



THE SKIM

Series: 10 Key Interviews; Insights into the sustainability of Open Infrastructure services | Published Autumn 2020

BACKGROUND

Over the summer of 2020, SPARC Europe embarked on a **series of in-depth interviews with leaders of Open Infrastructure services that are currently thriving**. The focus of the interviews was sustainability; via in-depth conversations, we were looking to identify key factors —choices and decisions —that seemed to attribute to their success. What could we learn from these services about their road to sustainability that would benefit others? A number of key themes emerged.

SERIES HIGHLIGHTS

Key takeaways

Recommendations for both services and funders to help us achieve greater sustainability:

- **Know your purpose and let it be your guiding star.** Have a well-articulated mission and vision and be clear on your target audience. And review these over time.
- **A crucial question every Open service should be asking themselves is this: Would the problem you are solving benefit more from competition or collaboration?** This choice is almost irreversible - because it most often impacts your legal structure.
- **Have a business plan and deeply understand how you will recover costs.** Without this, it's easy to become lost. You can't just assume the university or another funder will take care of you. This plan should include a range of diverse revenue streams.
- **Be deliberate in how you are balancing your time, money and people.** A common pitfall involves sinking too many resources in "fixing" the past; consciously approach the allocation of resources between "running today"; and innovating for tomorrow.
- **Choose your partners and governance deliberately and judiciously** since they will help you achieve your mission and will reflect what you stand for to your users or customers.
- **Recognise that a wide range of competencies is needed to run a successful operation/organisation;** from people management to accounting skills to technology. Be prepared to invest accordingly or be creative to tap into knowledge.
- **Outsource skills you lack in-house.** Think hard about what makes sense to manage yourself and what to outsource. Remain open to using new technologies as a means to bring down costs.
- **Learn from others.** Actively work to meet, share and learn from others. Think practical knowledge.



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