

Open Government Partnership New Zealand

National Action Plan 2018-2021

Progress report to: 30 April 2021

Commitment 9: Increase visibility of government data stewardship practices

Lead agency:

Stats NZ

Objective:

To increase the visibility of data practices for government-held data.





Ambition:

New Zealanders will:

- understand how government is managing, using, and protecting their data and be able to hold government to account.
- have confidence and trust in the management and use of data that government holds on their behalf.

OGP values:

Transparency, Accountability

Milestones		Progress
1	Develop and publish an overview of government's data stewardship practices <i>Start/End dates: August 2018 to 30 November 2018</i>	
2	Engage with citizens and government on the data stewardship overview to ensure it provides visibility of the right things and is addressing key needs <i>Start/End dates: 1 December 2018 to 31 April 2019</i>	
3	Promote the data stewardship practices to government agencies and support them to implement good practice <i>Start/End dates: 1 May 2019 (ongoing)</i>	
4	Engage with citizens and government to identify where effort should be focused to address gaps in government's data stewardship practices <i>Start/End dates: 1 May 2019 to 30 November 2019 (then periodically ongoing)</i>	

Progress key:



some delays



underway



completed

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

- Because the New Zealand government holds and uses data on behalf of New Zealanders, it has a duty to ensure data is carefully and responsibly managed and used. Government aspires to have an integrated and cohesive data system, with consistent practices for creating, managing, and using data. However, engagement with government agencies revealed a diversity in data literacy, stewardship awareness, practices, and maturity across government.

This diversity was reinforced in the review of successes and barriers to data access and use across government during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were inconsistencies and gaps in data practices, and many areas where improvements need to be made. The review report makes six key recommendations for improving the resilience of the government data system. These six recommendations focus on improving data findability and access, identifying the most important data, supporting collaboration, clarifying governance roles, fostering expertise-based networks, and helping data users navigate privacy, security, and ethical considerations. Implementing these recommendations will contribute to greater visibility and consistency of government data practices.

The report also proposed an additional 48 interventions, and noted the importance of open access to relevant data to maintain trust and hold the government to account, especially during a crisis when government's decisions can have a significant and long-term impact on the lives and livelihoods of New Zealanders.

Given the range and scale of changes required, achieving consistent and transparent data stewardship practices across government will be a multi-year initiative.

- Some progress has been made to provide greater visibility of government's data practices. To improve understanding of data stewardship, Stats NZ developed a framework comprising seven high-level elements to outline what is required for effective data stewardship.
- Stats NZ continues to publish resources on good practice for data management and use on data.govt.nz, including an introduction to data management, an approach to operational data governance, and a framework to guide ethical use of data.
- Data standards are being developed and mandated to establish consistent ways for describing and recording data across agencies.
- A Data and Statistics Bill is being drafted to replace the Statistics Act 1975. The new legislation will support a clear, coherent, and consistent approach to collecting data for producing official statistics, and sharing, integrating, and accessing data

for research and analysis, with appropriate privacy, confidentiality, security, and transparency settings.

- The NZ Government Data Strategy and Roadmap is currently being revised and will provide the vehicle for improving data practices across government to achieve an inclusive and integrated data system, and for implementing the new legislation.
- With the current diversity of data practice across government, the objective of this commitment will not be met within the timeframe of the third National Action Plan.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

Even though this commitment will not be completed by the conclusion of National Action Plan, valuable insights have been gained.

- **A different communication approach is needed.**

Data literacy is varied both within and outside government. To provide New Zealanders with assurance about government's data practices, we must communicate those practices in ways that are appropriate to the levels of literacy. This will support engagement and enable us to better understand concerns or issues.

There is a need for narratives, case studies, and analogies to explain data stewardship concepts, practices, and benefits. These need to take a citizen-centred perspective rather than a government one, focusing on what is important to them rather than what we think they should know. This perspective will also inform the language used, to help make content accessible and understandable. The effectiveness of these communication approaches needs to be continually assessed through engagement with citizens.

Our primary communication channel was data.govt.nz but this has a relatively limited reach as an engagement channel (given it is for the more data literate), so we received little to no feedback on the content published.

- **Engagement needs to provide value to those we engage with.**

Reciprocity is a key consideration when seeking effective and authentic engagement – what's in it for those we are engaging with? The topics about which we are engaging need to be relevant to the target audience. We also need to demonstrate that any input and feedback provided is valued. In part this can be achieved by being transparent about how that input will be used.

The work on this commitment has not reached a stage where the topics would be of interest to civil society. As a result we reduced our engagement efforts. We felt there was limited value to citizens, so asking for input could not be justified and we wouldn't be able to show how we could act on that input.

- **Diversity of data practices makes measuring progress difficult.**

The diversity of data practices across government makes it difficult to provide a cohesive view to New Zealanders of how government manages their data. This diversity also makes measuring the impact of greater data practice transparency more difficult.

HOW WE ARE INCLUDING DIVERSE VOICES AND KEEPING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INFORMED

Our approach will need to be reconsidered, given we now have a better understanding of the scale of transformation required. Possible initiatives to consider include:

- raising awareness of the importance and benefits of effective data stewardship, to achieve buy-in and advocacy for change
- providing greater transparency of the diversity of data practices, the challenges faced, and where improvements are needed
- creating a more nuanced, multi-pronged engagement plan
- establishing a community reference group
- being more specific about when and where we need Māori, iwi, and community input to help understand issues and concerns, and guide development of data practices.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Publication of the revised NZ Government Data Strategy and Roadmap.

LINKS – EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED

- [COVID-19 Lessons Learnt: Recommendations for improving the resilience of New Zealand's government data system](#)
- [Data stewardship framework](#)
- [Resources on data.govt.nz](#)
- [Data standards](#)
- [Cabinet papers – new data and statistics legislation policy](#)