How the UK have set up their version of the US SDGs tool in GitHub

Background

The UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) conducted a feasibility study in late 2016 to look at options for collecting and disseminating UK data for SDG global indicators. The study recommended reusing the US SDGs tool in the short to medium-term and using services within the ONS architecture in the long-term, once it has matured enough to meet SDG needs.

The ONS SDGs team have been running a project with the ONS Data Science Campus to set up and further develop a UK version of the tool. Work so far has involved streamlining code, reviewing data formats, improving chart visualisations and starting enhancement to navigation.

Setting up the UK version

We estimate it took less than a week for the UK to get a version of the US tool up and running, ready for adding data.

Outlined below are some of the steps we took and things we considered:

1. GitHub organisation and usernames

We set up a new ONS Data Science Campus 'organisation' on Github. If an establishment already uses github, it may be possible to set something up within it.

Our team members then set up their required GitHub accounts (see US training guide for more information) with higher-level administrator permissions given to one of the team.

Within a GitHub organisation it is possible to define 'teams'. This can be useful to indicate all of the users who are part of the project, improve communication between team members, and set finer grained permissions.

2. Forking the repository

To get your own version of the website you will need to 'fork' either the UK or the US version.

To do this, sign in to GitHub and go to https://github.com/datasciencecampus/sdg-indicators (UK) or https://github.com/gsa/sdg-indicators (US) and click the 'Fork' button at the top right. This creates a complete copy of the code, but not the issues.

Your website address will then be https://<YOUR-ORG>.github.io/sdg-indicators/, however, a few settings need to be changed for it to function properly.

3. Technical and hardware considerations

The tool has been developed using GitHub Pages and uses Jekyll server and prose.io. UK current thinking is that we will not need any separate Jekyll or prose.io server hosting to meet bandwidth requirements.

The only hardware requirement to get a version of the tool up and running is the use of a personal computer for working in GitHub

For developers the only software requirement is to have git installed on your personal computer. It is recommended to also have ruby installed so that the website may be tested locally. Data managers and data providers do not require software beyond a web browser. More advanced users will want to install git locally as well.

4. Customising setup

The UK will aim to provide more information on this in due course but key activities include
- Editing configuration files
- Granting prose.io access to the repository
- Removing the original country's data from the repository – the UK ran a script in Python to create blank data files (scripts could be written/run in R or Python).

To note: the code and data are currently in the same repository so any reforking will copy back over the original country's data and style sheets.

5. Skills required

- Setting up the tool and repository - proficiency in github and git, basic web development skills eg html, css.
- Developing the tool – as well as above, additionally need skills in javascript and ruby
- Data providers and data managers – need education on using the system (see US training manual).

Next steps

The US and UK are collaborating on key developments with a view to sharing code and experience from the enhancements each country has produced eg the UK are developing visualisations for disaggregations and the US are developing a dashboard of progress.

Over the coming months, newer enhanced versions of the tools will be available for other countries to freely reuse.

Contacting the ONS SDGs team

To contact the ONS SDGs team please email **sustainabledevelopment@ons.gov.uk**