How Does Open Data Create Social Impact?

Emily Shaw, National Policy Manager

Problems are everywhere – and solutions are too

- The internet empowers deterritorialized, loosely-coupled human cooperation
- Ideas can come from anywhere – the more potential cooperating partners, the better
- Open data – data available to everyone, for free - provides the building blocks for solving vexing problems through loosely-coupled cooperation

Data is the 21st Century's Navigable Waters

Treating data as a **public good** means asking: What happens if we provide everyone free access to data?

For Comparison: Public Trust Doctrine

- Principle: water and land up to the tideline are public and must be publicly maintained

- Challenges: public expense, value of privatizing resource

- Public benefits: navigation, recreation, research, wildlife protection, economic development

New Public Good, New Things to Figure Out:

How do we make the best use of this resource?
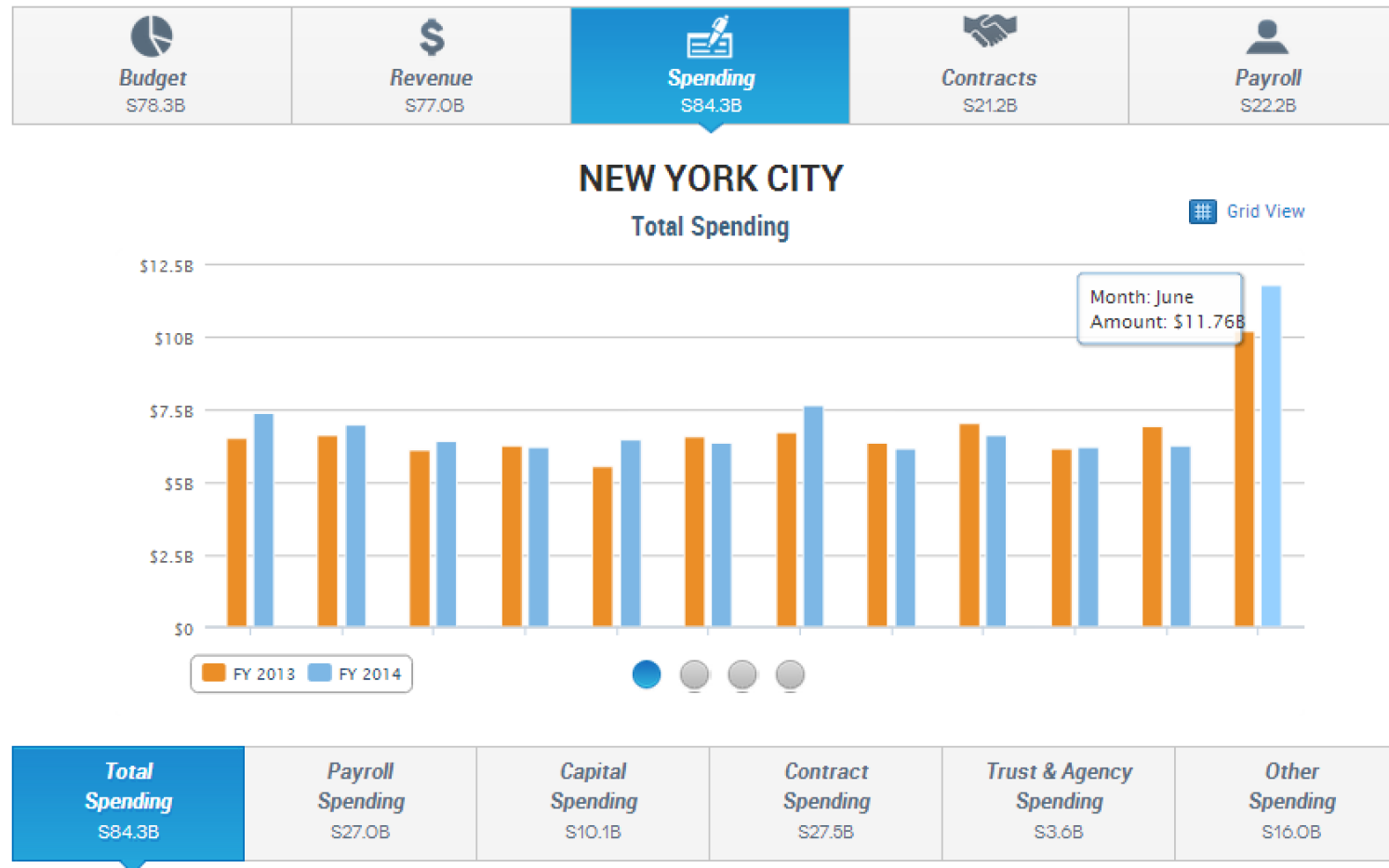How do we ensure it has the largest possible positive impact?

Communicate, communicate, communicate.

1. Communicate about successes.

- Sunlight Foundation's "Impacts of Open Data" explores some of the kinds of problem-solving cooperation enabled by open data
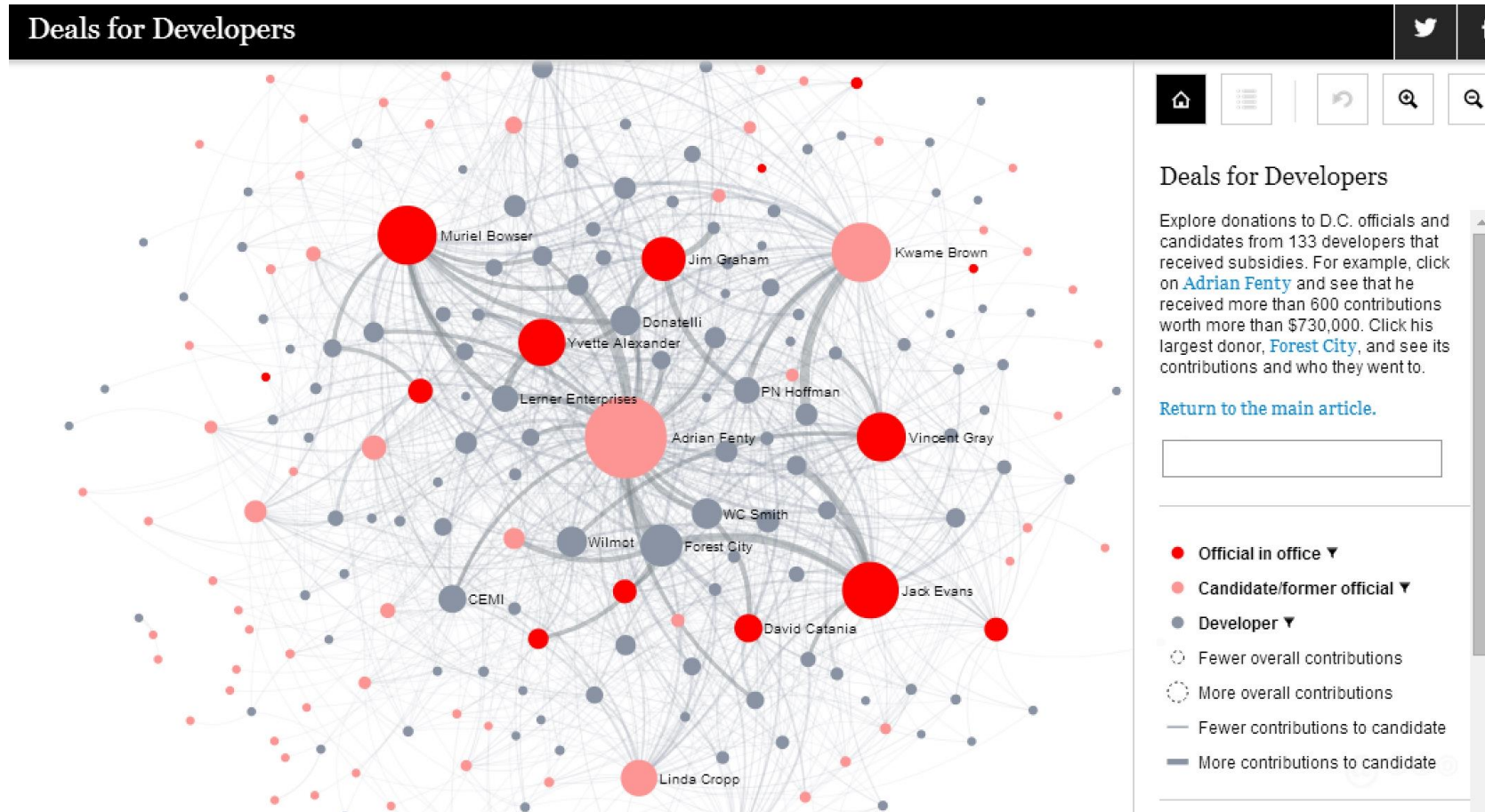
Creating Transparency

NYC Checkbook 2.0

Empowering Accountability

WAMU Deals for Developers story

Improving Governmental Efficiency
Using Data To Shine a Light on the Impact of City Services
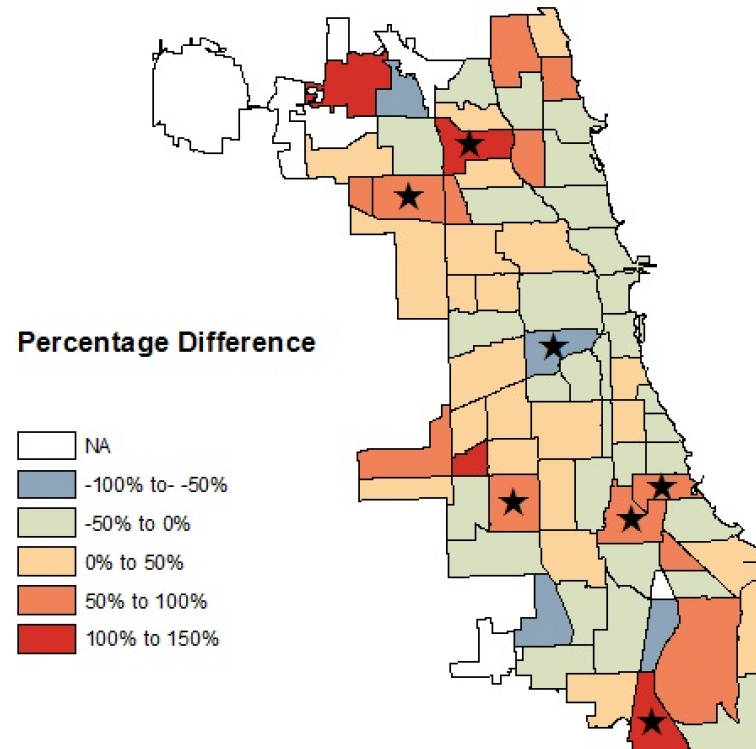
Improving Governmental Effectiveness

Los Angeles Times: "How Fast is LAFD Where You Live?"
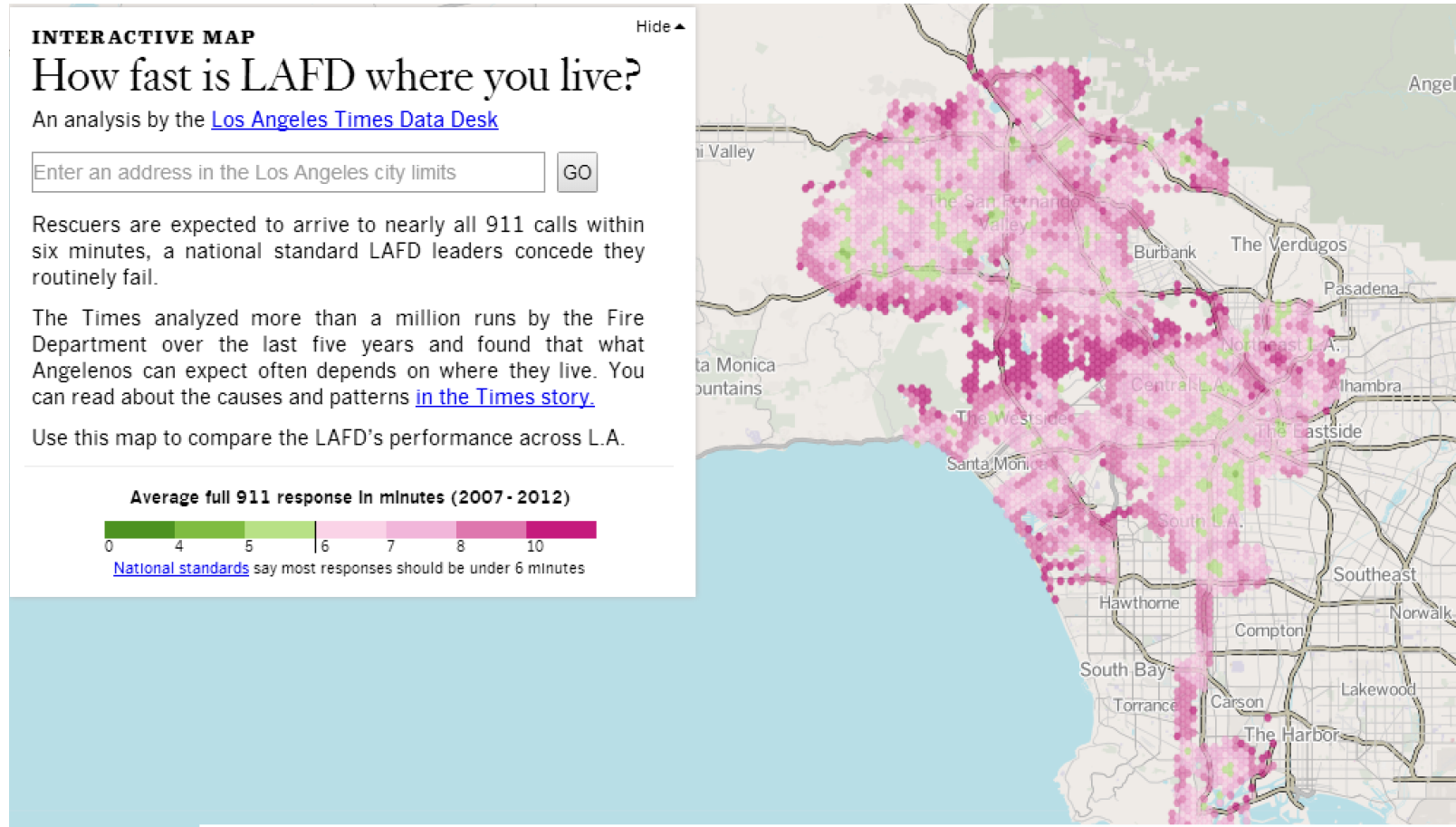
Increase Public Participation

South Bend, Indiana's CityVoice

2. Communicate About Shared Goals

- Health Care example: Ubiquity of "the Triple Aim" among health care researchers and advocates facilitates self-organizing cooperation.
- When a group of disconnected individuals all agree on a common definition of problems and set of goals to achieve, collective progress doesn't require traditional organization.

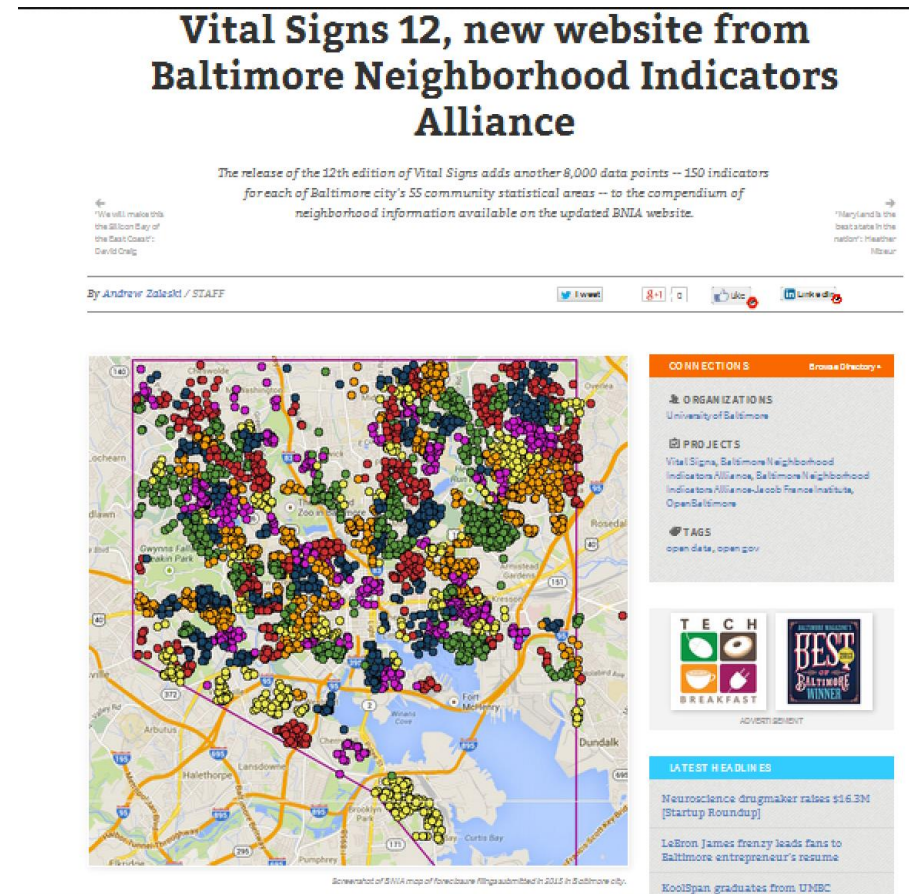# 3. Communicate about the data you want.

- Asking for specific datasets from governments lets them know what data is worth extra effort to release.

- Community organizations are increasingly working with governments to collect and cooperatively release data.

4. Communicate about data problems.

- Data quality concerns
- Cost of transition to open data
- Protecting individual privacy
- Restrictive public-private contracts
- Dealing with licensing and proprietary information

5. Communicate With Someone New!

- We are in the early days of a new concept in governance, and so Open Data needs you to talk about it!

- Does someone you know have a problem that could be solved with more data?

- Tell them to:
  - Ask for it by name!
  - Collect and share it freely!
  - Get in touch with open data advocates to find partners!