

# CREATING AN OPEN DATA NETWORK

*In the information materials, you have probably already read about the open data steering groups. They are a good opportunity to build relationships with those actors in the municipality who are interested in using open data to expand their capacity and improve the social good. But sometimes the best ideas emerge in a more casual, non-formalized setting. Here are some suggestions for organizing formats that bring together activists interested in open data. Remember, this toolkit was originally made for German audiences, but even if you do not have these opportunities in your country, these ideas or groups may still be useful.*

## OK Labs

*Is there an OK Lab near you or maybe something similar? If so, it may be worthwhile to contact them. At your local OK Lab, you will meet people who have expertise in the area of open data, and they will be willing to volunteer their time to help citizen-fronted projects. You will have to find your own countries equivalent but for more information on the German OK Lab, you can visit: [www.codefor.de](http://www.codefor.de)*

## Schools and colleges

You can contact local colleges to attract students who are also passionate about technology, especially if there are no OK Labs in your area. For example, you could work with a group of students to implement an open data project for your city or town, which the students could integrate into their coursework.

You can also contact schools in your community. As part of the project “Daten machen Schule” (Data Show What They Can Do), the city of Moers in western Germany has gathered information on how open data can be integrated into school lessons. The project website provides various resources including teaching materials. (You may have to use a translation app.)

[www.datenmachenschule.de](http://www.datenmachenschule.de)

## How do I organize a Meetup?

- ◊ Someone will need to take the lead. This could be addressed in a steering group meeting.
- ◊ Contact a local pub or café and ask if you can meet there. (You will bring paying customers, so you don't need to rent a room. Just use the space like other guests, a few tables will do.) This is common in Germany.
- ◊ To organize an event, you can use Eventbrite or Meetup (mostly the latter is used: <https://www.meetup.com/>).
- ◊ First, choose an evening for (perhaps monthly) Meetups. They are usually evening events so that working people can attend.
- ◊ Do a little research and try to find local people who are making a positive difference with digitization and invite them to the Meetup.
- ◊ Invite guest speakers to your Meetup. The setting should not be too formal. The guest speakers could provide brief input on their topic, which can be followed by a relaxed group discussion.

## Meetups

Meetups are a great way to connect interested people with different backgrounds to the open data activities of your municipality. These gatherings bring together city representatives, social activists and tech-savvy students in an informal setting.

There may be participants who are interested in your open data activities but who are not associated with a third-sector organization. These individuals might not feel the need to attend an #ODFA workshop. They may nevertheless be interested in digital development, open government and social engagement.

A Meetup is therefore an opportunity to reach out to those who may not be part of professional circles, allowing you to gain valuable support or feedback nevertheless.