

Guidance from the Data Ethics Advisory Group: Population Density Product – Data Ventures

The Data Ethics Advisory Group is formed of independent experts to provide advice to government agencies on issues relating to data use and innovation. The Group was established in July 2019 with the aim of empowering agencies to use data effectively and innovatively whilst managing risks in order to maintain the trust and confidence of New Zealanders. You can find current details of the Group, its work and its members on the data.govt.nz website.

Thank you for bringing your item before the Data Ethics Advisory Group. It was great to have you with us and we hope you found the discussion valuable.

Feedback in summary:

Overall, the Data Ethics Advisory Group felt this was an effective and proportional mechanism for assuring appropriate customer evaluation for the Population Density product, subject to the following considerations.

Members were impressed that:

- This appears to be a considered and effective tool for self-regulation.
- Multiple team members within Data Ventures evaluate each item, safeguarding oversight and minimising the potential impact of bias in evaluation.

Members had concerns that:

- The checklist approach to evaluation could introduce risks by not taking a holistic view of a project.
- There is no clear metric for arriving at scores – aside from aggregation of scores from different team members – which risks results appearing arbitrary and therefore potentially undermining trust for customers and the public.

Members recommend:

- That evaluation of customers includes multi-disciplinary perspectives to provide high-level oversight and ensure best practice.
- That some guidance be produced to assist with scoring to improve standardisation.

Members noted:

- Guidance has been predicated on the assumption that use of the Population Density product will be underpinned by a contract assuring that the data is only used for the purpose(s) specified in the customer's application and will contain adequate checks and balances to ensure this is upheld.
- we understand that the terms and conditions of the contract are currently being drafted.

We look forward to hearing from you in the future

- We would be keen to reconsider this item should the granularity of the data available increase, especially in the context of the COVID-19 response.

Please get in touch with the Group's secretariat should you have any questions about the guidance you have received. We are always delighted to hear from you.

We would also note that the Group reserves the right to extend an invitation to the Minister where they are concerned that their guidance has been misinterpreted or applied in bad faith.