IATI Identifiers

How to create and use IATI organisation identifiers and IATI activity identifiers.

When will you need this information?

• When your organisation needs to share information on a project using IATI.
• When your organisation needs to set up an account on the IATI Registry.
• When you need to link your data with data with that of other organisations working on or funding your project.

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What is the IATI open data standard?

IATI is an internationally recognised open data standard for international development and humanitarian projects. It supports organisations to share activity information in a structured format, which means that it can be easily used and analysed by others. This is important because it helps to increase the public transparency and accountability of the work that we do, and has the potential to increase coordination across many organisations, from governments to the smallest NGO.

Who maintains the IATI open data standard?

The IATI open data standard is maintained by the IATI technical team, part of the IATI Secretariat – you can contact them directly at support@iatistandard.org. Every organisation creating and sharing IATI data is responsible for keeping their data up to date and error free.

What are IATI identifiers?

IATI identifiers are unique codes that link the IATI data that you create and share back to your organisation. There are two types of identifiers:

- **Organisation identifiers**: This is a unique code for each organisation creating and sharing IATI data
- **Activity identifiers**: This is a unique code for each activity in an organisation’s IATI data.

What is an activity?

IATI is designed for sharing information on individual ‘activities’. The IATI Standard guidance states:

“An activity is defined by the reporting organisation. Depending on who is reporting, it might be a large programme, a small project or another logical grouping of work and resources.”

The most common scenario is that one activity = one project. But the word ‘project’ also means different things in different organisations, for example, a project might be an outcome that your organisation is aiming to achieve. This is why it’s important for your organisation to define the activity.

If your organisation works with programmes and associated projects, there is a way to represent this structure in IATI, for example using the Related Activity element (field). For your organisation, both programmes and projects may be defined as activities.

There is a space on the Registry publisher record for you to provide the definition of ‘activity’ (Units of Aid). For more information, see *Bond IATI Guide: IATI Registry*. 
Why are IATI identifiers important?

Using IATI identifiers in your data allow people to link your activities back to your organisation, and see the links with other organisations and activities. This is important where users want to analyse whose involved with the delivery of a particular project or programme, from the funder to the implementing organisation. It also helps to identify duplications – for example one organisation may have been given different names across several datasets. But if the unique code for the organisation is also provided, this allows users to clean up the data – one organisation will be identified instead of several.

For example:

Organisation A shares data naming their implementing partner as GoodWorks, who is based in Malawi and has the organisation identifier: MW-CN-0123456

Organisation B also works with the same organisation. Their data names it as GW Malawi and uses the organisation identifier: MW-CN-0123456

Organisation C doesn’t name the implementing partner at all but the financial information shows funds given to an organisation with the organisation identifier: MW-CN-0123456

Because the organisation identifiers are the same, the data analyst analysing IATI data on Malawi from organisations A, B and C can see that just one organisation is mentioned in all three datasets. By looking up the organisation on the IATI Registry they will also find out the organisation’s correct name – GoodWorks Malawi. If the organisation identifiers weren’t present in the data, then the analyst would have counted the organisation as three separate organisations, invalidating their analysis.

How to get an IATI organisation identifier

IATI organisation identifiers are created by each organisation creating and sharing IATI data. They are not given out by the IATI technical team, except in very rare situations. All organisations are created in the same way. When you look at IATI data, you’ll see the identifier in an element (field) named `organisation-identifier`.

Start with the country code for where the organisation is based:

GB-

Add a hyphen, then the registration authority you are legally registered with:
IATI Identifiers

GB-CHC

(In this example, we’ve used the abbreviation for the Charity Commission in England, but there is a list of the different registration authorities for over 50 countries at http://iatistandard.org/202/codelists/OrganisationRegistrationAgency/)

Add another hyphen, then your organisation’s registration number from that authority:

GB-CHC-123456 (where 123456 represents the registration number)

If your organisation is registered with more than one registration authority – for example Charity Commission and Companies House in England – just chose one authority to use. The only rule is that it needs to be verifiable.

If you are not based in the UK, you can see a list of country codes and registration authorities on the official IATI website, and you can also find out more about unique IATI organisation identifiers.

There is an exceptional XI-IATI option for organisations not covered by a registration authority ie. international networks or regional secretariats. The XI code is created by the IATI technical team, eg. XI-IATI-SOL-SAM for Solidaridad South America. All XI-IATI identifiers are subject to a short consultation on acceptable use, and a list of all organisations using the XI-IATI identifier is maintained by the IATI technical team. More information at http://iatistandard.org/202/codelists/IATIOrganisationIdentifier/ and via support@iatistandard.org.

If your country or registration authority is not listed or you are still not sure how to create your organisation’s identifier, please contact support@iatistandard.org.

How to get an IATI activity identifier

Each activity (project, programme or outcome) must have an activity identifier that is unique to that project. Organisations are responsible for creating the identifiers for their activities. The IATI technical team does not produce them. When you look at IATI data, you’ll see the identifier in an element (field) named iati-identifier.

All activity identifiers are created in the same way.

Start with your organisation identifier:

GB-CHC-123456

Add a hyphen, and then another series of letters, numbers and dashes that relate to the activity.
GB-CHC-123456-WASH

Common ideas from other organisations:

- Grant name and grant number: GB-CHC-123456-AidDirect-1234
- Country and project ID (from organisation’s own database): GB-CHC-123456-KEN-00789
- Country and programme area: GB-CHC-123456-MLW-ECCD

Top tips for creating activity identifiers

Only use letters, numbers or dashes. Other symbols eg. $, %, /, # should not be used.

If your organisation has more than one activity, develop one method for creating new activity identifiers that everyone uses. See the examples above for some ideas.

Keep a central list of activity identifiers to guard against duplications.

Try to keep the activity identifiers short and simple – longer identifiers can lead to errors in the data such as transposing letters or numbers.

Using Activity Identifiers

Activity identifiers are important both for linking activities back to particular organisations, and also for linking up the organisations involved in the delivery of a particular project or programme.

If you are involved in the delivery of a project with others, particularly where you have funders and implementing organisations or you are part of a consortium, exchanging IATI activity identifiers should be part of the standard information exchange between partners.

You will definitely need to share your activity identifier where you are providing funds to an organisation (for example via a disbursement).

Initially activity identifiers were seen as a way of following the flow of funding through organisations. But it’s more widely used by data analysts as a consistent bridge between organisations’ data on the same project where project names, descriptions, locations and funding levels typically change between organisations.
For example:

Funder A has a programme to increase girls’ access to education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their activity identifier for this programme is GB-GOV-DES-SSA-GE1

Fund Manager B manages the small grant component of Funder A’s programme. The grant programme focuses on access to primary and secondary education for girls in South Sudan and South Africa. Their activity identifier for this grant component is GB-COH-12345-GTEGRANT

Organisation C receives a grant from Fund Manager B to deliver a project in South Sudan to train primary school teachers. Their activity identifier for this project is GB-CHC-12345-SS-ED

Organisation D is the local partner in Juba working with schools, parents and local government officials to increase access to training for teachers. Their activity identifier for this project is SS-RRC-12345-JubaTT

Each of these organisations includes the activity identifiers of their immediate partners in their IATI data in two places:

- In the participating organisation field (alongside their partner’s name, organisation identifier and role)
- In any financial transactions, for example commitments, incoming funds or disbursements.

In our example, this means:

- Organisation D’s data will include GB-CHC-12345-SS-ED (Organisation C’s activity)
- Organisation C’s data will include GB-COH-12345-GTEGRANT (Fund Manager B’s activity)
- Fund Manager B’s data will include GB-GOV-DES-SSA-GE1 (Funder A’s activity)

So if a data analyst wants to find the source of the funds (Funder A) for Organisation D’s project, they will be able to work it out by following the activity identifiers.

Linking your data to DFID’s data

The UK Government’s Department for International Development (DFID) have very specific requirements around linking their data to a funded activity’s data. This involves the use of the ‘provider activity identifier’. Although this sounds different, it’s actually just an activity identifier. It’s called a provider activity identifier because DFID are the provider of the funds.

The result of linking your data in this way is that DFID staff can see the organisations and projects taking part in their programme, and also your data will show up on DFID’s website Development Tracker: https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/

In order to link your organisations’ data to DFID’s data, you need to do two things:
IATI Identifiers

• Include DFID as a Participating Organisation (Funding) in your data — this includes their name, their organisation identifier (GB-GOV-1) and their activity identifier for the programme you are funded under.

• Every time you add in data on funding received from DFID, include DFID’s activity identifier for the programme you are funded under, in your data. This will be added into the provider activity identifier field.

If you don’t have the DFID activity identifier for the programme, ask your DFID contact or fund manager to provide it. The activity identifier is usually a 2- or 3-series number in the format GB-1-2XXXXX or GBGOV-1-3XXXXX.

Dictionary of terms

Dataset

A dataset is a group of related, structured data. In IATI, a dataset is data which is retrievable via a single URL link, through which you can access the full contents. So for example an activities dataset, or an organisation dataset. In IATI, the dataset is stored in a data file, in XML format.

Data file

A data file is a computer file which stores data in a digital form (for example an XML or CSV file). A data file can be used by a computer application to input data into the application, and/or to output data from the application. A data file is different to a file which contains instructions or code to be run by a computer (a programme file).

XML

XML stands for eXtensible Markup Language. XML is just information wrapped in containers called <tags> which describe the information. The tags are similar to database field names. For example,

<country> England </country> <city>
London </city>

Note that XML does not change the information in any way.

XML provides a way of storing, transporting, and sharing data that is not dependent on particular software. XML stores data in plain text format, with the file extension .xml The tags are set by the users, and they can also define the order that the tags must appear (the schema). IATI has a set of tags that are specific to the IATI data standard, and an IATI XML file will feature these tags:
However, XML data can be read by people and by digital technology, they don’t need be IATI specific. To learn more about XML, go to the W3Schools website at https://www.w3schools.com/xml/default.asp

Where to go for further support

There is a help page on the Registry at: https://www.iatiregistry.org/help

Information on the IATI data standard can be found at: http://iatistandard.org/202/

For any issues or help with the IATI Registry, contact the IATI Technical team at support@iatistandard.org