

Open Government Partnership New Zealand National Action Plan 2018-2021

Progress report to: January 2021 – March 2021

Commitment 11: Authoritative dataset of government organisations as open data for greater transparency

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. <i>Start/End dates:</i> October 2018-December 2018	
2	Investigate and agree on the appropriate open standards for the dataset. <i>Start/End dates:</i> October 2018-June 2021	

3	<p>Work with identified dataset contributors to agree on the process for ongoing maintenance of the dataset.</p> <p><i>Start/End dates:</i> December 2018 – June 2021</p>	
4	<p>Explore and then agree on a governance model and ongoing ownership for the data model and data set.</p> <p><i>Start/End dates:</i> August 2020-June 2021</p>	
5	<p>Draft and then confirm a data model of the 'machinery of government' to support the ongoing release of data about government organisations.</p> <p><i>Start/End dates:</i> January 2020-June 2021</p>	
6	<p>Release the agency name open data set, released by the Public Services Commission in 2020, on data.govt.nz</p> <p>https://catalogue.data.govt.nz/dataset/mog-events/resource/bfc80102-20f8-4a37-815a-2c07c667101c</p> <p><i>Start/End dates:</i> December 2018 – June 2020</p>	
7	<p>Ongoing technical task of making the data set available via the data.govt.nz open data Application Programming Interface (API).</p> <p><i>Start/End dates:</i> December 2018 – June 2021</p>	
8	<p>Secure active users of the dataset/API by promoting the opportunities of reuse to government agencies, non-governmental organisations, business, and the public.</p> <p><i>Start/End dates:</i> June 2019 – June 2021</p>	

Progress key:



some delays



underway



completed

Planning out to June 2021

- The working group met in May 2021 to discuss the supporting narrative and content for the March Quarterly Report, discuss progress on the following:
 - www.govt.nz Government A-Z use case and sandbox experiment
 - options being considered for data standards when building the dataset
 - possible dates for further data modelling workshops in June focusing on votes and appropriations data.
- Consideration is being given to building the dataset based around the all of government (AoG) ontology being developed, and we are deciding whether we use linked data (preferred option) or semantic web standards. An AoG ontology can accelerate transition to fully digital information management and support digital government. The demonstrator is intended to aid understanding of what an ontology is; illustrate concepts, properties and relationships, and identify semantic, technical and governance issues.
- Workshops are intended for late June in which extensions to the data model (particularly vote and appropriations data) will be workshopped and mapped.
- The sandbox experiment focuses on testing and creating an enhanced dataset based on the Public Service Commission's (PSC) Machinery of Government (MoG) dataset and the govt.nz A-Z datasets. The Government A-Z is a core feature on www.govt.nz, providing contact and other key information about government organisations. Content updates are done manually based on a variety of inputs, including the PSC MoG dataset. An experiment is being conducted to see whether applying a content model to the PSC MoG dataset and updating the relevant fields in the A-Z list automatically via API could meet user needs and reduce maintenance costs.
- We are exploring how we are able to extend the dataset to include the categorisation of government departments (i.e. whether an organisation is a public service department, non-public service department, etc.) using a linked data approach.
- Another meeting of the working group is planned in late June to further report on progress, and review and finalise the report for the period April 2021 to June 2021. At this time, we will document progress and achievement of agreed milestones and consider whether the commitment needs to be extended for another year.

Data Model of Machinery of Government

- Workshops are planned to be held in June to identify and map possible extensions to the data model (particularly Vote and appropriations data).

- A number of meetings were held with Commitment 11 agencies to progress specific aspects of the work programme, especially connections between the government ontology, the Govt A-Z feature and the PSC MoG dataset.
- Specific use cases are being considered to test the data model, as well as reign in potential scope creep. The use case being focussed on at present is the Government A-Z feature. There is the opportunity to use the sandbox environment to progress other use cases (for example, improvements to the Ministry of Justice’s “Directory of Official Information” could be considered). This will help us understand more fully the implementation requirements for applying the dataset in a number of ways and to prioritise the extension of dataset elements.

Open standards

- Progress is being made in landing on an open standard for the data set(s). A paper detailing options is being prepared to be presented at the next working group meeting in June. A final decision on appropriate open standards will be communicated in the June 2021 Quarterly Report.
- Work continues investigating the use of unique identifiers for government organisations using URIs to support a linked data ontology, with a proposal that a URI minting service be set up. A set of principles is being developed similar to the approach adopted for govt.nz.
- Options for an All of Government ontology are being developed within Archives NZ at DIA. This is an exciting opportunity to look at using modern technology to address the need for common vocabularies and concept definitions across government. Amongst other benefits ontologies can enable machine-readable data and information as well as use of multiple languages and automation of our business processes.
- The UK government central govt ontology is being referenced concerning how it is used and its applicability for NZ. <https://lov.linkeddata.es/dataset/lov/vocabs/cgov>

HOW WE ARE INCLUDING DIVERSE VOICES

Work on the commitment is being assisted by civil society representatives and members of the public interested in this commitment. Previous blog posts on digital.govt.nz have encouraged people to get involved if they are interested, for example:

<https://www.digital.govt.nz/blog/agency-name-open-dataset-ready-for-reuse/>

<https://www.digital.govt.nz/blog/building-blocks-of-digital-transformation/>

A blog post is planned to provide an update on progress made in 2021.

HOW WE ARE KEEPING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INFORMED

- Planned blog in the open and use public and private Twitter accounts to amplify and extend the reach of this work.
- A Basecamp site has been set up to share documents, support ongoing discussion and enable easier collaboration amongst the Commitment 11 working group.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Delivering value with the Machinery of Government data modelling by testing the Govt A-Z use case (sandbox experiment).
- Further consideration of the UK government central gov ontology and its applicability for NZ. <https://lov.linkeddata.es/dataset/lov/vocabs/cgov>
- A paper describing options for an open standard for the dataset(s) with a decision to be communicated in the June 2021 Quarterly Report.
- Significant work is still required to explore future maintenance and governance requirements for the dataset. This will be a priority over the next reporting period.
- Review final draft of narrative that articulates the value of the Commitment 11 work (particularly the dataset of government organisations) for use by members of the group and by the wider OGP community.

LINKS – EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED

- Machinery of Government data model workshops:
<https://twitter.com/vicwray/status/1306715302458060804>
- Agency name open dataset – ready for reuse:
<https://www.digital.govt.nz/blog/agency-name-open-dataset-ready-for-reuse/>
- 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/1xCBmG9qiYgsy9ET_0dbG6A-IVN3nIChpINoyJlzxcuw/edit#gid=0
- Building blocks of digital transformation
<https://www.digital.govt.nz/blog/building-blocks-of-digital-transformation/>
- Exploring open standards:
<https://www.digital.govt.nz/blog/exploring-the-standard-for-government-organisations-data-give-us-your-feedback/>

IMPACTS

Immediate

Improved access to information about the structure of government agencies

The data set owned by the Public Services Commission (PSC) continues to be the only [authoritative list of government organisations](#) . Since June 2020 this has been available and maintained by PSC as an open data option via data.govt.

The Govt A-Z sandbox experiment is exploring the opportunities that exist to expand this dataset to increase its usefulness. For example through developing and adding a linked data ontology to enable citizens to trace the government's structure. This would allow understanding and exploration of where to get government services, or of agency accountability.

Consideration was given to the use of NZBN as the canonical ID for linking the wider datasets but was not considered best practice as if NZBN numbers change it would require subsequent changes in the OGP dataset, meaning every dataset linked to it would need to change as well. Also, not every organisation within the dataset will have a NZBN. This does not preclude the NZBN being included as another data element in the dataset so that it can be easily found, searched on, or even used as a reference ID.

Medium Term

Improved access to authoritative information

The “A-Z of government agencies” list is a core feature on Govt.nz, providing contact and other key information about government organisations. Content updates are done manually based on a variety of inputs, including the PSC MoG dataset, which forms the core of the Commitment 11 authoritative dataset of government organisations.

An experiment is being conducted to see whether applying a content model to the PSC MoG/C11 dataset and updating the relevant fields in the A-Z list automatically via API could meet user needs and reduce maintenance costs. The resulting project is intended to provide the first published use case of the dataset as open, machine-readable data presented in a user-friendly format on a widely used service.

The PSC MoG dataset (owned and maintained by PSC) records every name change and establishment/disestablishment related to government organisations, which forms the core of the Commitment 11 dataset. Govt.nz already uses a substantial portion of this dataset to maintain its A-Z list.

By merging the data and applying a content model to the concepts and how they are related to each other and presented to the user, Govt.nz could create a new, enhanced dataset and A-Z list that is updated dynamically via API via the published dataset on Data.govt.nz.

Planned steps are:

1. Define individual datasets and merged dataset entities and fields (underway).
2. Apply organisational ontology and schema currently under development by Archives as available and appropriate (underway).
3. Review content model and roles and responsibilities with stakeholders.
4. Define updating schedule with Govt.nz and design for future change.
5. Sandbox development:
 - a. PSC publishes existing dataset to Data.govt.nz
 - b. AoG Dev Team ingests and merges with A-Z dataset
 - c. AoG Dev Team publishes curated and merged dataset to sandpit environment for testing (UX, UAT, regression) and stakeholder review.
 - d. Based on those results, decision to publish updated A-Z list to live Govt.nz site and enhanced dataset to Data.govt.nz to be made by stakeholder agreement.
6. Govt.nz to share learnings with stakeholders and wider government as well as provide feedback and analytics as first user of C11 dataset. Govt.nz team will continue to advise on and develop applications of the dataset as a foundation for both digital services and information about government.