Open Government Partnership New Zealand

National Action Plan 2018-2021

Progress report to: July – September 2020

Commitment 11: 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-June 2021	🙂

3	Work with identified dataset contributors to agree on the process for ongoing maintenance of the dataset. *Start/End dates:* December 2018 – June 2021	☺
4	Explore and then agree on a governance model and ongoing ownership for the data model and data set. *Start/End dates:* August 2020-June 2021	☺
5	Draft and then confirm a data model of the 'machinery of government' to support the ongoing release of data about government organisations. *Start/End dates:* January 2020-June 2021	☺
6	Release the open data set on data.govt.nz *Start/End dates:* December 2018 – June 2020	☺
7	Ongoing technical task of making the data set available via the data.govt.nz open data Application Programming Interface (API). *Start/End dates:* December 2018 – June 2021	☺
8	Secure active users of the dataset/API by promoting the opportunities of reuse to government agencies, non-governmental organisations, business, and the public. *Start/End dates:* June 2019 – June 2021	☺

Progress key:

😐　　　　☺　　　　😃

some delays　　　**underway**　　　**completed**

Planning out to June 2021

- The working group met in August to plan out the commitment to its new end in June 2021. It was an active and useful session with a focus on communicating the value of the work being done as a foundation for accountability, transparency and service delivery.

Data Model of Machinery of Government

- This work is being co-led by The Treasury and the Digital Public Service Branch. Five workshops have been held, focused on the data held by the Cabinet Office (e.g. Ministerial lists and portfolios, Cabinet committees). The workshops were very well attended by a range of government officials and experts from civil society, the private sector and NGOs.
- More workshops are planned to focus on other aspects of government e.g. organisations, legislation, votes and appropriations (as reflected in the Estimates). The group is exploring using a specific test case to focus on. This is to test the model, as well as rein in potential scope creep.

Open standards

- Progress is being made in landing on an open standard for the data set(s). Work being done in the local council archival community to use Records in Contexts Ontology to describe local councils organisations, has been shared with the group. There is also a focus on using linked data to enable relationships between the data to be expressed, along with flexibility in scaling.

HOW we ARE INCLUDING diverse voices

N/A

HOW WE ARE KEEPING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INFORMED

- Continuing to blog in the open and use public and private Twitter accounts amplify and extend the reach of this work.

What's next?

- Focus on delivering immediate value with the Machinery of Government data modelling by testing it on some real use cases while continuing to acknowledge the bigger picture.
- Contacting the UK about the central govt ontology (https://lov.linkeddata.es/dataset/lov/vocabs/cgov) – how it's used, it's applicability for NZ.

- Continuing to explore governance options.
- Once governance for the work is clearer, work on rescinding the NZGLS mandate and creating a new mandate to take its place.

Links – Evidence of progress and Milestones achieved

- Machinery of Government data model workshops: https://twitter.com/vicwray/status/1306715302458060804
- Reusing the Public Service Commission's open dataset to validate and update government information: https://www.digital.govt.nz/blog/reusing-the-public-service-commissions-open-dataset-to-validate-and-update-government-information/
- Commitment 11 planning out to June 2021: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1xCBmG9giYgsy9ET_0dbG6A-lVN3nIChpINOyJIzxcuw/edit#gid=0

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. Note that government agencies themselves are a major beneficiary to having this data available for reuse.

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.