

Good Data Collaborative

Key findings
and new resources

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Good Data Collaborative



- The Center for Democracy and Technology ([@cendemtech](#))
- The Engine Room ([@EngnRoom](#))
- The Future of Privacy Forum ([@futureofprivacy](#))
- SIMLab ([@SIMLab](#)) (we closed at the end of last year)

You can be a data practitioner while trying to do something else

For many practitioners, data is not part of their core mission, but comes up in the course of their work.

For example

- medical records for a health development NGO in Kenya;
- personal information for LGBTQUA orgs in the Bay area;
- feedback from citizens in governance projects in Nepal.

We wanted to know how organizations in the US and overseas were managing new data responsibility requirements and risks.

We asked three main questions

- Which principles should you build your responsible data approach around?
- What is happening in practice right now?
- How can we improve on existing resources to help people get started?

Which principles should you build your responsible data approach around?

- We reviewed existing RD frameworks and principles from the US and international regimes.
- Most combine ethics with data protection frameworks: Fair Information Practice Principles (FIPs) with principles for human subjects research from the Belmont Report.
- The principles that are shared across many Frameworks can give organizations a starting point for their own policy (beyond simply adopting one that exists)

RD Principles across many Frameworks:

1. **respect for individual rights and autonomy**, which includes concepts such as consent and access to one's personal information;
2. **fairness or justice**;
3. **beneficence** and the necessity of assessing the risks and benefits of collecting or using data;
4. FIPs-based **privacy and data protection** principles, including data minimization;
5. **transparency and accountability**; and
6. **information security**.

What is happening in practice right now?

- SIMLab interviewed 30-40 people in summer 2017:
 - Practitioners
 - Policy people
 - Platform providers
 - Philanthropists

In practice, RD is confusing and often not implemented

- RD is complex in large organizations, with no clear 'owner', no compliance mechanisms and poor understanding.
- Individual actors are largely left to police themselves, therefore - but no practitioner we interviewed felt they were compliant with RD, citing lack of knowledge, infrastructure and capacity.
- Many noted fear of legal consequences but felt the best thing to do was to keep their head down. Many felt 'real harm' is already happening. Some theorized that this was the only thing that would create change.
- All practitioners felt they were driven by donor policy - but no donor recognized this dynamic. Donors themselves are challenged to provide guidance and investment in a complex area.
- RD is only moving forward in organizations with BOTH ethical drive and legal compliance pressures.

How can we improve on existing resources?

- The Engine Room conducted User Experience research to understand how to improve [ResponsibleData.io](#)
- They used their research and other work to inform a redesign of the site, and a revamped definition of what RD means for their community:

“Responsible Data (RD) is a concept outlining our collective duty to prioritize and respond to the ethical, legal, social and privacy-related challenges that come from using data in new and different ways in advocacy and social change.”

The right resources may not yet exist

TER found civil society needs guidance not just on what *not* to do, but actually what **to** do - hence the new tagline on the RD.io site: 'leading the way from best intentions to best practice.'

But SIMLab's research found that most practitioners were not aware of where to find resources. Even those working for agencies who had developed guidance might not be aware of it.

Beyond high-level frameworks, guidance resources are duplicative and confusing, with little authoritative practical advice. Little is suitable for small- to medium-sized organizations just beginning their RD journey.

We need more dialogue

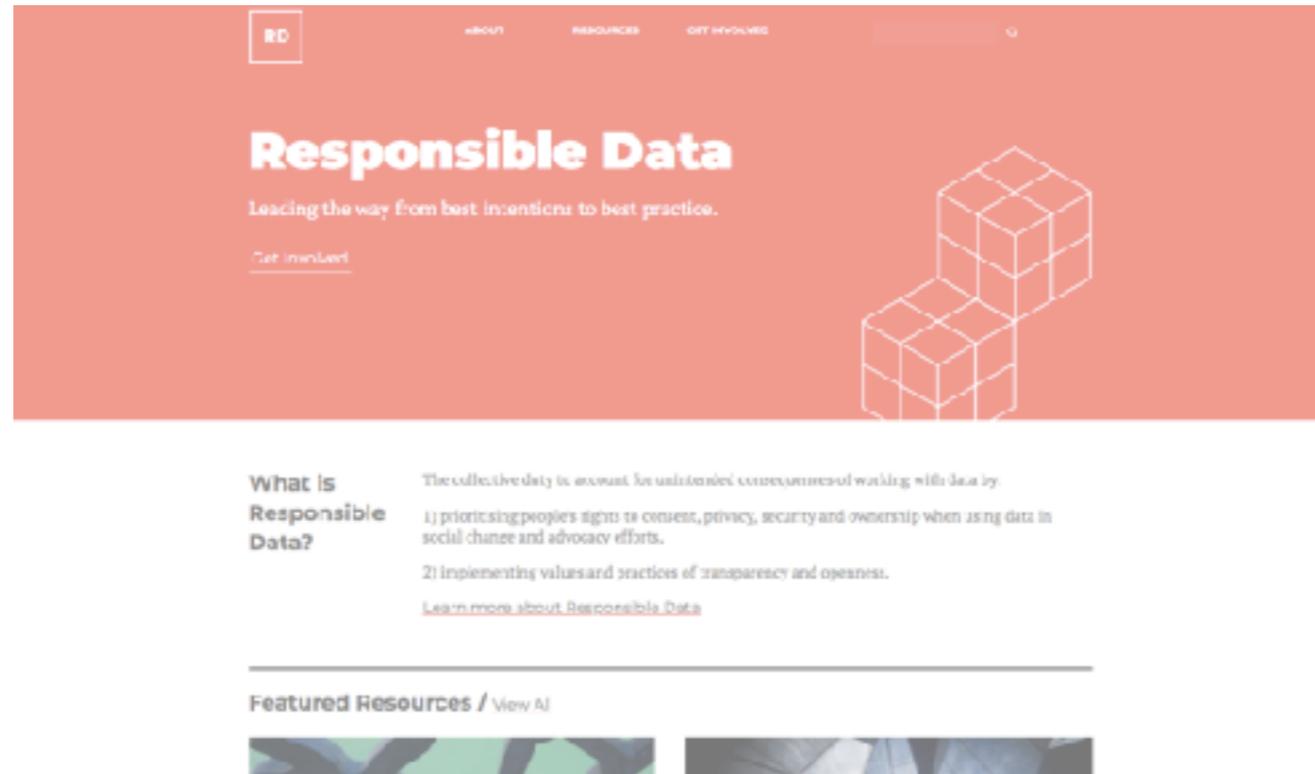
- Civil society infrastructure and systems need more funding.
- There is a disconnect between, on the one hand:
 - organizations moving towards **human-centered** RD principles, pushed by regimes like GDPR and led by human rights and humanitarian principles
 - organizations interested in **data monetization** business models that can grow to exponential scale in low-income countries and transform lives through markets
- We should be acknowledging this and talking about what it means for our practice and our philanthropy.

TL;dr:

RD is an ecosystem-level challenge, one that will not be solved by toolkits alone, but more likely will require

- institutionally-supported behavior change,
- individual internalization of these practices as good practice,
- sharing lessons learned and
- cooperative working across our whole community to confront ethics around operational data and the infrastructure needed to manage it responsibly

Check out



- [ResponsibleData.io](https://responsibledata.io) for The Engine Room's UX research report and the link to SIMLab's consultation report
- CDT and FPF's literature review and other resources are coming soon to [RD.io](https://rd.io) and [DigitalImpact.io](https://digitalimpact.io)!

Find us



[@cendemtech](#) [@EngnRoom](#) [@futureofprivacy](#) [@SIMLab](#)

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