



Open Government Partnership

Independent Reporting Mechanism

Canada

Comments Received on the Second Progress Report

Of the researcher's recommendations, I especially endorse the recommendation for the government to support its commitments with proper resources. Achieving whole-of-government support is another important and related recommendation. I appreciate the additional detail available in this report compared to the government's mid-term report, especially under commitment 10, Digital Literacy, for which the government's report did not mention any specific grants and contributions projects. I also appreciate this report's attention to the political context in which decisions are made.

With respect to milestone 3 of commitment 7, Mandatory Reporting on Extractives, it's important for the reports to not only be centralized, but to be published in a common, standardized format. A central repository of inconsistent PDF, Word, Excel, etc. files would make analysis and monitoring very difficult, because it would be harder to extract, interpret and compare the information in the files. Having a central repository of consistent files (using at least one machine-readable format) would make analysis and monitoring much easier. Furthermore, just as the government has made all completed ATI requests available through a single search interface, and just as it plans to provide single-window access to budgets, expenditures, and contracting data, the government should do the same with reporting by companies in the mining, oil, and gas sectors. This sort of access is much easier to implement if the source data is published in a single, standardized format.

With respect to commitment 8, Open Contracting, in terms of the challenges some users may have using the JSON format, the Open Contracting Data Standard describes an additional CSV format, which users can open in common tools like Excel or LibreOffice. Implementing both formats may address some of the usability concerns.

In order to be of greater utility to the government, some feedback in the report could be made more specific. For example, with respect to "data users noted that much of the data is in formats that are not always easy to use," it would be helpful to know which formats are hard to use, and which would be easier - assuming that information was provided by the data users. Presently, this feedback would require the government to re-investigate these questions before it could address the issue. In particular, it would be helpful to provide or link to examples of better engagement with civil society from other OGP countries. The following OGP document covers some good practices: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP-Whats-in-the-New-OGP-NAPs-report-web.pdf>

The following sentence appears late in the report without context or detail: "The metadata standards were received with skepticism and did not provide users with a high level of information." From my perspective, the work the government has done on its Common Core Metadata Element Set - and the work it is doing to extend that core to specific domains - is an important step forward both for improving the quality of its own metadata (which contributes to more effective, relevant searches for datasets in

its catalog) and for enabling integration and collaboration with subnational open data initiatives in Canada. As it stands, it is hard to reconcile this experience with this comment in the report.

In terms of any loss of information due to the consolidation of websites into Canada.ca, my understanding was that the government was archiving all old websites, though this remains a work in progress. I recommend confirming the statements made by Macleans' with the government to avoid any confusion on this issue.

Editorial notes:

- The cells in the tables in section IV are empty.
- "There are 2,529 social networks": Do you mean "social media accounts"?

- James McKinney, Senior Advisor, Government of Ontario; Senior Technical Adviser, Open North

Thanks for this James. I look forward to having the contracting information available and having it in both JSON & CSV sounds like a great solution. Most people still can't easily parse a JSON file.

With regard to the consolidation of information on Canada.ca, I really don't think that there is a great plan for archiving the old websites or data. Even in the process of preparing content for migration to Canada.ca I've heard that even the public sector is having to revert to <http://Archive.org> to pull down policy documents that were simply deleted from departmental sites. My sense is that we are loosing a lot and that there isn't plan to effectively archive it within the GoC. It's a bit old, but ultimately, I'd love to see governments move to something like Silona Bonewald's forward thinking vision here <http://radar.oreilly.com/2010/04/stop-fishing-and-start-feastin.html>

There are problems with the consolidation into Canada.ca that I've tried to outline here: <http://openconcept.ca/blog/mik>

I don't know of another government that is attempting to do this, and really don't see how it will help government be more relevant to Canadians. There is an ideology of centralization, rather than of standards. Ultimately I expect that it will fail big, as there is really no space for innovation

- Mike Gifford, President, OpenConcept Consulting Inc.