

Aid Transparency Index verification and review process

The Aid Transparency Index relaunched in 2026 with a new paid-for accreditation business model. International organisations were given the opportunity to sign-up to participate fully in the Aid Transparency Index process, including full engagement, capacity building and a practice round of data collection with detailed feedback to support them through the Index assessment process.

In order to maintain the Index's role as an independent assessment of the leading aid and development organisations globally, Publish What You Fund decided to include all of the major bilateral donors that were assessed in the 2024 Index, including those that had opted not to sign-up for full accreditation. These “non-accredited” organisations will be scored alongside the accredited organisations, using the same assessment method and scoring approach, and they will all appear in the Index graph and ranking. By opting out of the accreditation process, however, the non-accredited organisations will not receive the engagement, feedback and capacity building benefits. Neither will we share a full breakdown of their scores after Index publication. They will appear in the rankings with an overall score and scores for the five Index components, but no disaggregated indicator scores.

In order to reassure all observers of the fairness and comparability of the assessments and scores, this document sets out the error-checking, validation and fairness procedures we carry out during the Index assessment. These ensure that scoring approaches are not biased and that all organisations in the Index are scored fairly, in the same way, against the same criteria.

The Aid Transparency Index scoring process and verification checks

1. Data collection

The Index scoring is based on data collected by downloading each organisation's data published in the IATI Standard and by collecting data from organisation websites and data portals (through the Index **manual survey**).

The **manual survey** data collection process will be the same for each organisation assessed in the Index – the surveys will be carried out at the same time with the same opportunities to respond to findings, submit evidence and comment on scores. **Independent reviewers** may also intervene in this process to adjudicate between Publish What You Fund and assessed organisations where there are disagreements.

The IATI data collection is done in the same way for each organisation and the scores are calculated using automated tests.

2. Error check process

Once the automated tests have run against the data, the Publish What You Fund team reviews the scores and checks for significant changes from final 2024 indicator scores. Where there are significant changes ($\Delta > 25\%$) the Publish What You Fund team reviews the data to check that these are the result of a change in the data published by the organisation, rather than an error in the data download or the automated tests.

3. Sampling

IATI data quality sampling is carried out for 12 of the Index indicators. Publish What You Fund researchers review a random sample of 12 documents or data points for each of these indicators and pass or fail these based on whether the sampled data meets the Index criteria. Pass/fail decisions are based on objective criteria set out in the Index [technical paper](#). For borderline sampling decisions that are on the margin between a pass or fail, the Index team convenes at a weekly meeting and decisions are taken jointly by the team members. At least three researchers will be involved in these decisions, each with significant experience and expertise in the Index process. Decisions are based on a common understanding of the criteria for the indicator, with reference to previous decisions from previous indexes and with reference to pass/fail scores from other publishers in the same assessment. All researchers have previously worked as assessors on at least three previous Index processes.

In cases where the Index team are unable to agree on an outcome these are passed to an independent reviewer to adjudicate and make a final decision.

Our independent reviewers are academics with expertise in aid and transparency who research the topic as part of their field of study. These academics are entirely independent of Publish What You Fund and have no connection to any of the organisations being assessed in the Index.

4. Final score calculation

Once all data has been collected, tests have been run and verified and decisions on sampling have been taken, Publish What You Fund calculates all scores based on the indicator weightings and data quality points. To ensure accuracy with this process two researchers carry out the calculation independently, in parallel, and then compare final scores. Any discrepancies are identified and interrogated to identify possible errors in the calculations. Once any errors have been eliminated, a final set of scores is then reached. This forms the basis of the final scores, categories and ranking.

Possible outcomes of the 2026 Aid Transparency Index

There may be noticeable trends of either increases in scores by those organisations participating in the full accreditation process, decreases in scores by non-accredited organisations, or both of these outcomes. Any trends of this type would not be due to any difference in scoring approach or bias from our researchers regarding accredited or non-accredited organisations.

In previous Index processes we have observed significant improvements in transparency as a result of the feedback and engagement process we have provided to agencies. This feedback allows them to identify how to prioritise and improve data in line with the Index assessment. We saw an average [increase of 6 points](#) from the start to the end of this process in the previous two Indexes. By opting not to participate in the engagement process, non-accredited agencies will not benefit from the feedback which previously has contributed to these improvements.