Open Government Partnership New Zealand

National Action Plan 2018-2020

Progress report to: October 2019

Commitment 11: Authoritative dataset of government organisations as open data

Lead agency: Department of Internal Affairs

Objective:

To release and maintain an authoritative dataset of government organisations as open, machine-readable data to enhance the transparency of government structures to the public.
There will be cross-agency agreement to maintain this dataset, providing assurance that the data being used is the authoritative source. This dataset becomes a foundation for both digital services and information about government.

Ambition:

New Zealanders and others will have access to authoritative, open data about government agencies and their roles, learn more about how government is structured, what agencies do, and be able to reuse the open data in new and innovative ways.

OGP values: Transparency, Accountability and Technology and Innovation

	Milestones	Progress
1	Identify owners contributors and maintainers for the data held in the proposed dataset. *Start/End dates:* October 2018-December 2018	😃
2	Investigate and agree on the appropriate open standards for the dataset. *Start/End dates:* October 2018-December 2019	🙂
3	Work with identified dataset contributors to agree process for ongoing maintenance of the dataset. *Start/End dates:* December 2018 – June 2019	🙂
4	Release the open data set on data.govt.nz and make it available via the data.govt.nz open data Application Programming Interface (API), and promote the opportunities of reuse that the dataset provides with government agencies, non-governmental organisations, business, and the public. *Start/End dates:* December 2018 – June 2020	🙂

Progress key: 😐 some delays 🙂 underway 😃 completed

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

- Hosted and facilitated a workshop on 14th of August with the Open Data Programme at Statistics NZ. Participants were from civil society, business, and government and they gave their feedback and suggestions on the reference model, and draft open standard. Applications for different ways the data could be used, and extensions of the data, were also captured.

- Continuing to work with State Services Commission (SSC) on releasing their data as open data and confirming how it will be maintained.

- In conversation with Department of Finance in Australia about a potential Trans-Tasman collaboration on organisational registers and semantic interoperability.

HOW WE ARE INCLUDING DIVERSE VOICES

N/A

HOW WE ARE KEEPING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INFORMED

- Using public channels and public and private Twitter accounts amplify and extend the reach of this work.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Meeting on the 10th of October with a small group of both government and non-government experts. This meeting is to draw recommendations from the Open Data Meetup workshop feedback on the reference model, and draft open standard to present to officials for agreement.

- A meeting will then be held on the 16th of October with government officials from representative agencies who hold or want to use the government organisational data to discuss the recommendations. This meeting will be where the open standard and reference model for the dataset will be agreed and confirmed.

- Milestone 3, 'work with identified dataset contributors to agree process for ongoing maintenance of the dataset', will be an ongoing task. This is because each government agency operates in a different context (e.g. varying levels of data capability) and will need tailored help and advice to open the data and work out a maintenance plan.

- There is ongoing work required to support agencies in opening up their data. Some agencies have low levels of understanding and skills around open data. This is a need that will continue to require a joint approach by both the team of the Government Chief Digital Office, and the Government Chief Data Steward.

LINKS – EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS AND MILESTONES ACHEVED

- Open Data Meetup session "Help build the foundations for #OpenGov" event listing: https://www.meetup.com/Open-Data-NZ/events/263052997/

- Open Data Meetup session – feedback output: https://catalogue.data.govt.nz/dataset/government-organisation-register/resource/70cbe5ee-ecc2-49db-be5b-84a71a48e05e

- Engaging with civil society experts: https://twitter.com/openpolicynz/status/1169798662462984193

IMPACTS

Immediate

Improved access to information about the structure of government agencies

The only authoritative list of government organisations is owned by the State Services Commission. There is no open data option for this list, only an html page and PDF, so there are no options for reuse.

It lists the agencies by legal title which means that organisations aren't discoverable by the sub-agencies or working brands (eg only Department of Internal Affairs – Archives NZ, and National Library can't be found, Ministry of Social Development, but not Work and Income). It also means that organisations that are known by a trading name (eg Creative NZ, NZ on Air) are only discoverable by their legal title (eg Arts Council, Broadcasting Commission). Other alternative names, such as Māori name, also aren't listed. This reflects the intent of the data from a government perspective, but limits its usefulness for citizens who want to find out where to get government services, or who want to know which agency is accountable, so needs to trace the government's structure.

Up-to-date authoritative information

An authoritative list would enable better access to people's democratic rights – such as finding out which agencies to contact about the Official Information Act. Currently, data on the Directory of Official information is updated periodically and published via PDF. With machinery of government changes and agencies on the move, it doesn't take much to make this information out of date.

Medium Term

[Impacts that you expect to be visible by the end of the next NAP – that we could refer to in the Self-Assessment at the completion of NAP 4]

Opportunities for improved and innovative service delivery

There is a global shift in governments to the idea of 'government as a platform', where governments are responsible for foundational components, such as data, that can then be reused by anyone to create and innovate from. There is great potential for improved service delivery from businesses or NGOs being able to 'plug-in' (using APIs) to updated government data. For example, the Citizens Advice Bureau is an intermediary for people who either don't know where to go or don't trust government enough to approach them directly. They put time and effort into maintain data about government agencies that could better be spent serving people's needs and/or improving their services.

Simply work for those people and businesses who rely on legal lists of organisations

Having authoritative government data has multiple benefits for business and civil society/civic tech. It opens up the ability for more innovative government directories, building off the base of existing ones like the New Zealand Government Sector Directory or Neighbourly.

There is also the potential to open up citizen engagement, and government through initiatives like MySociety's writing to your MP service.