## Case study: Canada’s Open Government Portal

https://open.canada.ca

### Overview of the initiative

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<td>N/A</td>
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### Rationale, motives and key drivers

**Possible issues to explore**

- **Policy context prior to the initiative**
  - legacy legislation and regulation with its observed strengths and weaknesses
  - main challenges and policy gaps which needed to be addressed.

- **1983 – Access to Information Act**: law which gives Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and any person or corporation present in Canada a right to access records of government institutions that are subject to the Act.

- **1983 – Privacy Act**: law which gives Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and individuals present in Canada the right to access their personal information held by government institutions.
that are subject to the Act, and protects that information against unauthorized collection, use, retention and disclosure.

- **2003 and ongoing – Proactive Disclosure:** The Government of Canada has implemented a series of measures to strengthen public sector management by enhancing transparency and oversight of public resources in the federal government. One of these measures includes the proactive disclosure of financial and human resources-related information by departments and agencies. By making this information readily available on departmental web sites, Canadians and Parliament are better able to hold the Government and public sector officials to account. To this end, the Government requires publication on departmental Web sites of travel and hospitality expenses for selected government officials; contracts entered into by the Government of Canada for amounts over $10,000 (with only limited exceptions such as national security); and the reclassification of positions.

- **2006 – Federal Accountability Act:** Law which brought forward specific measures to help strengthen accountability and increase transparency and oversight in government operations. The Federal Accountability Act and associated Action Plan put in place a 5-year lobbying ban for certain designated ministerial staff and senior public officials; eliminated corporate and union donations to federal political parties; and introduced new protections for whistleblowers; among other reforms.

- **2011 – Open Government Initiative:** on March 18, 2011, the Government announced its commitment to an open government initiative along three main streams: open information, open data, and open dialogue. Launched an Open Data Portal on data.gc.ca.

- **2012 – Implementation of Canada’s Action Plan on Open Government.** The 2012-2014 plan included the introduction of the Open Government License, with the goal of removing restrictions on the reuse of published data and information, and the design and implementation of a new data portal based on broad public consultation with users.

- **2014 – Directive on Open Government – Mandatory Government of Canada directive requires federal departments and agencies to “maximize the release of Government of Canada open data and open information under an open and unrestrictive licence” and to “ensure that open data and open information is released in accessible and reusable formats”**

**Objectives as defined, and expected results**

The objective of the Open Government Portal is to provide one-stop access to the Government of Canada’s searchable open data and open information, together with open dialogue, as part of the federal government’s commitment to enhance transparency and accountability.

The portal includes navigation and search capabilities, public consultation and engagement resources, and tools for open government partners in all levels of government, as well as in civil society, academia, private sector, and media.

Portal also comprises a significant number of scientific data and information resources. These include:

- Over 60,000 geospatial datasets;
- Nearly 6,000 data and information resources on the subject of “science and technology”
• Data and information from science-based departments and agencies such as Environment and Climate Change Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Health Canada, and National Research Council Canada

Providing access to government data and information helps to promote government transparency, accountability and citizen participation.

• Body(-ies) who initiated the strategic initiative (i.e. governmental bodies/agencies, practitioner institutions or associations, other non-governmental stakeholders, international networks, or others)

The Open Government Portal was initiated and is maintained by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) in the Chief Information Officer Branch (now Office of the Chief Information Officer). Federal departments and agencies are responsible for maximizing the release of government information and data of business value, and each of the federal government’s Science-Based Departments and Agencies (SBDAs) releases open data and/or information resources via open.canada.ca. Additionally, the Government of Canada has recently established the position of Chief Science Advisor of Canada. The Chief Science Advisor works to ensure that government science is fully available to the public and that government scientists can speak freely about their work.

• International references and good practices as drivers (e.g. OECD recommendations, or examples set by other countries or supranational regions).
  o OECD recommendations, particularly Towards Empirical Analysis of Open Government Data Initiatives
  o Open Data Barometer, and World Wide Web Foundation report From Promise to Progress
  o Open Government Partnership membership requirements and best practices
  o Data.gov.uk

• The underlying motives for initiating the strategic initiative from a policy perspective (e.g. lifting specific barriers of technical or behavioural nature, building innovative creating trust among stakeholders, creating incentives for data sharing infrastructure, or other)

The open government portal was established following public consultations on the Digital Economy Strategy and Open Government. The consultations identified the need for open data to be made available in more usable and accessible formats.

The motivation for the establishment of the Open Government portal in 2011 was to provide a single access point to use and share structured, machine readable data and information from across the Government of Canada under an open and unrestricted license. The portal enables the reuse of data and information, serves as a model for data quality, and meets Government of Canada standards for official languages and accessibility.
• Please describe how the following issues were covered (or not covered) within the initiative:
  o Data governance for trust - addressing privacy, confidentiality, quality and ethical issues

The federal Privacy Act protects the privacy of individuals by establishing when the Government can collect, and how it manages, personal information. It gives Canadians and others the right to request their personal information from a government institution, as well as to request correction of that information where the individual believes there to be an error or omission.

Particular elements of the Act as it relates to privacy protection and the right of access are:

1. Personal information may be collected only when it relates directly to an operating program or activity of the institution;
2. Personal information must be collected directly from the person to whom it relates, with limited exceptions;
3. Individuals have a right to their own personal information with limited and specific exemptions; and
4. Restrictions are placed on the use and/or disclosure of personal information, subject to limited exceptions.

In accordance with the Policy on Privacy Protection all heads of the government institutions are responsible for the effective, well-coordinated, and protective management of personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act and Privacy Regulations within their institutions.

With regard to quality of open data and information, the open government team reviews all data and information resources to check, for example, for completed metadata and accessibility requirements. The Open Government Guidebook provides additional support to departments and agencies to address the publication of information on the open government portal, including guidance on privacy, confidentiality, and anonymization and de-identification.

  o Discoverability/findability, machine readability and data standards

All information resources published on the Open Government Portal follow a consistent metadata schema and formatting requirements. Technical and policy guidance to individual departments and agencies are provided to ensure consistency, quality, accessibility and discoverability. These include:

• The Standard on Metadata
• Open Data Release Checklist within the Open Government Guidebook
• Open Data Registry and User Guide
• Standard on Geospatial Data
• The Open Government Guidebook

The Open Government Portal Team at TBS also conducts quality checks on resources submitted for publication through the portal. Additionally, Canada’s 2018-2020 National Action Plan on Open Government contains a number of commitments related to improving of quality of resources on the open government portal.
- **Recognition and reward system for data authors**
  The Open Government Portal includes a data rating system allowing users to assign a rating (out of 5 ‘stars’) for each dataset and information resource. This rating system provides an opportunity to recognize open datasets that meet or exceed user expectations. As part of Canada’s 2018-2020 National Action Plan on Open Government, the Government of Canada has committed to refining this rating system to make it more useful to data authors and data users.

- **Definition of responsibility and ownership**
  The Open Government Team in the Office of the Chief Information Officer at Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat hosts the open.canada.ca portal, provides technical and policy guidance to departments and agencies and quality assurance of resources on the portal. The ownership and responsibility of resources on the portal remain with the publishing department or agency. Resources published on the portal are freely reusable under the Open Government License.

- **Business models for open data provision**
  As identified in the Directive on Open Government, each department and agency is responsible for maximizing the release of government information and data of business value. To meet this requirement departments and agencies were required to develop and publish Open Government Implementation Plans to identify efforts in Open Government, including publishing open information. Open.canada.ca serves as the centralized portal to enable departments and agencies to publish information for users to find, use and redistribute. The resources on the portal are freely shared and useable under the Open Government Licence.

  Each of the federal government’s Science-Based Departments and Agencies (SBDAs) releases open data and/or information resources via open.canada.ca. Additionally, the Government of Canada has recently established the position of Chief Science Advisor of Canada. The Chief Science Advisor works to ensure that government science is fully available to the public and that government scientists can speak freely about their work.

  To facilitate the publishing of open information, most departments have identified Open Government Coordinators, with responsibilities in implementing open government efforts.

- **Building human capital and institutional capabilities at public agencies, to manage, create, curate and reuse data.**

  The Open Government team at TBS works with departments and agencies to increase the knowledge and skill required to publish on open.canada.ca and support departmental open government efforts. In the 2016-2018 National Action Plan on Open Government, Canada committed to develop open government skills across the federal public service, including the value and use of open information and
data. In 2017, the Open Government Learning Hub was launched to provide guidance and resources to departments. Since July 2016, the TBS Open Government team has delivered 34 events on open government with approximately 1,800 learners from at least 26 federal organizations. Canada’s 2018-2020 National Action Plan on Open Government, includes a commitment to continue to promote and raise awareness and skills in the public service by continuing to build on the above.

As part of the governance of its open government initiative, the Government of Canada maintains an Open Government Working Group and an Open Government Resource Development Working Group. Both are collaborative groups made up of representatives from across the federal government. They support government departments and agencies to publish open data; support development of open government resources and technical guidance; and help build open government skills and capabilities throughout the Government of Canada.

Governance of the initiative

Possible issues to explore

- Governance structure of the strategic initiative: lead ministry or institution, working group or consortium

Canada’s open government initiative and portal have existed since 2011 with government-wide management of open data services being the responsibility of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) in the Chief Information Officer Branch (CIOB).

TBS is responsible for setting government-wide direction on open government, and for maintaining Canada’s open government portal. To support this work, a number of internal governance bands advisory committees have been created

The Open Government Director General Steering Committee is the executive level committee which sets the strategic direction for open government initiatives. It acts as the overarching steering committee monitoring the implementation of open government across the Government of Canada.

Additionally, the Government of Canada has two officials-level working groups that support work on open government. The Open Government Working Group is made up of representatives from departments and agencies across the Government of Canada. It is intended to be a collaborative environment to coordinate, advance and enable government-wide open government efforts and to track progress on commitments in Canada’s Open Government Plans to the Open Government Partnership (OGP). The OGWG provides advice to the Open Government Director General Committee for advancing open government across the Government of Canada.

The Open Government Resource Development Working Group is a collaborative forum with representative of departments and agencies that lead the development and implementation of technical tools and resources to support open government related initiatives.

The Government of Canada has also established an Open Science Director Generals’ Council, a committee made up of executive-level officials, focused on providing strategic direction for open science initiatives across Science-Based Departments and Agencies (SBDAs).
The multi-stakeholder forum supports ongoing dialogue between government and Canadian civil society on open government. Its mandate is to provide input and advice on the Government of Canada’s commitments on open government, identify new areas of focus, and build the open government community across Canada.

- **Stakeholder consultation: who were the main stakeholders identified and how were they consulted (potentially in two or more circles, according to the degree of involvement).**

Canada’s original open government portal was created following consultation with Canadians on the development of a Digital Economy Strategy and on Open Government. The results of these consultations stressed the importance of providing open access to public sector information and data and, in particular, the need to improve the availability of data to researchers and the private sector with fewer restrictions on reuse of these information assets. Canadians also want the opportunity to engage in an ongoing dialogue with government on policies and priorities.

The Government of Canada regularly undertakes public consultations regarding open government and open data policies. One example is the Government of Canada’s engagement process for the development of Canada’s 2018-2020 National Action Plan on Open Government. Through a series of online and in-person consultations, the Government of Canada heard from citizens, civil society organizations, academia, business, and other sectors regarding their expectations for what should be included in the new Plan. These consultations included an online dialogue to generate potential ideas for the plan; a series of in-person workshops in cities across the country, a series of thematic webinars, an online questionnaire on open.canada.ca, and social media presence, including Tweets and blog posts about consultation opportunities. In total, engagement on the 2018-2020 Plan reached over 10,000 Canadians, and generated nearly 6,000 ideas, comments, and questions.

This engagement process expands on previous engagement done in support of development of Canada’s previous three Plans to the Open Government Partnership.

Canada’s open government portal (open.canada.ca) is fully interactive, allowing users to submit feedback on open data activities, comments, questions, and suggestions through a number of channels. The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS)’s Open Government Secretariat receives roughly 1,000 comments and emails per year on specific datasets, and works with responsible departments to answer them. Additionally, users are able to request any dataset held by the Government of Canada via a standardized form on the Open Government portal (http://open.canada.ca/en/forms/suggest-dataset). This request is then shared with the responsible department. To make it easier for users to request the data they are looking for, the Government of Canada has also published an Open Data Inventory that provides information on the data held by the federal government departments and agencies, including datasets that are not yet open. A full list of datasets that have been requested is also available on the portal (http://open.canada.ca/en/suggested-datasets) and users can go there to check on the status of every request or to vote for datasets others have suggested.

The Government of Canada also regularly engages with open data stakeholders, leveraging social media (including Twitter) to raise awareness of open data initiatives. Individual government departments frequently undertake consultations with open data stakeholders, and officials representing TBS’s Open
Government Secretariat also regularly offer presentations and workshops to community organizations, stakeholder groups, and other government departments focusing on open government and open data efforts. The Government of Canada also engages with other governments at the provincial, territorial, and municipal level to support increased alignment of open data standards and practices across Canada.

Currently, the Government of Canada is working in close collaboration with members of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Open Government, which acts as an ongoing mechanism for dialogue between government and civil society on open government issues, including open data. The Forum was established in December 2017, and it is be a crucial mechanism for ensuring ongoing dialogue and feedback between Government of Canada officials and partners outside government.

- **Decision making: who was the main decision maker and how was consensus created? Was there a specific conflict resolution mechanism among participants?**

Canada’s open government portal was created by the President of the Treasury Board (then Minister Stockwell Day) in 2011. The decision to create a portal was taken by the President of the Treasury Board with support from the Prime Minister’s Office. The continuation and improvement of the portal has been supported by subsequent Presidents of the Treasury Board.

- **The role and interaction of different levels of actors at local, regional, national and supranational level and political leadership.**

The gov’t of Canada’s opened government portal open.canada.ca is focused on the publication of federal government data and information. However Canada’s open government work has important links to work being done by actors at the global and sub-national scale.

Canada is a member of the Open Government Partnership and currently serves in a leadership role of lead government chair of the Partnership. The OGP’s national action plan cycle helps bring structure to Canada’s work on open government. Through the Partnership, Canada is able to establish bilateral and multilateral relationships that allow it to leverage best practices and lessons learned from other governments.

Domestically, the Open Government team at the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat is the body which primarily interacts with institutions across the Government of Canada and with government partners across Canada. To facilitate these interactions, several working groups and committees have been established to engage across government.

Canada’s Open Government Working Group is a platform for multi-jurisdictional information sharing and collaboration on open government activities between Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments. An ongoing initiative is for the federation of provincial and territorial open data and information onto the open.canada.ca portal. To date, the province of Alberta’s open data has been federated onto open.canada.ca. This pilot allows users to search open data available from the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta through a single, centralized portal. The pilot will be expanded to include other provincial and territorial government in the coming months.
Additionally, the Government of Canada has two internal working groups that support work on open government. The Open Government Working Group is made up of representatives from departments and agencies across the Government of Canada. It is intended to be a collaborative environment to coordinate, advance and enable government-wide open government efforts and to track progress on commitments in Canada’s Open Government Plans to the Open Government Partnership (OGP). The OGWG provides advice to the Open Government Director General Committee for advancing open government across the Government of Canada.

Finally, the Open Government Resource Development Working Group is a collaborative forum with representative of departments and agencies that lead the development and implementation of technical tools and resources to support open government related initiatives.

- **How the governance models chosen ensures that the initiative continuously focuses on its strategic goal, while responsive to the changing context.**

The strategic goal of the open government portal is to provide centralized access to open government data and information, thereby supporting transparency, accountability and public engagement. To successfully implement these objects, improvements to the quality of data and information, and to the functionality of the portal, must be continuous. The governance model allows Government of Canada officials to develop support tools and resources, prioritize portal updates, and guide overall efforts in open government.

- **The measures to improve transparency in the management of the initiative.**

**Process and timeline**

2011
- Start of the open data initiative in the Government of Canada (GC)
- MARCH: data.gc.ca – the GC’s first open data portal – launched as a pilot
- SEPTEMBER: Letter sent to the OGP regarding Canada’s intention to join the initiative

2012
- APRIL: Canada officially joins the OGP by launching its first OGP National Action Plan (2012-2014)

2013
- JUNE: Open Government Licence issued to remove barriers to the reuse of government data and information
- JUNE: Re-launched data.gc.ca as open.canada.ca, a world class Open Government portal
- OCTOBER: Canada was named Chair of the OGP Open Data Working Group; Canada ranked 8th in Open Data Barometer

2014
- OCTOBER: Directive on Open Government is issued, requiring departments to maximize the release of data and information
2015
- JANUARY: Canada ranked 7th in Open Data Barometer (tied with Norway)
- MAY: Hosted the International Open Data Conference in Ottawa which brought together over 1,000 open data experts and professionals from across the world
- JANUARY - OCTOBER: Canada leads multilateral negotiations with government and civil society stakeholders to develop and launch an international Open Data Charter.

2016
- APRIL: Canada ranked 4th in Open Data Barometer
- OCTOBER: ‘Expanding Open Government’ TB submission is approved by Cabinet

2017
- MARCH: Canada is elected to a 3-year term on the OGP Steering Committee
- MAY: Canada ranked 2nd in Open Data Barometer
- SEPTEMBER: Canada accepts role as the OGP co-chair

2018
- MARCH: Canada formally adopts the Open Data Charter
- APRIL: The Multi-Stakeholder Forum is established to support ongoing dialogue between government and Canadian civil society on open government
- JUNE: Federated search pilot with Alberta launched on open.canada.ca
- SEPTEMBER: Canada ranked 1st in Open Data Barometer (tied with the UK)
- OCTOBER: Canada becomes lead government chair of the OGP
- DECEMBER: Canada launches its fourth OGP National Action Plan (2018-2020). This is Canada’s most ambitious to date (more than 10,000 Canadians engaged in-person and online) and is recognized by the OGP as a best practice.

- Please describe the evidence base used in the process (studies, surveys)

Canada’s open government portal (open.canada.ca) is fully interactive, allowing users to submit feedback on open data activities, comments, questions, and suggestions through a number of channels. The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS)’s Open Government Secretariat receives roughly 1,000 comments and emails per year on specific datasets, and works with responsible departments to answer them. Additionally, users are able to request any dataset held by the Government of Canada via a standardized form on the Open Government portal. This request is then shared with the responsible department. To make it easier for users to request the data they are looking for, the Government of Canada has also published an Open Data Inventory that provides information on the data held by the federal government departments and agencies, including datasets that are not yet open.

- Was regulatory impact analysis applied in the process, and if so, to what degree? If yes, what was the outcome of it? If not, is ex-post assessment foreseen?

Regulatory impact analysis was not required as part of this process.
• Idea generation and priority setting: how were the main ideas generated? How were priorities set among the ideas?

Priorities and ideas for the open government portal continue to be developed through public consultation, and environmental scanning of other countries and to align with national and international best practices on open government.

The commitments for open government efforts, including improvements to the open government portal, include Inclusion, Gender equity, Accessibility, User-centric thinking, Reconciliation and Collaboration.

• Please describe potential delays or setbacks in the process, as well as the underlying reasons for these setbacks (e.g. opposition of key advocacy groups or political forces, lack of communication among stakeholders, etc.)

Potential delays and setbacks for this process included:

• Complexity of large scale culture change toward greater openness
• Turnover among political and public service officials, requiring transition briefings and demonstration of value of open government efforts
• Technological delays (e.g. moving to cloud architecture)
• Development of consistent but flexible processes to meet the needs of all federal government departments and agencies

• Stakeholder consultation process: at what points in time were key stakeholder groups consulted, and how was their feedback incorporated into the design of the initiative?

Canada’s open government portal (open.canada.ca) is fully interactive, allowing users to submit feedback on open data activities, comments, questions, and suggestions through a number of channels. The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS)’s Open Government Secretariat receives roughly 1,000 comments and emails per year on specific datasets, and works with responsible departments to answer them. Additionally, users are able to request any dataset held by the Government of Canada via a standardized form on the Open Government portal (http://open.canada.ca/en/forms/suggest-dataset). This request is then shared with the responsible department. To make it easier for users to request the data they are looking for, the Government of Canada has also published an Open Data Inventory that provides information on the data held by the federal government departments and agencies, including datasets that are not yet open.

Adoption and implementation

Possible issues to explore

• What was contained in the final design of the initiative: main policies, regulations?

Canada’s Open Government portal was designed to provide users with a centralized portal where all government of Canada Departments and Agencies were able to publish under the Open Government
Licence to ensure ease of access to all data. It includes a public facing web site and an internally facing registry allowing departments to add data and information resources.

Additionally work on the open government portal was supported by the development of the Directive on Open Governments. Launched in 2014, the Directive requires departments and agencies to maximize the release of open data and information resources, and sets up a number of milestones for driving government toward culture of openness by default.

- **Scope of the initiative: does it concern purely data resulting from research, or does it concern broader public sector information or private sector data?**

Open.Canada.ca is the centralized portal for users to access open data and information from across the Government of Canada. It includes a broad range of federal government data and information.

- **Beyond data, how are the following aspects taken into account:**
  - Metadata
  - Software and algorithms for data interpretation?

All resources published on the Open Government Portal follow a standard metadata schema and formatting requirements. Technical and policy guidance to individual departments and agencies are provided to ensure consistency, quality, accessibility and discoverability.

- **What were the expected results of the initiative?**

The portal is a mechanism to advance overall open government efforts and principles across the Government of Canada. The portal itself serves as a platform for departments and agencies to publish open data and information, and provides users a centralized search tool. The publication of open data and information on the portal assists in promoting the open government principles of accountability, transparency and citizen engagement.

- **What were the key performance indicators foreseen in the initiative, and who was responsible for reaching the targets set?**

The performance of the open government portal is assessed by a number of internal corporate reporting structures and public facing reports. Key performance indicators include the percentage increase in net new data and information resources published; the percentage of departments and agencies actively publishing data and information; and the percentage increase in downloads of data and information resources.

- **Who was (were) the main implementing body(-ies) for the initiative?**
The main implementing body of Canada’s Open Government portal is the Open Government team in the Office of the Chief Information Officer, TBS. This includes ongoing development and maintenance of the portal.

- Problems or challenges to managing the implementation of the initiative (e.g. delays, missed targets, or results that did not meet expectations). What corrective actions were implemented to put the initiative back on track?

Ongoing challenges facing open government implementation include:

- Accountability: Policy development processes and traditional accountabilities are sometimes at odds with a co-creation or ‘open by default’ approach to policy-making.
- Measuring impact: It can be difficult to identify rigorous methods for accurately measuring the social and economic benefits of open government.
- User experience: In an era of unprecedented digital change, we can make more content available to more people. This creates a greater need to understand users and ensure content is presented with them in mind.

These challenges can be mitigated through ongoing consultation with internal government communities and an external users. Consultation and engagement with these key stakeholders can help in the development of tools, resources, and guidance that support greater openness and more effective re-use of government data.

International Aspects

Possible issues to explore

- The international dimension of the initiative, i.e., reference to international recommendations and standards (such as OECD recommendations), engaging foreign partners, addressing international data flows.

Canada is a member of the Open Government Partnership and currently serves in a leadership role of lead government chair of the Partnership. The OGP’s national action plan cycle helps bring structure to Canada’s work on open government. Through the Partnership, Canada is able to establish bilateral and multilateral relationships that allow it to leverage best practices and lessons learned from other governments.

Additionally as noted above Canada’s open government portal draws inspiration from international best practices, such as the OECD is open government recommendations, and other governments portals (e.g. data.gov.uk)

- Degree to which the international dimension influences the design and implementation of the initiative.
In the development and updating of open.canada.ca, environmental scans of other governments portals have been conducted, including portals in Brazil, Estonia, Indonesia, New Zealand, United Kingdom and United States, among others. Key functionality and features identified through environmental scan were used to help prioritize updates to the design of Canada’s open government portal.

- **International comparability of data and cross-country data.**

All information published on the Open Government Portal follow metadata and format requirements, including machine readability. The standardization across departments of the metadata is through the Standard on Metadata, which promotes interoperability and comparability of data. Recommended and preferred formats are identified for publishing on the site.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

*Possible issues to explore*

- **The monitoring and evaluation framework for the initiative, including responsible organisation, methodology, transparency and fund allocation**

The performance of the open government portal is assessed by a number of internal corporate reporting structures and public facing reports. This includes, for example, public reporting through Canada’s [quarterly open government progress tracker](https://open.canada.ca), and through Canada’s [mandate letter commitment tracker](https://open.canada.ca).

- **The criteria and key indicators for evaluating the initiative (including key performance indicators and targets).**

Key performance indicators for open government and open data include the percentage increase in net new data and information resources published; the percentage of departments and agencies actively publishing data and information; and the percentage increase in downloads of data and information resources.

Additionally, more targeted indicators have been developed to understand progress on open science. As part of Canada’s Third Biennial Plan to the Open Government Partnership (2016-2018), Canada committed to “develop metrics to track collective federal progress on open science activities.” [These indicators are now publicly available](https://open.canada.ca), and SBDAs are beginning to work to report on their progress against the indicators.

- **The role of the evaluation in improving the design of the initiative, i.e. how can the result of evaluation lead to revisions in the policy design?**
Internal and public facing evaluations will support prioritize edition of efforts to improve the open government portal. Evaluations will help to assess the value for money of efforts made to improve the portal. Additionally, the use of user testing and evaluation of usability of the portal continues to guide functionality and improvements.

- **Impact assessment on end users (if available): how does the initiative improve the access to data and re-use thereof?**

  The results of user testing, consultation and engagement continue to drive the design and development of the portal. The Open Data Portal Survey assesses user satisfaction with the portal to improve user access to high-value, statistical tax data and publications. A new user-friendly format was subsequently developed, and a pop-up window that invites users to participate in the survey was added.

- **The limitations of and challenges for monitoring and evaluation, due to its complex, dynamic and long-term nature.**

  While monitoring and evaluation mechanisms can help to measure progress in implementing open government and open data, many governments face ongoing challenges in the measuring the medium- and long-term impacts of open government. While some direct impacts can be more easily measured (e.g. creation of a new app was using open government data), the indirect impacts (e.g. open government data is one of several data sources used in a research reports that helps to improve government policy) are much more difficult to measure effectively.

- **Please quote any monitoring or impact assessment documents available, and the main outcomes achieved.**

  Public-facing evaluations and reports include Canada’s [quarterly open government progress tracker](#) and Canada’s [mandate letter commitment tracker](#).

**Lessons and Challenges**

*Possible issues to explore*

- **The degree of attainment of the objectives**

  The overall objective of the portal was to provide a centralized location for users to access government of Canada information. The portal has been operational since 2011, and continues to be updated with new features and functionality. Over 70 federal departments and agencies currently publish through the portal and there are over 81,000 records available.

- **Main achievements of the initiative in terms of process and end results**
The Open Government portal provides users with the ability to search through over 81,000 records from departments and agencies across the federal government, and federated search to the province of Alberta’s open information. The portal also allows users to view government records that have been proactively disclosed such as completed Access to Information summaries, travel and hospitality expenses, and government contracts.

Open Maps provides access to the Government of Canada’s geospatial information. Users can combine, visualize, and analyze geospatial data and collaborate with other Canadians. Currently we have over 850 map-able datasets.

The Open Government Learning Hub includes materials for users to gain knowledge and skills on open government, including Do-it Yourself Toolkit, Open Government 101 and Working with APIs.

The site also acts as portal to other government-wide reporting such as expenditure management and financial reports. Over 100 federal institutions have released roughly 875,000 disclosures.

- **The pitfalls that have been avoided**

Canada has a robust legal and policy framework related to open government. This includes one of the world’s first access to information laws (Access to Information Act, 1983) and strong legal protections for private and personal information (Privacy Act, 1983). It also includes mandatory government of Canada policies and guidance related to web accessibility and official languages.

These laws and policies have helped to ensure that the open government portal is, by default, open and accessible to all with appropriate protections for privacy, security, and confidentiality. This has helped the Government of Canada to avoid some pitfalls and delays related to potential revisions or changes to datasets to ensure their accessibility, integrity, etc.

- **Lessons learnt from setbacks in the process**

Canada will continue to strengthen the quality, accessibility, and searchability of open data. For example, in 2017, a number of redundant datasets on the open.canada.ca portal were consolidated to make it easier for Canadians to find the information they need quickly and easily. As a result of this consolidation exercise, the number of datasets on the portal dropped from over 115,000 to less than 80,000. While the overall number of datasets has decreased, this initiative helped improve the searchability and discoverability of open datasets.

- **Challenges for the future**

1. Ongoing data quality efforts, including reviewing datasets, refining current guidance, and implementing a quality grading for datasets.
2. Development of guidance materials, training and tools to support departments and agencies with visualizations for open data.
3. Work with sub-national partners to release, evaluate and standardize datasets in high-priority subject areas

4. Continuing efforts to better connect with and understand the needs of open science experts and end users (e.g. as part of Canada’s 2018-2020 Plan, commitment to “Promote open science and actively solicit feedback from stakeholders and federal scientists on their needs with respect to open data and open science.”

- **Transferability: how relevant is this case study for implementation in other OECD member and partner countries?**

Canada’s Open Government Portal is an applicable case study for OECD member and partner countries. Key features and functionalities of the portal, along with the open source coding of the portal, can be leveraged by other governments to establish or improve on existing portals.