

Part 1: Introduction

The Government of Israel has elected to advance the policy of open government and has joined the International Open Government Partnership for Promotion of Open Government Policy. This decision originated in the understanding that recent innovations in communication and information technologies allow for significant improvement of the traditional democratic system and its relationship between the individual and the government. The goal of open government policy is to empower the individual, society and state on the basis of three fundamental principles:

- Transparency and active reporting to the public
- Public participation
- Accountability

These three principles, combined with recognition of technology's significant role in facilitating change, are the central components of the International Open Government Partnership for Promotion of Open Government Policy.

Principle of Transparency and Active Reporting to the Public

The Government of Israel is committed to freedom of information and to promoting transparency of and accessibility to data and information produced in the public sector. Currently, we are in the midst of transition from the old perception, that views the Government as having a monopoly on the information it obtains, to a newer perception that views information as a public resource to which the public has maximal access rights. The Government has an obligation to make public information accessible to the public and to enable the public to use it in a variety of ways (including processing or improving it). The principle of transparency and active reporting is to be subject to the constraints determined by law, including consideration of individual rights and other public interests defined by law, such as the right to privacy, state security and intellectual property.

Principle of Public Participation

The Government of Israel will strive for implementation of a policy of public participation, with the goal of improving decision-making processes and strengthening public trust in our systems of government.

Principle of Accountability

The Government of Israel will strive for promotion of the concept of accountability (public officials' responsibility towards their constituents). The Government believes in the public's right to examine, critique and supervise governmental action and its need to review the activities of publicly elected officials and Government Ministries according to clearly defined benchmarks. Consequently, the Government will take steps to publish work plans and their objectives and to report on the level of Government service provided, as well as the level of bureaucratic procrastination involved. It will check the level of public satisfaction with the Government's activities and continually strive for improvement and excellence.

Implementation of Innovative Technologies

The Government of Israel will strive for the integration of innovative and interactive information technologies and for the development of technological tools that are capable of improving:

- Flow of information from governmental sources
- Dialogue between the Government and the public
- The level of public service provided to the public

The Government will need to overcome organizational, political and social challenges that arise as part of the transition process. For the project to succeed, it is essential for the Government (including all its central and administrative leadership) to recognize the priority of these changes.

In joining the Open Government Partnership, the Israel Government took upon itself the task of following the Partnership's road map and decided to focus on two Grand Challenges:

- 1. Improving the level of service provided by the Government to the public:** The Government of Israel will strive for improvement of service to the public and supply of a high service level and experience. For this purpose, the Government will strive for adoption of management methods and benchmarks that are widely used at present in the private and business sectors and will make necessary changes in the public sector accordingly. In addition, the Government will raise awareness of this issue among governmental service providers and the general public. Furthermore, the Government will establish a governmental customer service unit, that will measure and publish the level of Government service to the public and broaden use of sophisticated customer service technologies in the public sector.
- 2. Strengthening public trust in Government systems:** The Government will promote initiatives and projects that advance information transparency and accessibility to the public in a manner that will enable the public to monitor Government performance. Work plans developed by Government offices will be available, allowing the public to determine adherence to timetables in meeting goals. Similarly, the Government will promote measures that involve the public in key planning and implementation processes pertaining to its performance. Such measures, that strive to increase public supervision of Government work, aspire towards reducing cases of failure and corruption and towards strengthening public trust in Government systems.

As part of the Israel Government's commitment to the road map of the Open Government Partnership, the Government will define clear goals for 2012 in this document. The stated goals address each of the challenges described above. In addition, as outlined in the Partnership's road map, the Government will establish a cross-sector forum that includes senior representatives of the Government, the academic world, NGOs, civil society and the public. A broad public coalition will inform Open Government Partnership commitments and create a multi-stakeholder forum for public consultation on the implementation of its commitments.

The Government of Israel is interested in benefiting from the experience of other countries that are members of the Partnership through reports and information shared in international forums (as part of the Partnership). The Government is prepared to report on an ongoing basis and share the information and experience that it gains while going through this process, for the benefit of other countries and members of the Partnership.

Part 2: Assessing Existing Initiatives of Open Government

1) Improving the Level of Service Provided by the Government to the Public

A. Access to Government Information

The Government of Israel strives to increase the level of usability and effectiveness of governmental information. It aims to improve Government information on the Internet, promote interoperability among offices and increase the distribution of governmental information, using an easily accessible, secure, multichannel approach.

- 1. Government portals that provide information and services:** The Israel Government has developed portals that use a *single window* approach to data and service access by following complex, cross-agency processes. These portals orient users by providing information about services and processes, offering concrete information and allowing users to complete some of the services online. For example, the supplier portal provides a database of Government suppliers, offers information about financial issues such as tenders and allows users to purchase online, while the business portals concern registration of businesses, construction, imports and opening a business. The main Government portal is the *gov.il* portal, that includes information about different topics, explanations regarding eligibility for services and referral to other sites run by Government agencies and local authorities.
- 2. Government databases:** The Government regularly releases online applications that are based on Government databases and enable information analysis and retrieval. These include calculators, visualizations and simulators concerning individual rights, such as information about transactions, property ownership, eligibility for pensions and other allowances, subsidies, exemptions from taxes and liens and mortgages.
- 3. Government services for forms and payments:** The governmental form service currently includes 1,800 online forms, some of which allow users to fully conduct processes and services via the Internet. The payment service increases the accessibility of hundreds of different types of payments for a wide range of Government agencies and local authorities, using credit cards and bank transfers. Business transactions in 2011 are estimated at approximately NIS 14 billion.
- 4. Standardization of Government sites:** To ensure a unified structure for Government sites, their publication of essential information and their usability by all target audiences (including speakers of foreign languages and people with disabilities), Government sites will be reviewed annually. The results will be published in the Annual Report and reported to the Knesset Information and Technology Committee.

B. Cutting Red Tape

The Government of Israel aims at simplifying internal and inter-office work procedures and is developing initiatives that reduce bureaucratic red tape and help develop a customer-oriented service mentality among Government workers.

- 1. Establishing a ministerial committee for improving Government service to the public and open government:** The committee's authority includes establishing an overall policy and plans for providing Government service to the public; establishing policy and decision-making guidelines regarding open government; establishing

guidelines for Government agencies, simplifying procedures and making them more efficient; establishing processes that relate to measurement and type of service; deepening professional knowledge in the area of open government and service to the public and initiating central IT projects that strive towards these goals.

- 2. Inter-office committee for improving business processes:** As per a June 2009 Government decision, the Israel Government established a steering committee, headed by the CEO of the Finance Ministry, that aims at improving the efficiency of procedures required to do business in Israel. The committee has the authority to examine the processes and suggest ways of cutting bureaucratic red tape for the business sector (the cost of bureaucratic red tape is estimated at NIS 30 billion annually.) In addition, the committee was asked to review similar processes in other countries; to assess critical failures involved in the Israeli process; to determine quantitative goals and measurements for the process's assessment and to improve and simplify the process according to the World Bank's Doing Business model.

2) Strengthening Public Trust in the Systems of Government

A. Processes Strengthening Participatory Democracy

The Government of Israel initiated a process of public participation in key areas of its agenda: Legislation, Government reforms and ongoing decisions on subjects of broad national interest. Use of tools that include the public in the policymaking process seeks to contribute to: Building consensus and preventing conflict; enabling the Government to receive extensive information about public opinion; obtaining and using diverse information from different sources during decision making; minimizing alienation between the public and the Government and sharing innovative, diverse and original solutions with policymakers.

- 1. Planning reforms for improvement of government service to the public and open government:** In August, 2010, the Government decided on a reform of Government service to the public. Its planning was carried out in a broad and comprehensive process of public participation and with the assistance of volunteers. Minister Michael Eitan, who initiated the program, established roundtables of experts in technology, law and customer service, all of whom provided voluntary assistance to help develop the program. Similarly, the Government consulted with third sector organizations and representatives of the general public, who were asked (at the initiative of the Government) to comment on the decision and on program drafts. In this way, projects such as government customer service and contact centers were established (see Part 3, below).
- 2. Public Participation Project:** The public participation site provides information about government reforms, initiated bills and decisions with broad impact on the public. The public is able to vote for or against the subject under discussion, to express and discuss their views, via participatory platforms that are on the site. The public's position and suggestions are brought to the attention of policymakers on parliamentary and ministerial committees. Suggestions are sometimes integrated as part of the legislation or become a part of government decisions. In some instances, the public is invited to meetings with representatives of different agencies; in other cases, Government agencies select professional representatives to provide answers to questions. Examples of important topics discussed on the site include the Arrangements Law, the National Project for Prevention of Smoking and the Noise Reform of the Ministry of the Environment. Similarly, a public hearing was held on the site regarding the Google Street View Project, in which the public debated whether to allow a company to photograph the streets of

Israel. Site use is gaining momentum, with tens of thousands of Internet users visiting monthly.

- 3. Public hearings regarding activities of the committee for social and economic change:** The nationwide social protest that raged across Israel last August regarding the country's socioeconomic agenda forced the Government to review and reassess the distribution of public resources among different segments of the population. A public committee established for this purpose conducted a public hearing, in which tens of thousands of citizens and public representatives were heard. Organizations representing civil society, as well as people in the street, were invited to share opinions with the committee in public forums, roundtables, targeted discussions, via the website and in the *Response to the Manifesto* published by the committee. A *deliberation site*, set up as part of the committee's activities, allowed the public to raise issues for discussion, express opinions and respond online to other ongoing discussions. To make the site a space for open dialogue, users were invited to upload editorials and position papers, some of them highly critical of Government policy. At this site, eight of the committee's public hearings were broadcast, approximately 140 articles and position papers were uploaded and 3,336 suggestions from users were received, all of which were brought to the attention of the committee. Also published were the committee's report and reactions received in the *Response to the Manifesto* at the site. Public influence was reflected clearly in the number of suggestions taken from the website that were integrated into legislation, government decisions and adjustments to budgetary allocations.

B. Increasing Accountability: Measurement, Review and Publication of Information

Accountability involves adopting methods for measuring and reviewing government activity and publishing that information. These methods allow the public to keep track of the Government's implementation of policy and goals, budget allocation, the level of bureaucracy in various agencies and the services provided to the public. Examples of such projects include:

- 1. Portal data.gov.il:** The portal includes factual information of importance to the public, in an open and accessible format (Excel files). In addition, the portal includes a partial public listing of government databases that are accessible to the public.
- 2. E-Government Report:** An annual report, published for the past six years, rates online information and services according to parameters such as availability of services, availability of information and success in implementing standards regarding accessibility and usability for people with disabilities. These evaluations urged government agencies to improve their working plans (e.g., payments, forms, site accessibility, browser accessibility, social media activity, etc.).
- 3. Open Budget Website:** Since 2011, due to public demand, the Finance Ministry has been publishing budget details in Excel files. Using the information published, the NGO Workshop for Public Information created the Open Budget Website, that allows the budget to be searched and analyzed from different perspectives. The site includes participatory platforms that enable discussion about sections of the budget and participation on social media sites.

Part 3: Commitments for 2012

The Government of Israel will continue to initiate and develop programs based on new technologies that reflect the principles of open government. The programs presented here were selected on the basis of these criteria:

1. Projects that focus on one of the two Grand Challenges on which the Government has chosen to concentrate as a member of the Partnership:
 - Improving Government service to the public and cutting bureaucratic red tape.
 - Increasing public integrity in the Government.
2. Projects that involve a large number of Government offices.
3. Projects that deal with developing new organizational and technological infrastructure, or highly innovative and cutting edge projects.

A. Improving Government Service to the Public and Cutting Bureaucratic Red Tape

1. **Establishing a unit for Government service to the public:** The Government is currently establishing a central headquarters for improving Government service to the public. This unit will develop guidelines for governmental customer service, determine standards and develop central projects for improvement. It will run a set of measurements to review government services and publish its results for the public, coordinating its activities with officials in charge of different services at various Government agencies.

Goals: The Government will establish the unit, recruit its personnel and compose a strategic plan defining the unit's work. The unit will provide ongoing measurement of the level of service provided by Government agencies and publish a Government Service to the Public Report in 2012. The unit will conduct ongoing activity vis-à-vis other agencies, defining standards acceptable to stakeholders regarding levels of service necessary in each section of Government.

2. **Establishing a national information technology (IT) unit headed by a Government CIO:** To improve coordination and cooperation among Government information systems, the Government decided to establish a national IT unit, headed by a Government CIO. The unit will have extensive horizontal authority, including developing the Government's IT strategy, developing extensive governmental IT projects, defining unified architecture and standards for the government's IT unit and promoting development of databases and professional expertise within government agencies. The Government CIO will also be responsible for the e-Government unit, that promotes digitalized governmental services for the public and develops a horizontal technological infrastructure for administrative services. The Israel Government approved the appointment of a Government CIO in Government Decision No. 4375 on March 11, 2012.

Goals: The Government CIO was appointed recently. Staffing the unit will be completed by the end of the first half of the year. Once it is established, the unit will draft a work plan defining its activities and budget and institutionalizing its relationship with other agencies.

3. **Online catalog of Government services:** An online catalog will be developed with extensive information about Government services, on a unified interface, with defined metadata. The catalog will describe the service, conditions of eligibility, times and places where services are provided, user responses and additional information provided by other stakeholders from civil society with relevant expertise. Government agencies will

regularly update the information in the catalog and—at a later stage—add further metadata and information, including extensive information about rights, calculators, simulators and search engines.

Goals: Staff for this project is currently being recruited. Throughout 2012, a pilot project will be developed that will provide a catalog of services for three to ten Government offices that supply an extensive range of services to the public.

- 4. Creating a Government contact center (meeting points for private citizens):** In 2012, as part of this project, we will examine the option of establishing a phone support system that provides information about Government services, based on the online service catalogue. For this purpose, project specifications will be drafted and a feasibility and cost analysis will be conducted. During this year, the Government will decide whether to carry out the project and will assess possible subsequent stages thereof. Furthermore, it will explore options for contact center provision of basic services such as setting up appointments, receiving payments, filling out forms, etc., as well as tracking and monitoring the handling of public applications to Government Ministries through to their completion. Specification drafting will also examine the possibility of having the center integrate among existing call centers of various Government units and their possible combination into one central Government contact center.

Goals: Drafting detailed specifications for the contact center and publishing a tender for a company that can provide phone support services.

- 5. Inter-office committee for improving business processes:** A steering committee for improving business processes in Israel will be established in 2012 and strive towards launching a business portal that will include comprehensive, concentrated information about services for businesses. The committee will also continue to review inter-office processes and find ways of rendering them more efficient, seeking to reduce the bureaucratic burden and improve service to businesses.

- 6. Developing technology infrastructure for providing Government services:** The Israel Government will enable individuals to provide information and obtain personal services online, while ensuring maximal protection and privacy and using security processes that identify users with the highest possible level of certainty.

Goals (1): Assessing and determining system standards for remote identification of citizens that meets the stringent requirements for information security, based on use of a smart identity card. Until such cards are distributed, we will consider alternative means of identification for receipt of personal information and government services that meet the above criteria.

Goals (2): Developing a government server for forms and payments: The Government will continue to develop a system of 120-150 new form services.

Goals (3): Developing information infrastructure and government services through cellular phones: In 2012, the Government will assess appropriate technologies for development of Government applications for cellular phones and for development of a central infrastructure enabling Government units to develop such cellular applications.

B. Strengthening the Public's Trust in Systems of Government

- 1. Establishing a freedom of information unit in the Ministry of Justice:** The Government has had difficulties implementing the Freedom of Information Law. Individuals responsible for implementing the law within Israel Government offices only

partially use their designated authority. The freedom of information unit currently being established by the Ministry of Justice will have the authority to make broad policy decisions. It will publicize initiatives regarding government information and develop standards for simplifying the process of submitting policy requests and determining the types of decisions appropriate for public participation. In addition, the unit has the authority to establish and manage a central freedom of information website, to determine guidelines and publicize Government information, conduct seminars and provide professional consultations for those responsible for freedom of information in Government offices and the public sector. The unit will also clarify complaints against Government offices relating to Freedom of Information Law enforcement and raise public awareness regarding freedom of information. A unit director was appointed in November 2011.

Goals: Completing the initial stages of unit setup and staffing; defining policy and developing initial work programs; determining ongoing work flow vis-à-vis officials responsible for freedom of information in Government offices and the public sector; establishing a central Internet site for freedom of information; preparing seminars and workshops for employees in the public sector.

2. **Public participation in policymaking processes:** The Government will widen public exposure to the processes of policy planning and determination and will invite the public to respond to key issues on its agenda.

Goals (1): Developing a technological infrastructure for public participation: The Government will launch a central technological infrastructure that allows public participation, to be available for use by Government offices. The infrastructure will include participatory platforms and tools that allow for display of discussion summaries and public opinion. The Government will strive to encourage use of these tools by Government offices.

Goals (2): Establishing obligatory guidelines for processes involving public participation: The Government will define and approve protocols for public participation in Government office activity and key processes. Part of the protocol will define the types of policy and kinds of decisions that are appropriate for public participation. The protocol will also define appropriate forums for different types of consultation with the public at large (roundtables, professional forums, cross-sector coalitions) and different ways of receiving the public's opinion.

Goals (3): Expanding public discussion as part of establishing policy: During 2012, the Government will initiate at least 50 public online discussions about topics on its agenda.

3. **Cooperation between the Government and the public in developing online applications:** The Government will publicize information and datasets that are of importance to the public to allow private enterprises to develop applications for the benefit of the public. Similarly, the Government will offer grants and support for private social organizations that work towards these goals.

Goals (1): Government support of private social organizations that advance awareness of freedom of information and develop online services: Currently, the Ministry of Justice is formulating an appeal to private social organizations involved in promoting freedom of information initiatives, inviting them to apply for support and grants to advance their activities in these areas.

Goals (2): Government grant for Government information application developers: The Israel Government will offer a grant to developers who create applications designed to display and present Government information. The grant will be awarded in accordance with predetermined criteria, such as efficiency in improving service and reducing bureaucratic red tape, extent of target audience (population using the application), originality, reliability, etc.

Goals (3): Promoting the data.gov.il portal: Continuing to develop the portal and adding tools for information presentation, graphic displays, unified display of information (including tables), standardized downloading and standard APIs for data series.

- 4. Establishing a system of measurement and review and publicizing a Government service report to the public:** The Government will measure the level of Government service and publicize a Government service report, seeking to promote the principle of accountability. By gathering measurement information and publicizing a comparison of performance by different Government offices, it will enable the public to supervise Government activities and judge its operations, leading Government offices to define new goals and programs for improvement.

Goals: The Government will strive for initial publication of measurements (identifying different levels of Government service to the public) by the end of 2012. To achieve this end, the Government will work with suppliers that provide measurement services and will process and analyze data concerning all three channels of Government service (service branches, phone services and the Internet).

- 5. Publication of work plans in Government offices:** The work plans developed by Government offices and the goals defined in these plans will be publicized on the Prime Minister's Office Internet site under the direction of its Policy Planning Division. A special Website was established (<http://www.plans.gov.il>) to display these plans.

Goals: Providing search and information retrieval capabilities at the plan display website.

- 6. State Budget information accessibility:** In continuation of the Open Budget Project, the Finance Ministry will continue to make information about the State Budget accessible.

- 7. Establishing a cross-sector forum that promotes Open Government programs:** As part of its commitments to the Open Government Partnership, the Israel Government will establish a cross-sector forum as an official forum that will supervise approved Government plans and provide consultation on Open Government issues through the Minister in charge of Improvement of Government Services. The Forum will comprise senior representatives of the Government, the academic world and third sector organizations.

Goals: The document outlining Israel's commitments to the Open Government Partnership will be discussed and evaluated in the Israeli forum to be established. The document will be approved by the Government before it is presented at the founding conference of the Partnership in Brazil, in April 2012. Throughout the year, the forum will hold at least four meetings dedicated to open government topics concerning Israel and the rest of the world. Similarly, the forum will hold a national seminar on issues of Open Government policy and the Partnership's conference in Brazil.

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