"If I could say one thing…"

With Joost van der Linden, Our Community's resident data scientist

To grantmakers on collecting data:

One the one hand, be excited about the possibilities.

We are just getting started in Australia, which means that we, as a community, have the opportunity to set the agenda. What data do we collect? What data do we share? What questions do we aim to answer? Thinking about these questions is important in order to record the right variables and align your stakeholders.

One the other hand, be mindful of the limitations. Grant data is inherently multi-faceted and involves many human factors, which can be challenging to capture in a table. There are also ethics and privacy aspects to consider.

No organisation wants to end up in a big data "blooper" story like this one.

To grantmakers on using data:

Before doing anything, get the right people together.

A data scientist can develop a great model, but without the involvement of those who collected the data, and those who will use the model, you lose the connection with the real world.

Learn about the uncertainty that was introduced during the data collection and make sure you fully understand the problem you are tackling; ask a million questions!

For example, at Our Community, we are involving subject experts, grantmakers and end-users in the development of our new CLASSIE taxonomy. The feedback we have received has been invaluable.

To people who ask, "What is a data scientist?"

Although the industry is still trying to figure this out themselves, roughly speaking, a data scientist combines software development skills, mathematics and statistics knowledge and subject expertise.

Using a "toolbox" of programming languages, software and visualisation programs, a data scientist tests hypotheses and develops models to answer questions in a particular field.

The beauty about being a data scientist is that the toolbox can be used anywhere; for example, I use the same methods to study fluid flow in my PhD as I use to analyse grant and donations data at Our Community.

To grantmakers everywhere:

Our Community is here to help and make the most of your data. Want to learn more about the possibilities of data science for your organisation? Get in touch via classie@ourcommunity.com.au.