



*everyone's family*

## Case study

### Databilities® in Action

TRANSFORMING DATA LITERACY  
AT THE SMITH FAMILY



## Data Landscape

The Smith Family is an independent children's charity helping Australian children experiencing disadvantage to get the most out of their education, so they can create better futures for themselves. In 2019/20, The Smith Family reached

- 209,128 Participants
- 91 Communities
- 741 Partner Schools

Focusing on complex needs such as

- Financial assistance
- Personal support for students
- Access to out-of-school learning

### "We want to bridge the gap

between people having access to data and then being able to understand and apply it to solve problems. Data literacy supports us to collect the right data and also have the capacity to answer questions like how many children and young people did we actually reach, how well did we do this? And what impact did we have?"

With one in six Australian children and young people living in poverty<sup>1</sup>, The Smith Family recognised that its ability to collect, store, analyse and disseminate data is more important than ever. Accordingly, in 2018 The Smith Family developed a Data Enablement Strategy to amplify its mission by delivering greater impact and effectiveness at scale, improving stakeholder engagement and experience, and improving organisational efficiency and effectiveness. Strengthening the data literacy and capability of The Smith Family team was identified as one of four key objectives of this Strategy, and a critical factor in its success.



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## Data Challenge and Opportunity

The Smith Family is custodian to an extensive and significant data set related to the students, families, financial supporters, and volunteers with whom it works. Over the years, the organisation has made significant investments in upgrading its data systems and tools but had not fully addressed the need to equip team members with the critical skills and competencies to use these systems effectively.

Uplifting the data literacy of all team members is now a core focus - because without data literacy, The Smith Family is unable to fully realise the true value of the data entrusted to them.

Although willing and enthusiastic, poor data literacy presented a barrier to the effective flow of data from creation through to decision making. They understood their ability to fund and deliver critical programs could be impacted by missed opportunities to use data in meaningful ways and that dissatisfaction with using internal data systems also put their team members and volunteer engagement and satisfaction at risk.

To address some of these challenges, The Smith Family turned to Data To The People to help them measure and map data literacy across the organisation, identify areas of focus and add to their data literacy program.

### "It was a true partnership

in the sense that we worked together to reach an outcome that neither party would have been able to do alone. Data To The People provided the framework, approach, and subject expertise, while we made sure it aligned with our internal frameworks, priorities, and ways of working. Data To The People were incredibly professional and easy to work with - offering practical advice and support as we worked through the various project phases."

<sup>1</sup> Poverty in Australia, 2020, ACOSS/UNSW Report.

## Using Databilities®

The program started with an organisational assessment, using a tool that had been customised to suit the unique needs of The Smith Family. After receiving a strong response rate, the team worked closely with Data To the People to analyse the results and identify several priority competencies for the organisation to work on.

### “We had some informal methods

for measuring data literacy, but we needed a scalable solution that would allow us to measure data literacy at an organisational level, at functional levels, and help us target and prioritise our upskilling efforts.”

Through a series of mapping exercises, the team also developed a view of what ‘good’ looks like for a range of different functions (such as operations and marketing) and job families (such as leadership and frontline staff).

By comparing the results of the assessment with these ‘future state’ visions, the team was able to identify specific areas of focus for team members so that the right mix of tools and resources could be developed to help them develop specific competencies relevant to the tasks required in their role.

### “I was thinking the leaders might

tap into, and make requests of, specialists - rather than thinking that they would be doing it themselves. It really changed the way that I was thinking in terms of, ‘oh, they actually either have those capabilities now or they were acknowledging that we should have those capabilities ourselves.”

## Data Foundations

Using resources and curriculum provided by Data To The People, The Smith Family has now launched their ‘Data Foundations’ program, which provides a series of data literacy resources to help build team members’ understanding of key data concepts and terms.

Importantly, these resources go hand-in-hand with more detailed learning pathways about the organisation’s specific data systems and processes, ensuring new skills can be directly applied in the business context.

### “Going to the broader value

of this around the shared language, it was also a good way to be able to describe the functions of what the team does and how they work with other teams in the organisation.”

## Data Horizons

With their ongoing commitment to breaking the cycle of disadvantage and building a better future for children all over Australia, The Smith Family’s ongoing investment in data literacy will be crucial in the organisation’s use and understanding of data to inform and enrich its work.

### “Users told us they appreciate

that we’re committing to this work which they see as an investment in them”

Moving forward, the organisation will continue to build their ‘Data Foundations’ series and look at new ways to embed data literacy questions, skills and concepts into their existing business infrastructure and operations.

### “We were excited to work with

a team that shares a lot of The Smith Family’s values and shares our belief in the transformative power of education.”

- The Smith Family Data Enablement Strategy Team

## Get Databilities®

Use the world-first, evidence-based data literacy competency framework to measure, map and develop data literacy across your organisation.

Databilities® is exclusively available through Data To The People and is the foundation of this approach. It allows us to identify, prioritise and measure the impact of capacity development initiatives.



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