation

Understanding the collaborative nature of FAIR

While it might seem efficient for a single individual to identify and structure the FAIR goal, the process of making data assets FAIR is inherently collaborative and requires active involvement from all stakeholders. This shared approach strengthens alignment and ensures the FAIR vision is practical and achievable.

Simplifying FAIR

The FAIR principles, while comprehensive, are often technical and aspirational, setting a high standard that may seem challenging. To foster stakeholder buy-in and collaboration, it is essential to simplify the language around FAIR and clearly communicate what each principle means in practice. This helps everyone understand their role in the FAIR journey.

Adapting FAIR to context

The interpretation and application of FAIR principles vary by region and project. For example, “findable” data might mean something different in Ethiopia compared to Ghana, Nigeria, or India. Open discussions help stakeholders explore these differences, reach a shared understanding, and define what each principle means in their specific context.

Consider the below strategies to develop an effective workshop:

You have the flexibility to mix different stakeholders (such as grantees, project partners, researchers and end users) in each session, or opt for group-specific sessions (where only certain groups participate in each session).

Focus on translating complex concepts into simple, relatable language e.g., instead of 'metadata', use 'labels and tags' to help participants think of data as items in a store that need clear labeling.

Use simple definitions of each principle to introduce FAIR:

Findable: Data that one can locate.

Accessible: Data that one get hold of.

Interoperable: Data that one can work easily with.

Reusable: One understands what they are permitted to do with the data.

Given potential differences in participants' understanding of FAIR and its intricacies, provide comprehensive information in advance. Incorporating a pre-session activity or question that encourages participants to think about the session topic will enable a more productive session.

During the workshop, encourage discussion of these materials collectively or in smaller breakout groups.

By the end of the workshop, participants should collaboratively answer the following questions:

What does 'findable' mean in our context? Consider whether this looks like a searchable metadata catalog, an email address for the data holder, or something else entirely.

What does 'accessible' mean in our context? Think about what it takes for data to be easily obtained or shared among relevant stakeholders.

What does 'interoperable' mean in our context? Explore what it means for data to be integrated or compatible across different systems and stakeholders.

What does 'reusable' mean in our context? Define what it looks like for data to be easily understood, interpreted and repurposed within the project's scope.

4) By defining these principles collectively, project stakeholders create a shared understanding of what is aspirational versus what is realistic for their specific context. This approach not only leads to higher levels of buy-in, but also increases the likelihood of successful implementation. When stakeholders define what FAIR means in the context of their project, they are more likely to commit to achieving these goals. This shared understanding becomes a cornerstone for subsequent FAIR-related activities.

Investment types



Overview



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Every investment project is unique

The application of the six steps will vary accordingly. To provide examples that align with your project, common characteristics of AgDev investments were researched and three ‘investment types’ were developed.

AgriConnect: a digital solutions investment



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AgriConnect: Workshop to draft a FAIR goal

Objective:

To collaboratively define what FAIR principles—Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable—mean for AgriConnect’s digital agriculture platform, involving a range of stakeholders who bring different perspectives on data needs.

Workshop focus and participants:

Defining FAIR in agricultural data:

AgriConnect’s lead grantee invites smallholder farmer representatives, researchers, government data custodians, and private sector partners to the workshop. Each group brings unique insights:

Smallholder farmers share needs around data accessibility and usability.

Researchers discuss technical requirements for data interoperability.

Government representatives address potential data access restrictions and compliance.

Addressing barriers to FAIR:

Participants discuss anticipated challenges, such as smallholders' limited digital literacy and restricted access to government data. Each group offers ideas for overcoming these barriers, like simplifying data access for farmers or using alternative data sources when access is restricted.

Documenting insights for future application:

The lead grantee captures key insights contributed by each participant group. For instance, metadata cataloging is prioritized for researchers, while simplified access methods are noted for smallholders. These insights will guide AgriConnect's FAIR goal in Step 4.2.

AgroThrive: a policy and advocacy investment



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AgroThrive: Workshop to draft a FAIR goal

Objective:

To establish a shared understanding of FAIR principles as they apply to AgroThrive's policy-focused data assets, involving stakeholders who contribute to policy development and data management.

Workshop focus and participants:

Clarifying FAIR for policy data:

The workshop includes policy advisors, researchers, government representatives, and private sector data users to define what FAIR principles mean for policy data. Each group's role is crucial:

Policy advisors focus on data usability and transparency.

Researcher discuss the technical aspects of interoperability.

Government representatives address access restrictions and anonymization needs.

Private sector partners highlight considerations for data security.

Identifying resource needs and challenges:

Participants identify challenges such as restricted access to economic indicators and ensuring interoperability across different policy systems. This helps pinpoint resource needs, including the possibility of additional funding for secure data access methods.

Capturing collaborative input:

The lead grantee documents each group's input, ensuring that priorities like anonymization protocols and controlled data access are addressed. These insights will shape the FAIR goal and implementation plan in Step 4.2.

NGBT: a field research investment



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NGBT: Workshop to draft a FAIR goal

Objective:

To establish a feasible and actionable FAIR goal that supports NGBT's climate-resilient barley research, focusing on data accessibility, ethical considerations, and scientific reuse.

Workshop Focus and Participants:

Defining FAIR for Research and Agricultural Data:

The workshop brings together researchers, geneticists, climate scientists, smallholder representatives, and ethics advisors. Each group contributes specific perspectives:

Researchers and geneticists discuss standards for making data findable and interoperable.

Climate scientists provide input on accessibility needs for environmental data.

Smallholder representatives share insights on privacy concerns related to location-specific data.

Ethics advisors emphasize ethical guidelines for sensitive data.

Discussing Sensitivity and Ethical Considerations:

Stakeholders address concerns around sensitive data such as genetic information and crop data. Smallholder representatives and ethics advisors highlight the need for anonymization, while researchers propose strategies to balance openness with privacy.

Documenting Key Definitions:

The lead grantee captures each group's contributions to FAIR, including priorities like ethical data reuse and secure data storage. These insights will guide the development of NGBT's shared FAIR goal in Step 4.2.

This stakeholder engagement process not only contributed to trust building as a prelude to data sharing in the project, but also more broadly to the upskilling of in-country partners around data

management best practices within their own institutions.

CABI, MaDiPHS Project in Malawi

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