

## Open Data – Imagine the Potential

'Open data' is a phrase heard more and more often. But what is it? What is it not? And what can we do with it? According to a recently released [Knowledge Brief](#), open data is all data sets that are "freely available to the public, in a usable and standardized format". Such data can be downloaded – like the 3000+ data sets on [Data BC's](#) website, or viewed online in an interactive format – like the RDI [Digital Basin Portal](#).



Data access can lower barriers, helping give everyone a more equal footing. Open data also increases transparency, allowing citizens to hold the public and private sectors accountable for their decisions and actions. An example of this is from the World Bank, an institution where decision-making, and the data those decisions were based on, was hidden. Today their attitude has changed. The World Bank provides free and open access to [global development data](#), as well as an [open data toolkit](#) designed to help others navigate open data. Another example is how collaborations between organizations can be helped through open data – allowing all partners equal access to the same information.

It is important to note that privacy laws and other restrictions do apply. Open data does not mean the indiscriminate sharing of any and all information. For example, with health data we can see aggregated data—that a certain number of knee replacements were done at a specific hospital or in a specific local health area—but not any personal information about those people. Another example is with archeology sites, where specific locations are confidential to protect the sites, but it is possible to access aggregated data about the types of archeology sites in an area.

Imagine the opportunities that become available and the challenges that can be tackled through the sharing of information. Activities like Hackathons – timed events where participants collaborate to tackle a specific problem – are examples of innovative uses of open data and local skills to create solutions.

While open data policies are becoming more common, less is known about open data in rural places. The [Selkirk Geospatial Research Centre](#) (SGRC) has set out to better understand open data in rural places through their Open Data for Open Government project. "There is great potential for applying open data in rural places" says Justin Robsinson with the SGRC, "but, like many other things, there isn't a direct transfer of how to do things from urban to rural places. So we're working towards understanding what open data means in a rural context." For more information visit: <http://www.ruralopendata.ca/open-data/> .

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*This article is a product of the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, at Selkirk College. We are a regional research centre with a mandate to support informed decision-making by Columbia Basin-Boundary communities through the provision of information,*

applied research and related outreach and extension support. Visit [www.cbrdi.ca](http://www.cbrdi.ca) for more information.

## TRAINING WORKFORCE – LEADING COMPLEX COLLABORATIONS

In partnership with Purdue University's Agile Strategy Lab, Selkirk College is offering training designed to help you lead complex collaborations. Join us for three days of engaged learning - September 25, 2017 @ 9:00 am to September 27, 2017 @ 4:00 pm. Strategic Doing enables people to form action-oriented collaborations quickly, move them toward measurable outcomes, and make adjustments along the way. In today's world, collaboration is essential to meet the complex challenges we face.

Click [here](#) for more details on how to register.

## HAVE YOU HEARD?

The Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (RDI) and Selkirk Geospatial Research Centre (SGRC) at Selkirk College are partnering to deliver a webinar on open data, local government and economic development in the region. The webinar will explore an open data opportunity that could leverage the assets of the Kootenay Real Estate Board, the SGRC, RDI, our local governments, and our economic development community to support evidence-based decision-making and stimulate economic development. The webinar is Wednesday, September 13 from 12-1pm (PST).

Click [here](#) for more details on how to register.



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