Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM): Ontario Progress Report 2017

Daniel J. Paré, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, Independent Researcher

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a voluntary international initiative that aims to secure commitments from governments to their citizenry to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. In 2016, OGP opened to subnational participants in their own right as part of a pilot program. The OGP Subnational Pilot Program consists of 15 subnational governments who submitted Action Plans and signed onto the Subnational Declaration at the Paris Global OGP Summit. This report summarizes the results of the development and implementation of Ontario's pilot subnational action plan from January 2017 to December 2017.

The IRM reports for OGP pioneers will be published online primarily. As a result, this template is outlined in terms of the final site layout of the report.

Site map

- Overview page
- Context and scope of action plan
- Development process and monitoring of the action plan
- Commitments
- OGP method and sources

Overview

Period under Review

Action Plan under Review	2017
Dates of Actions under Review	01/2017 – 12/2017

Summary of IRM Findings

Ontario completed its three commitments in time, significantly improving access to information and civic participation among youth. To strengthen future action plans, it is important to expand their focus to new sectors and establish inclusive, permanent dialogue mechanisms during the formulation of commitments.

Participation in OGP

Action Plan Date	01/2017 – 12/2017
Lead Agency (Office, Department, etc.)	Open Government Office Treasury Board Secretariat

At a Glance

Table 1: At a Glance		
Number of Commitments		3
Level of Completion		
Completed		3
Substantial		0
Limited		0
Not Started		0
Number of Commitments with...		
Clear Relevance to OGP Values		2
Transformative Potential Impact		0
Substantial or Complete Implementation		3
All Three (✪)		0
Did It Open Government?	*Major*	3
	Outstanding	0

Action Plan Priorities

1. Strengthen Ontario's commitment to making government data open by default by adopting the International Open Data Charter
2. Improving youth engagement in government policy and program development by harnessing digital tools
3. Improve open government literacy to change the ways in which public sector employees engage with their responsibilities

Institutional Context

This section summarizes the Institutional and Subnational Context section. It emphasizes the description of the lead institutions responsible for the action plan, their powers of coordination and how the institutional set-up boosts or affects the OGP process.

OGP leadership in Ontario

Ontario's commitment to the OGP is not rooted in any official or legally binding mandate. It is anchored in an October 2013 open letter published by the government of Ontario calling for the province to lead the way in "re-imagining what's possible" through its Open Government initiative.[1] The letter specified that each of the government's then 27 Ministries were to develop plans for becoming open and engaged, and that an expert team[2] had been put in place to lead province wide discussions about how the government could become more open. The 2014 Ministerial Mandate Letter to the President of the Treasury Board specified that one of six key priorities for this Ministry was "building an open and accountable government."[3] Coinciding with this priority, a team of individuals tasked with implementing strategies promoting more open, transparent, and accessible government was created.[4] In late 2014 the Open Government Office (OGO) was formally established. The OGO is mandated to lead "Ontario's Open Government strategy and action plan to increase openness, transparency and accountability" and "is partnering with ministries, OPS [Ontario Public Service] staff, businesses, public sector partners and Ontarians to implement Ontario's plan."[5]

Today, the Treasury Board Secretariat remains the lead agency for open government in Ontario, with leadership for various open government efforts shared among the OGO and partnering ministries and agencies. Responsibility for the oversight and implementation of Ontario's OGP Action Plan falls under the remit of OGO, although within the Ontario government it has not been formally/officially designated as the exclusive lead for OGP activities.

This reflects, in part, the fact that OGP-related activities and commitments are not the driving force for open government in Ontario. The province's participation in the subnational pilot program[6] constitutes only one facet of the OGO's open government activities. Despite complementing the OGP pilot program framework, much of the OGO's open government work falls outside of the remit of the sub-national pilot program.[7]

In June 2018, Ontario voters elected a new government. The issue of open government was not a key component of the platforms advanced by any of the three main political parties. With this change in government the continuity of Ontario's open government trajectory is open to question.

Table 2. Summary of OGP leadership in Ontario

1. Structure	Yes	No
Is there a clearly designated government lead for OGP?	✔	
	Shared	**Single**
Is there a single lead agency or shared leadership on OGP efforts?	✔	
	Yes	**No**
Is the head of government leading the OGP initiative?		✔
2. Legal Mandate	**Yes**	**No**
Is the government's commitment to OGP established through an official, publicly released mandate?		✔
Is the government's commitment to OGP established through a legally binding mandate?		✔
3. Continuity and Instability	**Yes**	**No**
Was there a change in the organization(s) leading or involved with the OGP initiatives during the action plan implementation cycle?		✔
Was there a change in the executive leader during the duration of the OGP action plan cycle?		✔

Participation in OGP by Government Institutions
This sub-section describes which government institutions were involved at various stages in OGP.

In Ontario, participation in OGP by government institutions currently is limited to the ministries, departments and agencies who opted to engage in the process. The information contained in Table 3 below sets out the institutions which were involved during the subnational pilot program. The OGO was responsible for leading on the implementation of Commitments 1 and 3. The Youth Strategies Branch of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), in collaboration with the OGO, was responsible for the implementation of Commitment 2.

Throughout the consultation and implementation phases of the initiative, the participation of government institutions and members of the public was promoted through a number of channels including email, press releases, and social media. Actual engagement by representatives of these entities was largely on a voluntary basis. The OGO sent out blanket invitations to all Head of Communications Officers in each ministry and agency. Those who wished to participate contributed ideas during the first phase of a three-phase consultation process.[8] The Ministries identified as being affected by the ideas received from the public in the initial consultation phase assessed all submissions in Phase 2 of the consultation process, and likewise participated in workshops held in the Phase 3 to guide selection of the Action Plan commitments.

Each Action Plan Commitment had an accompanying advisory committee.[9] The advisory committees for Commitments 1 and 3 were comprised of representatives from the Ontario Public Service, civil society, academia, business and community groups, political staff, and the Canadian federal government. The advisory committee for Commitment 2 was made up of representatives from the Youth Strategies Branch of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and members of the Premier's Council for Youth Opportunities.

With the exception of the Youth Strategies Branch of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the direct participation of government institutions in the implementation of the Ontario's OGP Action Plan was

largely limited to those who had representatives on the advisory committees. For Commitment 1, the participating government institutions were the Open Government Office, the Treasury Board Secretariat's Minister's Office, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, and the Ontario Digital Service. For Commitment 3, participating government institutions included the Open Government Office, the Treasury Board Secretariat's Minister's Office, the Cabinet Office, the Centre for Leadership and Learning, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Ministry of Housing.

Table 3. Participation in OGP by Government Institutions

How did institutions participate?	Ministries, Departments or agencies	Legislative (parliaments or councils)	Justice institutions (including quasi-judicial agencies)	Other (special districts, authorities, parastatal bodies, etc.)
Consult: These institutions observed or were invited to observe the action plan, but may not be responsible for commitments in the action plan	35[10]	0	0	1[11]
Propose: These institutions proposed commitments for inclusion in the action plan	0	0	0	0
Implement: These institutions are responsible for implementing commitments in the action plan whether or not they proposed the commitments	10[12]	0	0	1[13]

Commitment Overview

The implementation of Ontario's OGP Action Plan throughout 2017 fostered a number of tangible results and identified some areas for improvement in moving forward. The plan contains three commitments whose respective activities are seen as ongoing and set to continue well beyond December 2017. These three commitments aim to:

1. Strengthen Ontario's commitment to making government data open by default by adopting the International Open Data Charter.
2. Enhance opportunities for young people to contribute to the development of government programs and services by implementing a digital engagement tool.
3. Develop a new guide and training aimed at embedding open government principles in the day-to-day work of the Ontario Public Service.

The expected beneficiaries of the Action Plan are:

- Members of the Ontario Public Service
- Citizens of Ontario who encounter barriers in accessing government information and who wish to engage in dialogue with government
- Youth wishing to contribute to developing government programs and services

There are two principal areas of focus informing the commitments and the issues they are meant to tackle. The first is internally facing and is rooted in the findings and recommendations of the Open Government Engagement Team's 2013/14 consultations that informed the province's Open Data Directive. Then, as now, the main issue of concern rests on assuring the successful implementation of open government writ large in Ontario. There was virtually unanimous agreement among the government and civil society actors interviewed[14] that achieving this goal is contingent on a long-term enterprise-wide commitment to transforming public servant and political culture in a manner that addresses the differing levels of understanding of, and competencies for, operationalizing and embedding open government principles into the day-to-day work of Ontario's public servants and politicians. Therefore, the commitments and milestones focus largely on internal administrative reform and training because it is public servants who are the ones responsible for *doing* open government. Ensuring the presence of highly trained staff who are committed to the principles of open government is also seen as essential to assisting citizens in understanding and accessing government information.

It is too early to assess the outcomes of the commitment implementation. However, in terms of its training work the OGO is working with the Ontario Public Service Internal Audit and its performance measurement framework to determine the most effective way of assessing the impact of its training efforts. According to Kelly Villeneuve, Manager, Organizational Change and Outreach, OGO, a scope of work audit aimed at assessing the progress Ministries are making in implementing open government, and measurable changes resulting from the OGO's training work also is being developed. Coinciding with these training activities, and in accord with its Open Data Directive, the government of Ontario continues to make government data publicly available via its data catalogue that as of February 2018 lists 2336 data sets spanning 24 topics from 32 Ministries and agencies.[15] Of these data sets, 653 are open, 176 are scheduled to be open, 936 are under review, and 569 are restricted.[16]

The second area of focus is public facing. It centres on augmenting youth engagement in government policy and program development processes by implementing a digital engagement platform that connects with this demographic using social media and mobile-based platforms. The web-based platform, http://youthvoiceontario.ca/ was launched in August 2017 and is paired with English and French language Twitter accounts. As of February 2018, the English language @YouthVoiceON account had more than 2500 followers. Its French language companion account, @VoixDesJeunesON, had 72 followers. This marks a notable increase in the total number of followers since the launch of the website in August 2017. By the end of 2017, the platform had hosted three topics of discussion. During the beta-testing phase, discussion focused on youth mentorship. This was followed by a discussion about post-secondary education in the province, and subsequently a discussion regarding climate change.[17]

It must also be noted that, despite holding common values and a shared sense of purpose, the OGP and OGO visions for moving forward with implementing open government appear to diverge in noteworthy ways. For instance, the training-centric approach to open government adopted in Ontario engages with, but is not driven by, civil society. Ontario's approach is driven foremost by a desire to improve governance and service delivery of which implementing openness is a crucial consideration as opposed to being a project driven foremost by concerns about widespread engagement with civil society organizations per se. This reflects two important facets of the Ontario context. First, the movement toward open government in

Ontario is largely a supply-driven as opposed to demand-driven phenomenon. Outside of a small community of voices, there is no notable citizen-based push for open government. Second, within Canada, civil society organizations have consistently found it difficult to mobilize those in whose interest they claim to speak.[18]

Commitment 1: Strengthen commitment to making government data open by default

The aim of this commitment is to enhance accountability and ensure a more robust implementation of Ontario's Open Data Directive. Strengthening Ontario's commitment to making government data open by default is an ongoing objective that is intended to carry on for the coming years. Throughout 2017, the individual milestones accompanying this commitment were largely completed. This said, none of the milestones is directly linked to a measurable practice per se, focusing instead on the provision of institutional and organizational infrastructures to facilitate and sustain open government practices. The lack of clarity about concrete deliverables that are meant to flow from the milestones means that early tangible results are difficult to identify. Nonetheless, there are early indications that, collectively, the completion of the four milestones is contributing to enhancing openness and fostering an engagement culture across the Ontario Public Service.

Commitment 2: Digital Platform for Youth Engagement

This commitment seeks to facilitate and enhance youth engagement in the development and design of the Ontario government's programs, policies, and services through the development and implementation of an online platform. The individual milestones accompanying this commitment were largely completed as of December 2017. By then, the platform had been used to support discussions about three topics with Ontario youth. During the beta-testing phase, discussion focused on youth mentorship. This was followed by discussions about post-secondary education in the province and, as of February 2018, a discussion about climate change. Engaging with the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities (PCYO) and their youth networks about the ways in which the province's youth want to engage with government, and their preferred means for doing so is, an ongoing activity that takes place on regular intervals.

Commitment 3: Openness Training

Openness training for members of the Ontario Public Service has been ongoing since 2015, preceding Ontario's participation in the OGP subnational pilot program. Commitment 3 marks a continuation and extension of this experience, focusing on changing the day-to-day operating culture of the Ontario Public Service. In essence, it is the operational counterpart of Commitment 1. By year's end, a new open government guidebook developed in collaboration with representatives from other Ministries, civil society, academia, business and community groups, political staff, and the Canadian federal government was serving as a basis for training Ontario Public Staff about open government principles. Clear progress has been made in establishing a community of practice that includes actors internal and external to government, pilot training of ministerial staff is ongoing, and staff leads are receiving training about how to conduct additional traditional training sessions.

Table 4. Overview: Assessment of Progress by Commitment
Table 4. displays for each commitment the level of specificity, relevance to OGP values, potential impact level of completion.

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsens	No change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
1. Strengthen Commitment to Open by Default			✓		✓						✓					✓				✓	
2. Digital Platform for Youth Engagement			✓			✓		✓			✓					✓				✓	
3. Openness Training		✓			Unclear Relevance						✓					✓				✓	

General Recommendations

Commitment construction: The commitments in Ontario's Action Plan have been organized around embracing and strengthening open government principles within the Ontario Public Service and developing a digital platform to engage with youth on an on-going basis about policy issues. This has resulted in commitments that are neither policy- nor problem-driven per se, and two of the three commitments focusing mainly on internal administrative reform. This said, with its onus on those responsible for delivering open government, the approach set out in the Ontario Action Plan broadly adheres to the findings of much contemporary research about the successfully implementing information systems and strategies and minimizing design-reality gaps. Despite two of the three commitments lacking explicit public facing information delivery components, the civil society stakeholders interviewed expressed strong support for the Government's approach, stressing that getting the correct administrative fundamentals in place is a pre-requisite to successfully implementing open government over the long-term. This said, the links between the commitment objectives and ambitions articulated in the Action Plan, along with their potential impacts is obscured by the language used to describe the activities pursued. It is recommended that future action plans:

- Design commitments that are public-facing and connected to specific challenges or problems with which residents of Ontario and the provincial government are contending.

- Use specific language for both the commitments and their respective milestones. Much of the language in Ontario's Action Plan is vague, making it difficult for the IRM researcher and, more importantly, residents of Ontario to discern the intentions of the commitments and to assess whether their objectives are being successfully realized. Greater specificity includes better coordination in the design and articulation of commitments and milestones to avoid overlaps and/or duplication, and ensuring that commitments are SMART (specific, measurable, accountable, relevant, and time-bound).
- Be comprised of commitments that align more closely with the OGP framework and values. The value-added that OGP brings to efforts at opening government is a resource that can be more effectively leveraged in assisting the government of Ontario realize its open government ambitions.
- Include performance measures that comprise mechanisms involving citizens and civil society in both the development of appropriate metrics and ongoing monitoring of action plan commitments.

Engagement: In Ontario, open government initiatives have been ongoing since 2013. There is room for improving levels of public engagement around these activities and with the OGP. Each of the commitments in Ontario's Action Plan had their own respective Advisory Committees, comprising experts from different fields, but the extent to which these bodies constitute dialogue mechanisms extending beyond open government / open data communities is unclear. In moving forward, a central challenge for open government in the province will be finding mechanisms and strategies for engaging with a broader range of civil society interests extending well beyond niche open government / open data communities. This task is rendered more challenging by the fact that the open government in Ontario is a supply-driven rather than demand-driven phenomenon. With this in mind, it is recommended that the Government of Ontario:

- Establish a mechanism for promoting and sustaining permanent dialogue that connects diverse sectors of civil society on matters relating open government and the OGP. The importance of establishing an effective dialogue mechanism is reinforced by the absence of a strongly coordinated civil society within the province.
- Leverage existing relationships with government Ministries to establish more direct and stronger linkages between the OGO and the civil society organisations and individuals with whom the Ministries engage.
- Develop a communication campaign extending across myriad communication channels to educate residents of Ontario about open government, its relevance to people's daily lives and well-being, and how to they can get involved.
- Clearly delineate between the cultural, economic, political, and social goals being pursued by implementing open government, and communicate these objectives accordingly.

Information Repository: The Ontario.ca website is a useful information resource containing a wealth of explanatory information about Ontario's OGP action plan. It has the advantage of providing citizens and civil society with updated content about the Ontario's open government activities, but it does not meet the OGP criteria for an online repository. Indeed, there is no online public repository of all documents relating to Ontario's OGP process. Moreover, the collection of documents available is neither complete nor up to date. The OGO needs to develop and implement operational protocols for standardizing the collecting, preserving, archiving, and releasing of all documentation relating to its OGP-related activities in a timely and systematized manner within a publicly accessible single online archive/catalogue.

Expand action plan focus to key sectorial policies: It is recommended that the government of Ontario and the OGO work to ensure that commitments within future OGP action plans have a clear focus addressing key policy issues that respond to OGP values. To this end, we suggest striving:

- to maintain a continued focus on citizen and civil society participation in any future action plan and, in particular, on initiatives aimed at overcoming barriers to participation including digital disparities across the province.

- to ensure that future action plans strike a balance between commitments aimed at building requisite capacities and competencies for open government, and commitments aimed at opening government in key sectors. The former entails moving forward with and strengthening the initiatives launched as part of the pilot program. The latter involves increasing the ambition of future action plans by making OGP an enabling platform for actors inside and outside of government to co-construct commitments that are strongly linked to key policy areas and challenges with which residents of Ontario must contend.

Resources: Given Ontario's budget deficit,[19] a plausible key consideration in the coming months and years will centre on the level of funding the provincial government is willing to invest in open government initiatives. At present, the OGO is comprised of a small team of dedicated individuals who work with a very limited budget. Every member of the Ontario Public Service with whom the IRM researcher spoke during the course of this evaluation had a positive view of open government and was eager to move forward with an open government agenda. However, it was repeatedly noted that open government amounted to additional task that was not supported by the provision of additional resources. Across different Ministries and agencies, open government activities are manifest in the form of staff having parts of their workloads allocated to openness-related activities. It is recommended that in moving forward with another Action Plan, the Government of Ontario provide additional resources to the Ministries, departments and agencies tasked with implementing the plan and its commitments. Indeed, depending on government priorities and the types of commitments advanced, providing dedicated funding in the provincial budget for open government initiatives may be an idea worthy of consideration.

---

[1] *Let's open up government to new possibilities.* Premier Kathleen Wynne, October 21, 2013. See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/lets-open-government-new-possibilities [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[2] Open Government Engagement Team. See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/open-government-engagement-team [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[3] *2014 Mandate letter: Treasury Board Secretariat. Premier's instructions to the Minister on priorities for the year 2014.* See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/2014-mandate-letter-treasury-board-secretariat#section-2 [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[4] *Published plans and annual reports 2015-2016: Treasury Board Secretariat.* See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2015-2016-treasury-board-secretariat#section-6 [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[5] See, http://www.infogo.gov.on.ca/infogo/home.html#orgProfile/6731/en [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[6] The name of the Subnational Pilot Program transitioned to the *OGP Local Program* as of 2018. However, this report assesses Ontario's participation until December 2017, and thus uses the original name of the program.

[7] See, *Open Government: Ministry Plans, Highlights, May 2017* https://intra.ontario.ca/wordpress/uploads/2015/10/Open-Government-Plans-Report_ver9.pdf [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[8] For details about the three phases, see *Process of Development of the Action Plan*

[9] Information about the composition of and the Terms of Reference for the Advisory Groups is available at: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d6p4z87fuzhngkx/AAB37ASM_Q0VGhvTiz96N4w1a/Advisory%20groups%20-%20Groupe%20consultatif?dl=0 [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[10] Accessibility; Advanced Education and Skills Development; Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; Anti-Racism Directorate; Attorney General; Children and Youth Services; Citizenship and Immigration; Community and Social Services; Community Safety and Correctional Services; Digital Government; Economic Development and Growth; Education; Education – Early Years and Child Care; Energy; Environment and Climate Change; Finance; Francophone Affairs; Government and Consumer Services; Health and Long-Term Care; Housing; Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation; Infrastructure; Intergovernmental Affairs; International Trade; Labour; Municipal Affairs; Natural Resources and Forestry; Northern Development and Mines; Poverty Reduction Strategy; Research, Innovation and Science; Seniors' Secretariat; Tourism, Culture and Sport; Transportation; Treasury Board Secretariat; Women's Directorate

[11] Government of Canada

[12] Treasury Board Secretariat's Minister's Office; Open Government Office, Treasury Board Secretariat; Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Youth Strategies Branch; Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry; Ontario Digital Service, Province of Ontario; Cabinet Office, Province of Ontario; Centre for Leadership and Learning, Province of Ontario; Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; Ministry of Housing, Province of Ontario

[13] Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities

[14] For a full listing of the interviewees see, *Methods and Sources*

[15] See, Data Catalogue, https://www.ontario.ca/search/data-catalogue [last accessed 10 February 2018].

[16] Data records that have been classified as restricted cannot be publicly released because of legal, privacy, security, confidentiality or commercially-sensitive reasons, as outlined in Ontario's *Open Data Directi*ve. See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-open-data-directive [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[17] The topic of youth mentorship was selected on the basis of practical need for the beta-testing phase. It was an internal file of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Youth Strategies Branch for which input from youth was required. It was the office of the Minister of Children and Youth Services who mandated the launch of the post-secondary education as the second topic of discussion. The third topic of discussion was the result of the former Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) contacting and engaging with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services on the heels of the launch of the digital engagement platform.

[18] See, Miles, John (2015). Canadian Sociological Association Outstanding Contribution Lecture: The Fading of Redistributive Politics in Canada, *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 52(1): 1-21.

[19] According to the Financial Accountability Office (FAO) of Ontario, the government of Ontario is running a CDN$4 billion deficit for fiscal 2017-2018, with this deficit projected to increase to $9.8 billion in fiscal 2021-2022. The FAO likewise predicts that without changes to the province's current fiscal policies Ontario's net debt-to-GDP ratio will increase to over 41 percent by 2021-2022. See, Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, Economic and Fiscal Outlook, Fall 2017 Update http://www.fao-on.org/en/Blog/Publications/EFO-Fall_2017 [last accessed 10 February 2018]

Institutional and Subnational Context and Scope of Action Plan

This section places the action plan commitments in the broader context. The emphasis of the IRM report is on the development and implementation of the OGP action plan. However, to ensure the credibility of the report and of OGP more broadly and to inform future versions of the action plan, researchers are asked to briefly consider the institutional context within which the OGP action plan is framed. Consider significant actions not covered by the action plan that are relevant to OGP values and the entity's participation in the Partnership. The emphasis should be on the specific subnational context, although researchers may make some reference to the broader national context as it affects implementation at the subnational level (in county, referring to ward level or in the Municipality, referring to State and Federal context).

Background

In Canada, governmental authority is divided among eleven jurisdictions: the federal Crown, and ten provincial Crowns. The division of legislative powers between the federal and provincial governments is set out in the *Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982*.[20] Sections 92, 92(A), and 93 of the Act specify that the exclusive powers of provincial legislatures concern local matters including: Direct Taxation within Province, Management/Sale of Public Lands belonging to Province, Prisons, Hospitals, Municipalities, Formalization of Marriage, Property and Civil Rights, Administration of Civil/Criminal Justice, Education, Incorporation of Companies, Natural Resources, Matters of a merely local or private nature.[21] The province of Ontario operates in accord with a unicameral Westminster system parliamentary government, with the leader of the political party who wins the most seats in the legislature becoming premier of the province. The three main political parties are the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario (PC), the Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP), and the Ontario Liberal Party.

Ontario's commitment to the OGP is not rooted in an official or legally binding mandate. It is instead rooted in an October 2013 open letter published by the government of Ontario calling for the province to lead the way in "re-imagining what's possible" through its Open Government initiative.[22] The letter specified that each of the government's then 27 Ministries were to develop plans for becoming open and engaged, and that an expert team[23] had been put in place to lead province-wide discussions about how the government could become more open. Five months later, in March 2014, the Open Government Engagement Team published a report, *Open by Default – A new way forward for Ontario*. Based on the insights gathered from the team's on- and off-line meetings with people from across the province, the report set out a series of recommendations aimed at helping the Ontario government to become more open, transparent, and accessible.[24]

In line with the *Open by Default* recommendations, the 2014 Ministerial Mandate Letter to the President of the Treasury Board specified that one of six key priorities for this Ministry was "building an open and accountable government."[25] Coinciding with this priority, a team of individuals from the Ontario Public Service tasked with implementing strategies promoting more open, transparent, and accessible government was created.[26] In late 2014 the Open Government Office (OGO) was formally established. The OGO is mandated to lead "Ontario's Open Government strategy and action plan to increase openness, transparency and accountability" and "is partnering with ministries, OPS [Ontario Public Service] staff, businesses, public sector partners and Ontarians to implement Ontario's plan." [27] The OGO has a staff of 17 people and had an operating budget of CDN$ 1.66 million in fiscal year 2016-2017.[28] This said, there is no budget-line specifically for OGP-related activities in the OGO's budget.

In May 2015, public consultations were launched to inform the drafting of Ontario's Open Data Directive. The directive, which "outlines requirements for ministries and Provincial Agencies on listing all data inventories, publishing Open Data, and preparing information systems to support ongoing Open Data requirements" was released at the end of that year, and came into effect on April 1, 2016.[29]

April 2016 also marked the time at which Ontario began its participation in the OGP's sub-national pilot program. Although responsibility for the oversight and implementation of Ontario's OGP Action Plan falls under the remit of the OGO, there is no designated lead exclusively for OGP activities. The OGO's principal function in this regard is one of co-ordinator rather than heading a hierarchical chain of command. This reflects, in part, the fact that OGP-related activities and commitments are not *the* driving force for open government in Ontario. The province's participation in the subnational pilot program constitutes only one facet of the OGO's open government activities. Despite complementing the OGP pilot program framework, much of the OGO's open government work falls outside of the remit of the sub-national pilot program.[30]

The public consultations informing Ontario's OGP Action Plan were launched in August 2016. In September 2016, a new Ministerial Mandate Letter was issued to the President of the Treasury Board. This letter recognized the progress Ontario was making in moving toward becoming "the most open, transparent and digitally connected government in Canada" and specified that "advancing a more modern, open and digital government" remained one of the ministry's four principal priorities.[31] Having been drafted in less than six months, the commitments for the OGP's subnational pilot program were finalized in December 2016.

In March 2017, the province appointed its first Chief Digital Officer.[32] Reporting to the Minister Responsible for Digital Government[33] the Chief Digital Officer was tasked with "streamline[ing] online government services and make[ing] them more efficient for people and business" and "to help accelerate transformation across government by setting new service standards for digital products, attracting and empowering digital talent, and aligning partners around delivering the best possible customer experience."[34] There are obvious complementarities between Ontario Digital Government and the OGO. However, the two entities are operationally distinct. The Treasury Board Secretariat remains the lead agency for open government in Ontario, with leadership for various open government efforts shared among the OGO and partnering ministries and agencies.

Stakeholder Priorities

Low levels of public engagement is an acknowledged concern for both civil society and government stakeholders. Nonetheless, there is an across the board recognition that, to date, the OGO has, with a limited budget, done of laudable job of seeking to engage with members of the public. However, and as most stakeholders were quick to point out, those that have participated in Ontario's open government initiatives are largely a niche conglomerate of groups and individuals with an interest in open government and open data. To this end, there is an acknowledgement that in moving forward, garnering widespread public engagement is likely to remain an ongoing core challenge.

From the perspective of the advisory committee members for Ontario's three commitments, operationalizing open government is a medium-to-long term project requiring, among other things, a transformation in the organizational culture of the public service. Hence, the principal priority was, and remains, a focus on the training of Ontario Public Service staff. To this end, Commitments 1 and 3 are seen to be directly oriented at addressing foundational open government issues insofar as they focus on fostering openness by ensuring the requisite skills, competencies, and motivations are manifest among those responsible for delivering open government to residents of Ontario. Commitment 2, youth engagement, is

seen as being very important but of a different nature than its counterparts insofar as it is outwardly focused and oriented around a tangible deliverable – i.e., creating and implementing a digital platform

Throughout discussions with various civil society and government stakeholders and individual citizens who participated in a November 2017 OpenON Forum, it was repeatedly made very clear to the IRM researcher that, in addition to continuing to move forward with the Ontario Public Service staff training and youth engagement activities, approaching the issue of openness in terms of pre-selecting policy areas/domains to be prioritised is not an appropriate approach for the Ontario context. When queried about this issue, respondents were virtually unanimous in expressing the view that, rather than identifying *a priori* policy areas/domains for open government, a more effective approach/strategy entails bringing openness to bear on policy issues faced by the province and its residents, ascertaining how open government and open data comes into play vis-à-vis the priority domains, identifying what is the relevant data, determining how to make this data available and in so doing, hopefully, facilitate engagement with the wider public. As noted by Jean-Noé Landry, the Executive Director of Open North[35] and a civil society member of the advisory committee for Commitment 1, what is needed is a process to identify new priorities and "*a conversation about issues to be addressed.*" The rationale underpinning this view is rooted in the premise that civil society and other stakeholders concerned with particular policy issues (e.g. pollution) are not likely to engage *de facto* in issues of open government unless they have a pre-existing interest open government / open data. It follows from this view, that engaging effectively with these types of actors requires first engaging with them through their principal interest and then bringing openness to bear on the discussion.

Three inter-related considerations are at play here. First, there is a general lack of detailed understanding among the population of Ontario about how processes of policy program design and delivery work. Second, at this point in time the push for open government in Ontario comes principally from government itself. It is not a civil society driven undertaking. Third, civil society organisations continue to be mainly concerned with their respective issues of interest. Beyond a few niche civil society entities, interest open government and open data are not key priorities for most Ontarians. This also is reflective, in part, of the fact that within Canada, civil society organizations have never been self-sufficient mass membership entities. Instead they have tended to be funded by government, and in recent years their funding levels have notably decreased. Furthermore, in Canada, civil society organizations have consistently found it difficult to mobilize those in whose interest they claim to speak.[36] Likewise, the extent to which the views of civil society organization represent a broader committed public interest is subject longstanding debate. This said, all the stakeholders with whom the IRM researcher spoke about these issues were adamant in wanting to be part of co-creation processes aimed at moving forward with open government in Ontario.

Scope of Action Plan in Relation to Subnational Context

While it is not the job of the IRM to tell governments and civil society organizations what can or cannot be in action plans, the IRM Guiding Principles do require the IRM to identify, "The extent to which the action plan and its commitments reflect, in a certain subnational context, the OGP values of transparency, accountability, and civic participation, as articulated in the OGP Declaration of Principles and the Articles of Governance.

Ontario has a broad pre-existing open government agenda that transcends its first OGP Action Plan. It appears that rather than seeking to merge this agenda into the OGP framework, Ontario's OGP Action Plan seeks to merge the OGP framework into the province's agenda. This gives rise to a situation wherein despite the Ontario government's championing of transparency, accountability, and civic participation, the province's first OGP action plan does not strongly reflect OGP values as articulated in the *OGP's Open*

Government Declaration[37] and its *Articles of Governance*.[38] For example, the OGP value of public accountability is absent from Ontario's OGP Action Plan. The action plan contains no public-facing mechanism enabling citizens to actively hold government accountable for its actions. The same holds true regarding transparency.

Despite the seeming incongruence between the Ontario OGP Action Plan and the OGP framework, both civil society and government stakeholders maintain that the onus placed on Ontario Public Service staff training (Commitments 1 and 3) and youth engagement initiatives (Commitment 2) is well warranted, and that the lessons learned from the pilot program offer a strong foundation for moving forward with open government activities in other areas. The IRM researcher does not question the veracity of these claims but notes that the Action Plan's inward facing orientation may have impacted engagement. Further public facing commitments may better facilitate participation.

The OGO is to be commended for its communication and outreach activities pertaining to the action plan. In moving forward, actualizing the norms of civic engagement and participation championed by the OGP will be contingent upon findings means of motivating greater numbers of Ontario residents to actively engage in co-creation processes as well as post-creation monitoring and evaluation activities. This also is crucial to expanding open government engagement beyond the current predominance of participation from the southern Ontario region, and more specifically the greater metropolitan Toronto area and its surroundings. The IRM researcher suggests that one way of advancing in this direction is to focus more clearly on specific projects that resonate with peoples' daily lives and well-being, and to set out clear outputs and outcomes that are linked to specific policy areas (e.g. community and social services, healthcare, Indigenous relations and reconciliation, transportation).

---

[20] *Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982*. See, http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/ [last accessed 10 February 2018]. Unlike the provinces whose power and authority comes from the Constitution Act, 1867, it is the Parliament of Canada that delegates power to the territorial governments of the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut.

[21] Government of Canada (2017). The constitutional distribution of legislative powers. https://www.canada.ca/en/intergovernmental-affairs/services/federation/distribution-legislative-powers.html [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[22] *Let's open up government to new possibilities*. Premier Kathleen Wynne, October 21, 2013. See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/lets-open-government-new-possibilities [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[23] *Open Government Engagement Team*. See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/open-government-engagement-team [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[24] *Open by Default – A new way forward for Ontario*. See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/open-default-new-way-forward-ontario [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[25] *2014 Mandate letter: Treasury Board Secretariat. Premier's instructions to the Minister on priorities for the year 2014*. See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/2014-mandate-letter-treasury-board-secretariat#section-2 [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[26] *Published plans and annual reports 2015-2016: Treasury Board Secretariat*. See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/published-plans-and-annual-reports-2015-2016-treasury-board-secretariat#section-6 [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[27] See, http://www.infogo.gov.on.ca/infogo/home.html#orgProfile/6731/en

[28] Treasury Board Secretariat. *Public Accounts of Ontario: Ministry Statements and Schedules, Volume 1, 2016-2017* https://files.ontario.ca/volume1_eng.pdf [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[29] *Ontario's Open Data Directive*. See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-open-data-directive [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[30] See, *Open Government: Ministry Plans, Highlights, May 2017* https://intra.ontario.ca/wordpress/uploads/2015/10/Open-Government-Plans-Report_ver9.pdf [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[31] September 2016 Mandate letter: Treasury Board Secretariat. Premier's instructions to the Minister on priorities. See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/september-2016-mandate-letter-treasury-board-secretariat [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[32] News Release: Ontario Names First Chief Digital Officer, https://news.ontario.ca/maesd/en/2017/3/ontario-names-first-chief-digital-officer.html [last accessed 20 March 2018].

[33] See, News Release: Women Promoted to Cabinet in Key Government Roles. https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2018/01/women-promoted-to-cabinet-in-key-government-roles.html [last accessed 20 March 2018].

[34] News Release: Ontario Names First Chief Digital Officer, https://news.ontario.ca/maesd/en/2017/3/ontario-names-first-chief-digital-officer.html [last accessed 20 March 2018]. See also: *Ontario Digital Service: Key Priorities.* https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-digital-service-key-priorities [last accessed 20 March 2018], and *Start with users. Deliver together. https://www.ontario.ca/document/start-users-deliver-together* [last accessed 20 March 2018].

[35] Open North defines itself as "Canada's leading not-for-profit organization specialized in open data, open government, community engagement, open smart cities and civic technology." See, https://www.opennorth.ca/ [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[36] See, Miles, John (2015). Canadian Sociological Association Outstanding Contribution Lecture: The Fading of Redistributive Politics in Canada, *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 52(1): 1-21.

[37] See, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/open-government-declaration [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[38] See, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP_Articles-Gov_Apr-21-2015.pdf [last accessed 10 February 2018]

Process of development and monitoring of the action plan

Governments participating in the OGP follow a process for consultation during development of their OGP action plan and during implementation. This section summarizes the performance of the Province of Ontario during the development of their first action plan.

Process of Development of the Action Plan

OGP basic requirements

Subnational Governments received the following guidance on participation during action plan development and execution:

May – November 2016: Development of commitments: Participants set up ways to work with civil society organizations and other groups outside government and use these mechanisms to identify priority areas for commitments. Specific commitments should then be developed in partnership with civil society, allowing them the opportunity to support governments in drafting them and establishing milestones. Draft commitments should be shared with the OGP Support Unit as they are being developed and for comment and advice in October-November. Commitments should be finalized and agreed by the end of November, so they can be published and announced at the OGP Summit in December.

Ontario has met the OGP basic requirements through the implementation of a three-phase consultation process with stakeholders that began in August 2016. This process entailed consulting stakeholders in generating ideas, having stakeholders vote on the ideas received, and conducting in-person and online workshops to refine the ideas.

Phase 1 involved the conducting of a public online survey asking respondents to submit ideas about potential open government commitments aligning with one of four pre-identified themes:[39],[40] transparency, accountability, public participation, technology and innovation.

Phase 2 involved two activities. First, having the ideas received assessed internally by Treasury Board Secretariat, Ministries, as well as other internal departments and agencies in order to determine whether they constituted a new activity/initiative and could be achieved within one year.[41] Second, having the public vote online for their favorite idea in each theme.[42]

Phase 3 entailed the conducting of three workshops with targeted stakeholders over three days – one in Toronto, one in Ottawa, and one online using the OpenON Forum.[43] According to Nosa Ero-Brown, Director, Open Government Office, Treasury Board Secretariat, these workshops sought to engage with "*as wide a range [of stakeholders] as possible*." This included soliciting participation from representatives of Ministries and agencies within the Ontario government because it is the people working in these entities who ultimately "*are responsible for implementing and doing*" Open Government, as well as engaging with external actors. The objective was to have participation be "*as broad as it could be in terms of reflecting a broad representation of society.*"

There are two notable aspect of the consultation process:

(1) public servants constituted the majority of participants; and

(2) although Ontario's three commitments all emerged from the consultation process, these specific commitments were not the three most popular ideas in terms of the number of public votes garnered.[44]

Table 5. Basic requirements

1. **Participatory Mechanism:** Was there a way of working with CSOs and other groups? Guideline: Participants set up ways to work with civil society organizations and other groups outside government and use these mechanisms to identify priority areas for commitments.	Yes
2. **Priority identification:** Was civil society able to help identify priority areas for commitments? Guideline: Specific commitments should then be developed in partnership with civil society, allowing them the opportunity to support governments in drafting them and establishing milestones.	Yes
3. **Commitment development:** Did civil society participate in the [development/drafting] of commitments and milestones? Guideline: Specific commitments should then be developed in partnership with civil society, allowing them the opportunity to support governments in drafting them and establishing milestones.	Yes
4. **Review:** Were commitments submitted for review to the Open Government Partnership Support Unit prior to finalization? Guideline: Draft commitments should be shared with the OGP Support Unit as they are being developed and for comment and advice in October-November.	Yes
5. **Submission:** Were commitments submitted on time? Guideline: Commitments should be finalized and agreed by the end of November, so they can be published and announced at the OGP Summit in December.	Yes

Openness of consultation

Who was invited?

Ontario residents were invited to participate via a range of on and off-line communication channels, along with more than 500 stakeholders who were contacted either by internal government communication or direct invitation to participate. The workshops conducted during Phase 3 were promoted on the Government of Ontario website and direct invitation to entities on the original stakeholder list as well as participants who had expressed their interest during Phase 1.

There were 236 stakeholders directly invited to participate in the idea generation phase of the consultation (i.e., Phase 1). The *Ontario Open Government Partnership Action Plan* web site, that provides a background to the roll out of the Action Plan (see, https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-open-government-partnership-action-plan [last accessed 5 July 2017]), offers the following breakdown of direct invitations: [45]

- 23 academic institutions
- 95 civil society organizations

- 32 not for profit
- 42 private sector stakeholders
- 44 public sector organizations

Additionally, some 279 invitations targeting Ontario public servants were sent through internal government communication channels. The not yet publicly available electronic documentation provided to the researcher by the Open Government Office, and whose authorship is not specified, (https://docs.google.com/document/d/10kXiCRczXvabzDllPBrGDcm7OwSUIulR26KtnxmoWzQ/edit [last accessed 5 July 2017]) sets out the following breakdown of these notices:

- 135 Ministry contacts
- 25 Internal Research contacts
- 59 Open Government Ministry Staff Leads
- 60 Open Government Ministry Executive Leads

Overall, 54 percent of the 515 invitations sent out targeted internal government actors, with 46 percent distributed to external stakeholders.

How was awareness-raising carried out?

The consultation process involved using diverse communication channels and platforms to notify interested parties about the process, to provide information about the status of activities, and to encourage broad public engagement. These included:

- Providing updates on the Ontario government's *Open Government website* <https://www.ontario.ca/page/open-government>
- Online Survey
- Online Voting
- In-person and online workshops
- Creation of three advisory groups – one for each Action Plan commitment
- Social media outreach
- Email communications with mailing-list subscribers

Which parts of civil society participated?

During Phase 1, idea generation, some 272 submissions were received,[46] of which 238 were submitted by individual residents.[47] Of the remaining 33 submissions:[48]

- 29 were from 19 self-identified non-profit organizations (of which 15 submissions were from 10 civil society organizations, 7 submissions from 7 religious and anti-abortion entities, and 7 responses from unnamed entities);
- three submissions from three public sector organizations; and
- one submission from a self-identified academic institution.[49]

The Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS), working in consultation with representatives from the Ministries identified as being affected by the ideas received, assessed all submissions on the basis of four criteria: (i) relevancy to Open Government in Ontario; (ii) achievability by the end of 2017; (iii) connection to themes of transparency, accountability, public participation, and technology and innovation; and (iv) novelty of the proposed activity or initiative.

Of the 272 ideas received, the TBS presented 46 online, and gave the public 14 days to vote for their

favorite idea in each theme.[50] Some 785 anonymous votes identifying 15 top ideas were generated through this exercise.[51] Noteworthy in this regard is the finding that youth engagement, the basis of Ontario's Commitment 2, fell outside of this list. In terms of votes, it ranked 16th (n=77) overall.[52]

Level of public input

The IRM has adapted the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) "Spectrum of Participation" to apply to OGP.[53] This spectrum shows the potential level of public influence on the contents of the action plan. In the spirit of OGP, most countries should aspire for "collaborative."

Given that the voting in Phase 2 to identify the most popular ideas was conducted anonymously, there is no way of identifying who actually participated in the vote. Moreover, and despite Phase 2 being participatory insofar as voting apparently was open to all interested actors, the available evidence precludes reaching any empirically grounded conclusions about the diversity of views represented in the voting outcome.

Some 85 stakeholders, the majority of whom were members of provincial and federal government ministries, participated in the three workshops constituting Phase 3. At these workshops, facilitators were used to lead participants through a series of activities aimed at assessing and prioritizing three to five of the top 15 voted commitments – and youth engagement – for inclusion in Ontario's action plan. The largest contingent of participants was composed of representatives from the Ontario Public Sector Ministries. Indeed, the latter group accounted for just less than one half of the total participants (N=39).[54] Eleven participant entities self-identified as representing a civil society organization. The next most represented stakeholders where private sector and academic organizations, each of which had eight participant entities.

A total of eight commitments were selected during the workshops, of which three were selected and refined at two or more workshops.[55] Of these, the three identified as being most desirable were:

1. Create a dashboard to provide citizens with information about key government outcomes, metrics, and initiatives;
2. Adopt the international open data charter and its 6 principles for all Ontario ministry and provincial agency data;
3. Provide a digital engagement tool for cross-government use, in order to better engage youth in conversations to support the development of policies and programs that impact youth the most. The tool would enable the civic participation of youth who are not engaged through traditional methods.

The commitment to "Create a dashboard to provide citizens with information about key government outcomes, metrics, and initiatives" is not present in the Ontario government's Action Plan.[56] This is due, in large part, to the Treasury Board Secretariat determining that delivering a fully operational dashboard within twelve months was not feasible. Principal considerations in this regard included issues pertaining to defining the scope of such an undertaking, the time and complexity of building the dashboard, as well as uncertainties about how to link legacy and emerging data into such a dashboard. Ultimately, the Government of Ontario determined that proceeding with building a dashboard risked not having any demonstrable output to the OGP by the end of 2017.

Public input into the action plan development process was actively sought, but overall participation was limited, as was the feedback provided to the public regarding the shaping of the commitments. The participants constituted 0.00005% of the total population of the province and did not include central and northern parts of the provinces where some of the more rural and remote communities, as well as indigenous communities, are situated. Moreover, despite actively seeking public input, the Government of

Ontario remained the ultimate decision maker.

Considering this information, the level of public input during the development process of the action plan is best defined as *Consult*. This said, a key challenge for the Ontario initiative rests in the fact that in terms of population and geographical size it is akin a small state. Indeed, it is larger than some of the OGP's member countries. This magnifies the diversity of interests needing to be considered in attempting to move forward with the development process when compared to the province's urban counterparts in the subnational pilot program initiative.[57] It also means having to mobilize a large public bureaucracy wherein the speed of decision-making and policy implementation is much slower than many of Ontario's municipal government counterparts in the pilot program. This may help to account, in part, for both the seemingly limited level of public engagement, and the adoption of broad rather than more narrowly circumscribed commitments.

Table 3.2 Level of public input

Level of public input		During development of action plan
Empower	The government handed decision-making power to members of the public.	
Collaborate	There was iterative dialogue AND the public helped set the agenda.	
Involve	The government gave feedback on how public inputs were considered.	
Consult	The public could give inputs.	✔
Inform	The government provided the public with information on the action plan.	
No Consultation	No consultation	

[39] *Ontario Inviting Public Feedback on Open Government Initiatives.* See, https://news.ontario.ca/tbs/en/2016/08/ontario-inviting-public-feedback-on-open-government-initiatives.html. [last accessed 5 July 2017].

[40] An archived copy of the questionnaire is not yet publicly available. However, an electronic document listing the questions posed in the survey was provided to the researcher. See, https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B6VJeErIt5duR1RkanVRam1YRlU. [last accessed 5 July 2017].

[41] *Ontario's Open Government Partnership Action Plan.* See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-open-government-partnership-action-plan [last accessed 5 July 2017]. A list of the ministries and internal departments is not yet publicly available. The information was however made available to the researcher. See, https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B6VJeErIt5duSHU2RV94b2VzV0k [last accessed 5 July 2017].

[42] *Vote on Ideas to Make Ontario the Most Open Government in Canada.* See, https://news.ontario.ca/tbs/en/2016/09/vote-on-ideas-to-make-ontario-the-most-open-government-in-canada-1.html [last accessed 5 July 2017]

[43] For more detailed information about the scheduling and location of the workshops see Table 1 at: https://goo.gl/8QVfBP

[44] A breakdown of the top 15 ideas in terms of votes received is provided in Table 2 at: https://goo.gl/8QVfBP. The idea that would go

on to become Commitment 1 received the most votes overall. Commitment 3 is an amalgam of the 9th and 14th most popular ideas. Commitment 2, fostering youth engagement, was actually the 16th most popular (N=77) idea. Interestingly, of the 14 ideas submitted by those in the 15-25 age demographic, none called for great youth engagement. Of the ideas submitted by members of this group the two most common were: calls to repeal Section 65(5.7) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act forbidding access to information requests about abortion service statistics (N=5), and calls for increased dialogue between various levels of government and the public (N=4). This suggests that push to develop tool to facilitate youth engagement was not, in this instance, something driven by the youth participants themselves.

45 At the time of preparing this report the IRM researcher has not been able to identify whom exactly were the stakeholders comprising the numbers presented here. Citing the Ontario Government's Privacy Statement <https://www.ontario.ca/page/privacy-statement> the Open Government Office, Treasury Board Secretariat has been unwilling to share the names and contact details of organizational representatives who participated in the process.

46 The province's *Open Government Partnership Program* web site <https://www.ontario.ca/page/open-government-partnership-program> [last accessed 5 July 2017]) states "over 270 open government ideas" received but does not as of yet offer any summary of who the respondents submitting the ideas were.

47 The researcher has not been able to ascertain how those responsible for conducting the online survey were able to confirm that the respondents actually were residents of the province.

48 The information provided here is from not yet publicly available electronic documentation provided to the researcher. See, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CeH158dMkl0K1Cwr0Kfov18GGTZo6jO9wL7IRE_yNHM/edit [last accessed 5 July 2017].

49 Follow-up verification by the researcher confirms that this entity actually is a US-based provider of business-related courseware tools, and not an academic institution as self-identified.

50 *Vote on Ideas to Make Ontario the Most Open Government in Canada.* See, https://news.ontario.ca/tbs/en/2016/09/vote-on-ideas-to-make-ontario-the-most-open-government-in-canada-1.html [last accessed 5 July 2017]

51 The results and the ranking of the voting process for ideas were posted on the *Open Government Consultation* page <https://www.ontario.ca/page/open-government-consultation#section-2> [last accessed 5 July 2017]) for the public and civil society to review.

52 See footnote 45.

53 "IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum", International Association for Public Participation Federation, (2014) http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/foundations_course/IAP2_P2_Spectrum_FINAL.pdf

54 There is some discrepancy regarding the number of stakeholders who participated in the workshops. The province's *Open Government Partnership Program* web site (https://www.ontario.ca/page/open-government-partnership-program [last accessed 5 July 2017]) states, "We hosted in-person and online workshops with more than 100 people, including members of the public, non-governmental organizations and community groups, to consider the top-voted ideas." However, the not yet publicly available electronic documentation provided to the researcher points to 85 participating stakeholders. See, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YofWJ-eBWfdRAVzHtu-XD0Ojr_xIOvwTAJaVrrto-hA/edit [last accessed 5 July 2017]. The information presented in Tables 3 and 4 at <https://goo.gl/8QVfBP> offers a synopsis of the data set out in the latter documentation.

55 The full list of commitments selected at the three workshops is as follows:

Preliminary Commitment – Top voted in work shops

1. Create a dashboard to provide citizens with information about key government outcomes, metrics, and initiatives

2. Adopt the international open data charter and its 6 principles for all Ontario ministry and provincial agency data

3. Provide a digital engagement tool for cross-government use, in order to better engage youth in conversations to support the development of policies and programs that impact youth the most. The tool would enable the civic participation of youth who are not engaged through traditional methods.

Other workshop Commitments

4. Enhance the Consultation Directory to create user-friendly and API-enabled online portal for public consultations that is comprehensive and allows people to sign up for updates, review key documents, and see what changes were made as a result of consultation.

5. Use the Dialogue Xchange to engage the public on social issues that local communities are facing

6. Create training on Open Government and Digital Government for public servants

7. Implement all of the recommendations made by the Open Government Engagement Team in 2014

8. Develop an Open Government guide in collaboration with other levels of government that offers clear and tangible ways for

public servants to align their daily work with the principles of open government.

56 The information provided on The *Ontario Open Government Partnership Action Plan* web site (see https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-open-government-partnership-action-plan [last accessed 5 July 2017]) does not mention that these were the three principal commitments to emerge from the workshops. The latter are however directly identified in not yet publicly available electronic documentation provided to the researcher. See, https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B6VJeErIt5duTV9nY1k4dHVUVTg [last accessed 10 September 2017].

57 Furthermore, the development process is being administered and overseen by a very small team of individuals with limited resources.

Process of Monitoring Implementation of the Action Plan

OGP Basic Requirements

December 2016 – December 2017: Implementation of Commitments

The guidance below provides more information about the best way to manage implementation of commitments, internal reporting and consultation with civil society throughout.

- Commitments should be developed in partnership with civil society and should seek to engage the widest possible input from citizens. This note provides guidance about how to conduct successful engagement with civil society and provides advice about ongoing consultation with civil society.
- Governments should conduct regular internal assessment, to make sure that commitments are on track and that there is an ongoing role for civil society. This assessment should be carried out along the lines of the OGP template for self-assessment, to make it easier for the IRM researcher to gather information.
- At regular intervals governments should publish a brief update on progress against commitments and use that as an opportunity to invite any comments. To complement any tracking system, governments are strongly encouraged to maintain a public, online repository of all documents giving evidence of consultation and implementation of commitments.

The Ontario government met the basic requirements for managing the implementation of commitments, internal reporting and consultation with civil society. Throughout 2017 four mechanisms were used to engage with citizens and civil society in monitoring the implementation of Ontario's OGP Action Plan commitments.

1. Internal assessments were conducted on the basis of ongoing consultations with the Advisory Committees for each respective commitment.[58] Each committee was chaired by the Responsible Officer for the respective Commitment it was meant to advise about. As specified in the Advisory Group Terms of Reference, these committees were tasked to operate under terms of reference that were drafted in accord with "*information from the OGP guide [Designing and Managing an OGP Multistakeholder Forum: A practical handbook with guidance and ideas] to designing and managing stakeholder forums as well as a review of other jurisdictions,*" and mandated to, "*provide advice and input on the implementation of open government commitments, as part of the OGP's co-creation requirement.*" The advisory committees for Commitments 1 and 3 were comprised of representatives from "*civil society, academia, business and community groups, OPS and political staff.*" Members were expected to participate in quarterly meetings (and more if deemed necessary) throughout 2017. The advisory committee for Commitment 2 was made up of representatives from the Youth Strategies Branch of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and members of the Premier's Council for Youth Opportunities. The role of the committees was, "*to support the implementation of Ontario's OGP commitments by providing ideas and advice*" by functioning as "*a space for consultation and ideation*", with their respective ideas being "*reviewed and assessed for feasibility, timing and alignment prior to implementation.*" Members were also tasked with "*deliberating about how to improve commitment implementation,*" "*assessing fulfilment of commitments,*" and "*acting as champions to create*

awareness on the work Ontario is doing to become a more open and transparent government." The actual meetings took place via teleconference and in-person participation.

The advisory committee for Commitment 1 met five times throughout 2017, including the November meeting which ostensibly was a group interview with the IRM researcher (March 1, May 4, July 12, September 20, and November 7).[59] At these meetings, advice about a wide range of topics was solicited from the participants, with action items specified and acted upon by the OGO. These included ideas and feedback about: fostering end-user engagement; fostering inter-jurisdictional and key stakeholder engagement; how to leverage advisory committee members' knowledge to improve existing staff training courses; how to improve the look and feel of Ontario's data catalogue; developing partnerships with key stakeholders; the launching of updated training modules and a revised open data guidebook; and the creation of a new data catalogue user feedback loop.

Throughout 2017, elements of Commitment 2 were discussed at three meeting of the Premier's Council for Youth Opportunities (PCYO) (March 10-11, Timmins; May 28-29, Toronto; October 1-2, Toronto) and one teleconference meeting of the PCYO Subcommittee on YouthVoiceON (YVO).[60] At each of the PCYO meetings time was scheduled to discuss issues regarding YouthVoiceON. For instance, at the Timmins meeting, the discussion centred on the upcoming soft launch of the YouthVoiceON platform and challenges associated with reaching and connecting with rural and remote youth. The May meeting in Toronto set aside 40 minutes for providing and overview and receiving feedback about the platform. At the October meeting 90 minutes was allotted for Council members to provide advice on the tool and its formal launch. The July teleconference meeting of the PCYO Subcommittee on YouthVoiceON (YVO) coincided with the release of the OGO's self-assessment and online survey. Participants at this meeting offered ideas and feedback about: strategies for making YouthVoiceON a feature in schools; strategies for increasing levels of youth feedback about the platform; strategies to diffuse information about the platform throughout PCYO networks; linking the platform to PCYO meetings; and a general discussion about youth engagement.

The advisory committee for Commitment 3 met four times throughout 2017, including a November group interview with the IRM researcher (March 8, May 10, July 12, and November 7). At these meetings, advice about a wide range of topics was solicited from the participants, with action items specified and acted upon by the OGO. These included ideas and feedback about: developing a framework to identify key training deliverables for 2017; developing an open government learning framework and principles for Ontario Public Service staff; content informing the Open Information Guidebook; content informing the Open Government Guidebook; content informing an Open Government conversation kit to assist open government leads deliver information sessions within their respective Ministries; leveraging advisory committee members' knowledge to inform pilot training of Open Government Executive and Staff Leads

2. In July 2017, the OGO published a self-assessment online that looked at the co-creation of the government's commitments and the progress made during the first six months of the pilot program implementation. A survey questionnaire was included along with the self-assessment to help identify ways of improving program implementation. Interested parties were given a two-week window to respond. The survey was held from From July 15 to 31, 2017 and received 51 responses (31 from Ontario government ministries, 10 from private sector representatives, 4 from non-profit organizations, 3 from interested individuals, 2 from academics, and one from a respondent who did not self-identify). The survey findings, which were published online, showed that: [61]

- Respondents felt that "non-governmental organizations, community groups and public servants have been part of the Open Government Partnership process" with a small percentage noting that these

entities could have been more involved;

- Slightly less than half of respondents felt they had been given sufficient opportunities to provide feedback/ideas, and received timely information about the OGP process;
- A majority of the respondents had read the self-assessment or had participated in earlier phases of the OGP consultations

The general comments received as part of the survey focused on: increasing opportunities for participation and feedback; better use of plain language; focusing on measurable outcomes; sharing feedback from earlier phases and identifying how feedback was incorporated in activities to date; and providing opportunities for input on draft products/material.

3. Five OpenON Forums were held throughout 2017. These are online forums advertised via social media that provided opportunities for interested individuals to learn and provide feedback about the types of open government activities – OGP and non-OGP – in which the OGO is involved. The subjects covered in the five forums are set out in the table below. Although documents pertaining to the forums are available online, information about the numbers of participants and the entities whom they represent have not been publicly released or archived.

Date	Topic	Speaker(s)
12 April 2017	Crowdsourcing Datasets Through Civic Engagement	Nik Peipenbreir, Sr. Business Solutions Consultant, Information Management and Analytics Unit, Housing Programs Branch, MHO
		Roy Thomas, Manager, Business Solutions at the Office of the Chief Information Officer, Community Services I&IT Cluster
		Richard Pietro, Toronto Open Data Book Club, founder of OGT Productions
2 June 2017	Employment Ontario Open Data	Analytics Unit, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development
26 July 2017	OGP Commitment Implementation	OGO
27 September 2017	Expanding Access to Administrative Data to the Academic Research Community	Ministry of Community and Social Services
6 November 2017	OGP Independent Reporting Mechanism	Daniel J. Paré, IRM Independent Researcher

4. In February 2017, five workshops aimed at members of the Ontario Public Service where conducted. [62] These workshops focused on Ontario's OGP Action Plan, open government, and the International Open Data Charter (IODC).

As of December 2017, no online repository of OGP-related documents had been created. However, summaries, assessments, and updates about the consultation and implementation process are available on the Ontario.ca web site, and some documents pertaining to the consultation and implementation process (ie., Advisory Committees, OpenON Forums, Workshops) were available online via a Dropbox based

repository that is accessible via the Ontario.ca website. According to Kelly Villeneuve, Manager, Organizational Change and Outreach, OGO and Merlin Chatwin, Senior Policy Analyst, OGO the use of Dropbox for this purpose is part of a stop-gap measure in working toward creating a more formal online repository.

A notable challenge with which the OGO must contend in meeting the OGP criteria for an online repository is that any such platform must operate in compliance with *The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), 2005.[63] As its title implies, the Act aims to identify, remove, and prevent barriers[64] for people with disabilities.[65] For instance, it mandates that public sector organizations' websites and web content adhere to the WCAG 2.0 web accessibility standard.[66] In practical terms, ensuring that documents placed online meet the legal stipulations set out in the Act means that that the OGO and all other government Ministries, departments, agencies cannot simply convert documents to pdf and/or other formats and put them online. Further slowing the process is the need for all publicly available Government of Ontario documents to be made available in both English and French.

Table 3.2: Basic Requirements

1. Internal Assessment & Participatory Mechanism:
 	
    a. Did the government conduct regular internal assessments?
    b. Did the government ensure an ongoing role for civil society in monitoring of the action plan?
	1.a Yes

Guideline: Governments should conduct regular internal assessment, to make sure that commitments are on track and that there is an ongoing role for civil society.	1.b Yes

2. Regular Updates & Opportunity to Comment:
 	
    a. Did the government publish updates on progress at regular intervals? [at least once every four months]
    b. Were civil society organizations provided the opportunity to comment on progress of commitment implementation?
	2.a Yes

Guideline: At regular intervals governments should publish a brief update on progress against commitments and use that as an opportunity to invite any comments.	2.b Yes
3. Online Repository: a. Did the government create a public online repository of documents? Guideline: To complement any tracking system, governments are strongly encouraged to maintain a public, online repository of all documents giving evidence of consultation and implementation of commitments.	3.a No

Openness during implementation

Who Was Invited?

The civil society participants in the advisory committees for Commitments 1 and 3 all had existing relationships with the OGO predating the development and implementation of Ontario's Action Plan. Civil society representation on the advisory committee for Commitment 2 was comprised of the members of the Premier's Council for Youth Opportunities (PCYO). The PCYO is a 25-member group of youth, young professionals and leaders, ages 16 to 25. Members are selected on a rolling basis, through an annual province-wide application process. Once selected, members serve one-year terms that are renewable. During their tenure, these individuals give advice to the Minister of Children and Youth Services and other Cabinet Ministers on issues affecting youth and work within their local communities to make sure youth voices are considered in government decision-making.[67]

Ontario residents were invited to participate and provide feedback through the OGO's self-assessment and survey exercise, and five OpenON Forums. Ontario Public Service staff also were invited to engage in these activities. Invitations to participate in the self-assessment survey and the OpenON Forum were diffused via internal government communication as well as online promotion via the Ontario.ca website and social media.

How Was Awareness Raising Carried Out?

The OGO was and is very proactive in disseminating and communicating its progress on OGP and non-OGP open government activities. Consultations about the implementation process involved using diverse communication channels and platforms to communicate with interested parties, to provide information about the status of activities, and to encourage broad public engagement. These included:

- Providing updates on the Ontario government's Open Government website <https://www.ontario.ca/page/open-government>
- Self-assessment report and accompanying online survey
- In-person and online workshops
- 5 OpenON Forums that were announced a few weeks in advance
- Meeting of the three advisory groups
- Social media outreach
- Internal email communications

In spite of these communication efforts, citizen and civil society engagement remains limited. It is Ontario Public Service staff who continue to comprise the largest portion of participants in in the OGO's consultation activities. Equally noteworthy is that participants are predominantly situated in the greater Toronto metropolitan area and its surroundings. As noted by a number of stakeholders, it also seems plausible that the combined absence of a strongly coordinated civil society in the province and a marginal-to-non-existent understanding of the overall purpose of OGP among the public at large serves as an impediment to wider public engagement.

Which Parts of Civil Society Participated?

Civil society participation in consultations about the implementation program was most strongly connected to the civil society representation in the three advisory committees. The breakdown of civil society representation for each committee is as follows:

Commitment 1 Advisory Committee: The committee is comprised of 13 individuals, six of whom represent civil society interests (five of whom are from open data organizations, and one who is an academic). The open data organizations are: Iamsick.ca; Open Data Institute; and Open North.[68]

Commitment 2 Advisory Committee: The committee is comprised of 27 individuals, 25 of whom are the individuals who make up the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities.

Commitment 3 Advisory Committee: The committee is comprised of 12 individuals, two which represent civil society interests. One of these individuals also is a member of the Advisory Committee for Commitment 1 (i.e. Open Data Institute). The other individual is associated with an organization that defines itself as an independent progressive think tank (i.e., Canada 2020).[69]

The IRM researcher notes that four non-profit organizations responded to the survey questionnaire accompanying the OGO's self-assessment report, however, there are no means by which to identify who those organizations were. Likewise, and in accord with Ontario's privacy legislation, identifying information about participants in the OpenON Forums cannot be shared with the IRM researcher.

Level of Public Input

The IRM has adapted the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Scale of participation for use in OGP. The table below shows the level of public influence on the implementation of the action plan. From left to right, features of participation are cumulative. In the spirit of OGP, most countries should aspire for "collaborate."

The level of public engagement with the consultations during the action plan implementation was limited in terms of actual numbers of participants. This, however, is not surprising given that open government/open data remains, in Ontario at least, an area of direct interest largely for a niche group of individuals and groups. Nonetheless, and bearing in mind the OGO's budget, its engagement efforts are commendable. As noted above, there were three principal forms of implementation-related consultation throughout the pilot program.

1. *Civil society participation via the three advisory committees*: When asked about the functioning and effectiveness of their respective committees, those involved with Commitments 1 and 3 were uniformly positive about the experience. The common sentiment among the participants was that the committees had been a very positive experiment that should carry on, that civil society voices had been heard and acted upon (and when not acted upon, rationales were provided), and that the participants had played a valuable role in contributing to moving forward the province's open government strategy. For instance, the civil society members' contributions played a vital role in informing decisions about the look and feel, and feedback loop of the Ontario data catalogue. Likewise, their expertise was incorporated into both the content of the Open Data Guidebook, and the delivery of staff training. This said, one individual did note that "*a bit more transparency about what goes on between the meetings might be useful.*" The IRM researcher did not speak any members of the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities.

2. *Citizen and civil society participation via the survey questionnaire accompanying the OGO's progress report*: While the sample size is very small, the findings suggest that the respondents felt there was room for improvement regarding the participation of civil society organization and community groups, and opportunities to provide feedback and ideas.

3. *Citizen and civil society participation via the OpenON Forums*: These online sessions provide opportunities for interested individuals to learn and provide feedback about the types of open government activities – OGP and non-OGP – in which the OGO is involved. How the feedback obtained is integrated subsequent decision making is not clear.

The myriad consultation activities undertaken during the implementation process are indicative of on-going efforts to sustain a dialogue with interested parties, some of which was iterative and some of which was not. The observations of the civil society and government participants in the advisory committees leaves no doubt that they viewed their interactions as an iterative dialogue wherein the civil society voices were directly influencing the implementation of commitment-related activities. By contrast the self-assessment exercise and the OpenON Forums are oriented more toward involving and consulting members of the public. An important consideration in moving forward will centre around the implications vis-à-vis OGP values of the trade-off between working more closely with a small number of civil society interests (i.e., the current practice) with relevant expertise versus working, perhaps less closely, with a broader array of civil society interests with less expertise.

In the light of the evidence set out above, the level of public engagement in the ongoing monitoring during the implementation of Ontario's Action Plan is deemed, in accordance with the IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum, to be "collaborate."

Table 6. Level of Public Input

Level of public input		During implementation of action plan
Empower	The government handed decision-making power to members of the public.	
Collaborate	There was iterative dialogue AND the public helped set the agenda.	✔
Involve	The government gave feedback on how public inputs were considered.	
Consult	The public could give inputs.	
Inform	The government provided the public with information on the action plan.	
No Consultation	No consultation	

[58] Information about the composition of and the Terms of Reference for the Advisory Groups is available at: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d6p4z87fuzhngkx/AAB37ASM_Q0VGhvTiz96N4w1a/Advisory%20groups%20-%20Groupe%20consultatif?dl=0 [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[59] For information about the committee's terms of reference, meeting minutes and action items see, https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ms9hij0zzy8o7kv/AABT3rtUmmWyqh_ZTqRKmq1na/International%20Open%20Data%20Charter%20-%20Charte%20internationale%20sur%20les%20donn%C3%A9es%20ouvertes?dl=0 [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[60] See, https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ms9hij0zzy8o7kv/AADtTwrBJJHZMSdKUmiiaZ6_a/Digital%20engagement%20tool%20-%20Outil%20de%20mobilisation%20num%C3%A9rique?dl=0 [last accessed 10 February 2018]. Note: Agendas and summary notes of the PCYO meetings are not publicly available.

61 See, *Open Government Partnership: progress update*. https://www.ontario.ca/page/open-government-partnership-progress-update#section-6 [last accessed 10 February 2018]. Note: The raw data pertaining to the survey were never made public, nor is an archived copy of the survey questionnaire available online.

62 Presentation materials from the workshops is available online at: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/74up6lwkz8djc2g/AABCsYOqJA1NP_KQCodq0DoNa?dl=0 [last accessed 10 February 2018].

63 Accessibility legislation in Ontario stipulates that, government, businesses, non-profits and public sector organizations must meet specific criteria to improve accessibility for people with disabilities in 5 areas of daily life: 1. Customer service (i.e., remove barriers for people with disabilities to ensure they have access to goods, services or facilities); 2. Information and communications (i.e., ensuring organizations make their information accessible to people with disabilities); 3. Transportation (i.e., facilitating peoples' ability to travel in the province); 4. Employment (i.e., making hiring and employee practices more accessible); 5. Design of public spaces (i.e., requiring new and redeveloped outdoor public spaces to be accessible). See, *About accessibility laws*, https://www.ontario.ca/page/about-accessibility-laws [last accessed 10 February 2018]; *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005,* https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11 [last accessed 10 February 2018]; *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, ONTARIO REGULATION 191/11, Integrated Accessibility Standards* https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191#BK9 [last accessed 10 February 2018].

64 According to the Act, a barrier as "a circumstance or obstacle that keeps people apart" and specifies that, "for people with disabilities, barriers can take many forms including attitudinal, communication, physical, policy, programmatic, social, and transportation." See, https://accessontario.com/aoda/definitions/#def-barrier [last accessed 10 February 2018]

65 In accordance with Ontario's Human Rights Code, a disability refers to "a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities." See, https://accessontario.com/aoda/definitions/#def-disability [last accessed 10 February 2018]

66 See, *How to make websites accessible*, https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-websites-accessible [last accessed 10 February 2018]

67 See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/about-premiers-council-youth-opportunities [last accessed 10 February 2018] and https://www.pas.gov.on.ca/scripts/en/BoardDetails.asp?boardID=142820 [last accessed 10 February 2018].

68 See, https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ms9hij0zzy8o7kv/AABT3rtUmmWyqh_ZTqRKmq1na/International%20Open%20Data%20Charter%20-%20Charte%20internationale%20sur%20les%20donn%C3%A9es%20ouvertes?dl=0&preview=Membership.docx [last accessed 10 February 2018]

69 See, https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ms9hij0zzy8o7kv/AACsLovXAZ669zhi9DYPNd2Ja/Training%20Program%20-%20Programme%20de%20formation?dl=0&preview=Membership.docx [last accessed 10 February 2018]

Commitments

1. Strengthen Ontario's commitment to making government data open by default by adopting the international open data charter.

Commitment Text

1. Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed:

Ontario has implemented an Open Data Directive that requires all government data to be open by default, unless it is exempt for legal, privacy, security, confidentiality or commercially-sensitive reasons.

While the directive is a strong foundation, there are concrete steps to be taken to enhance accountability and ensure a more robust implementation of the Open Data Directive. The gaps that will be closed by adopting the open data charter include (1) clear time-bound actions including timing for the release of datasets and inventories as well as concrete methods to demonstrate progress towards clearly defined and communicated targets. (2) Concrete measures for proactive civil society engagement with data and (3) Engagement with domestic and international standards bodies and other standard setting initiatives to increase the interoperability and comparability of Ontario's data.

Main objective: To maximize the release of, increase access to, and promote greater impact of Ontario's data.

Brief description of commitment: The International Open Data Charter brings Ontario into an emerging body of national and subnational governments that are releasing their data in a standardized and comparable format. The International Open Data Charter provides Ontario with a common foundation as well as continuing guidance for realizing the full potential of its open data.

Milestones

1. Provincial announcement of the adoption of the International Data Charter
2. Develop strategy for Ontario to further align its Open Data Directive with the Charter principles
3. Publish Implementation Schedule and Plan
4. Provide updated tools and guidance (Open data guidebook) for ministries and provincial agencies

Commitment Overview

Status of Completion	Complete
Start Date	January 2017
Intended Completion Date	Date not specified
Responsible Office	Nosa Ero-Brown, Manager, Policy and Partnerships Open Government Office
Did It Open Government?	Major

Is it a STAR commitment?	No
Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria: - It must be specific enough that a judgment can be made about its potential impact. Starred commitments will have "medium" or "high" specificity. - The commitment's language should make clear its relevance to opening government. Specifically, it must relate to at least one of the OGP values of Access to Information, Civic Participation, or Public Accountability. - The commitment would have a "transformative" potential impact if completely implemented. - Finally, the commitment must see significant progress during the action plan implementation period, receiving an assessment of "substantial" or "complete" implementation.	

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Tech. and Innov. for Transparency and Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Complete	Worsens	No Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
Overall		✔			✔						✔					✔				✔	
1.1 Announce adoption of charter				✔	✔						✔					✔					
1.2 Align the Open Data Directive		✔			✔						✔					✔					
1.3 Publish Schedule and Plan		✔			Unclear Relevance					✔						✔					
1.4 Provide updated tools		✔			Unclear Relevance					✔						✔					

Commitment Aim

Overall Objective & Relevance

The pledge to strengthen Ontario's commitment to making government data open by default by adopting the *International Open Data Charter*[70] constitutes an early important step in achieving greater access to information for residents of Ontario. It focuses on pursuing internal administrative reforms aimed at ensuring the robust implementation of Ontario's *Open Data Directive*. The latter directive,

"Instructs ministries and Provincial Agencies to release Government Data that they create, collect, and/or manage as Open Data, unless the Data is exempt from release as Open Data, pursuant to this directive

Defines principles and requirements for publishing Government Data as Open Data

Promotes a culture of openness and collaboration – both within the public service and externally with the people of Ontario" [71]

Commitment 1 is meant "to maximize the release of, increase access to, and promote greater impact of Ontario's data" and foster an "increase in access to Ontario's data, a greater economic and social impact of Ontario's data and better consistency and comparability of Ontario's data with other jurisdictions."[72] Adhering to the Charter's six principles is seen as providing a guiding framework for closing three specific gaps in the *Open Data Directive's* implementation: *(1) clear time-bound actions including timing for the release of datasets and inventories as well as concrete methods to demonstrate progress towards clearly defined and communicated targets. (2) Concrete measures for proactive civil society engagement with data and (3) Engagement with domestic and international standards bodies and other standard setting initiatives to increase the interoperability and comparability of Ontario's data.*

These challenges, and others, were identified in a previous, and related, public consultation process that took place in late 2013 and early 2014. Led by the Open Government Engagement Team – a group of nine representatives from academia, business, and community groups who were tasked with providing recommendations about how to advance Open Government in Ontario – the consultations had focused on: (i) how the government of Ontario views information, data, and dialogue; and (ii) the changes needed to enable the Ontario government to become transparent and accessible in the light of the rapid pace of technological innovation, and growing public expectations for greater accountability and engagement.[73] The three principal challenges identified by the participants in these consultations centered on the:[74]

- necessity of a culture shift and 'leap of faith' among politicians and public servants if Open Government is to succeed;
- need to facilitate and catalyze public engagement by redressing information disparities between government and members of the public; and
- importance of ensuring ready access to adequate resources – financial and otherwise – so as not to impinge on the implementation of Open Data initiatives.[75]

Based on the value definitions provided by the OGP, the relevance of this commitment, as presented, is restricted to the OGP value of *Access to Information.* None of the four milestones are directly aimed at civic participation, public accountability, or technology and innovation for openness and accountability. This said, only milestones 1.1 and 1.2 are deemed to be directly relevant to the OGP value of *Access to Information.* Adopting the *Charter* contributes to improving access to information insofar as its statement of principles champions the timely release of comprehensive datasets, ensuring that the released data is accessible and usable as well as comparable and interoperable, and proactively engaging with citizens.

The primary audience for Milestone 1.3 is the International Open Data Charter Stewards and Working Groups, the advisory committees to the province's open government initiative, and the Ontario government's ministries and agencies. The objective of the milestone is to enable these parties to be familiar with the plan as well as its long- and short-term goals. Put simply, this milestone pertains to information about government activity as opposed to government-held information.[76] Nonetheless, information about the implementation schedule and plan can potentially enable interested parties, including civil society organizations, to monitor the government's progress in moving toward becoming open by default.

Milestone 1.4 builds on an existing internal government guidebook for public servants that is being revised to better align with OGP-related considerations and the implications thereof. In accordance with the definitions and criteria set out in the IRM Procedures Manual, and in the absence of a public-facing component to further the goals of access to information, civic participation or public accountability, it is deemed to not be relevant to OGP values.

This said, the IRM researcher maintains that these milestones are at least indirectly relevant to the OGP values of *Access to Information* and *Technological Innovation for Transparency and Accountability* insofar as they enable interested parties, including civil society organizations, to: (i) monitor the government's adherence to the principles of the International Open Data Charter; and (ii) understand the processes and procedures with which Ontario public servants must comply in order to make data open. Without such information the ability of civil society actors to effectively engage with government is impeded. Furthermore, despite their internal orientation, these two milestones do play a role in enhancing transparency.

Specificity and Potential Impact

The commitment language of the individual milestones for Commitment 1 varies. The commitment language of milestone 1.1, for instance, specifies a clear, verifiable activity and measurable deliverable (i.e., either the announcement is made, or it is not) for achieving of the commitment's objective. It is assessed as having high specificity.

Milestones 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 focus, broadly, on internal implementation aspects of the commitment. In each instance, the language used describes an activity that can be construed as verifiable but requiring some interpretation on the part of the reader to identify what the activity sets out to do, to determine what would the deliverables be, and how they might be measured. For instance, the reader of these milestones is left to ponder: *What exactly is the content of the strategy and plan mentioned in Milestones 1.2 and 1.3, and what is the timeline for their respective implementation?* Likewise for Milestone 1.4: *What comprises this guidebook and how are we to assess whether its contents are actually being used as intended?* In the light of these considerations, all three milestones are assessed as having low specificity. As for Milestone 1.2, the commitment language by which it is articulated contains no measurable activity, deliverable, or milestone.

The information regarding Commitment 1, as written in *Ontario's Open Government Partnership Action Plan,* is too vague to effectively ascertain how it, and its associated milestones, is meant to contribute to actualizing the specified objective and ambition. The IRM researcher considers there is no clear link between the objective/ambition specified for Commitment 1 and the milestones presented for getting there. This said, and despite the absence of clearly measurable milestones, the commitment language nonetheless describes an activity that is objectively verifiable – i.e., we can assess whether or not the International Open Data Charter is adopted. Therefore, the overall commitment is deemed to be of medium specificity.

It is difficult to assess the potential impact of this commitment and its associated milestones in any substantive sense because they outline broad plans rather than specific actions aimed at tackling specific issues/problems/challenges. Nonetheless, given the importance that government and civil society representatives attach to adopting the *International Open Data Charter* in the move toward government that is more open, the commitment as a whole is assessed as having a moderate potential impact. In addition to providing a statement of principles that can be used by all stakeholders as benchmarks for assessing the progress Ontario is making in implementing its *Open Data Directive*, adopting the Charter represents a significant step forward in pursuing broad internal administrative reform aimed at ensuring the robust implementation of Ontario's Open Data Directive.

Status
Complete

The aim of strengthening Ontario's commitment to making government data open by default is an ongoing commitment that is intended to carry on for the coming years. None of the milestones is directly linked to a measurable practice per se, focusing instead on the provision of organizational infrastructure to facilitate and sustain open government practices. As such, the individual milestones accompanying the commitment are highly instrumental in nature. All four milestones have been completed.[77]

Milestone 1.1 Provincial announcement of the adoption of the International Data Charter

This milestone was actualized on May 5, 2017 at the Go Open Data 2017 Conference in London Ontario with a public announcement that Ontario had officially adopted the International Open Data Charter.[78] Since 2013, this conference has been an annual event organized by, and whose main participants are, members of Ontario's open data community. Go Open Data identifies itself as "a collaborative effort between civil society, IT professionals, bloggers, community and economic developers, city planners, civil servants and more."[79] The conference usually attracts some 200 participants and involves one day of thematic panel discussions followed by a second day organized as a hackathon. The announcement of Ontario adopting the IODC garnered minimal mainstream media attention.

Milestone 1.2 Develop strategy for Ontario to further align its Open Data Directive with the Charter principles

This milestone was a central focus of the work undertaken by members of the advisory committee for Commitment 1.[80] Indeed, one of the government documents refers to the committee as the 'Implementation Team' referring to these individuals as "advisors who will collaborate in the development and launch of the Charter in Ontario, its supporting documents, including revisions to the Open Data Guidebook, and other tools."[81] The focus of the committee's work centred around the IODC principles 2 (Timely and Comprehensive), 3 (Accessible and Usable), 4 (Comparable and Interoperable), and 5 (For Improved Governance and Citizen Engagement), and is evident in the members contributions to: (i) the development of a feedback mechanism to obtain user views about how to improve the quality of data available via Ontario's data catalogue; (ii) the development of an Open Data Guidebook and open government training sessions; (iv) the counsel/advice provided regarding the need to work with international standards bodies to create common standards; and (iv) ongoing engagements with civil society and private sectors interests.

Milestone 1.3 Publish Implementation Schedule and Plan

The implementation schedule and plan for operationalizing the International Open Data Charter was developed in collaboration with members of the advisory committee for Commitment 1. This topic was the focus of the group's meeting of May 4, 2017. The Schedule and Plan were published online in December 2017.[82]

Milestone 1.4 Provide updated tools and guidance (Open data guidebook) for ministries and provincial agencies

This milestone also is largely complete for the purposes of this assessment but is, in fact, an ongoing dynamic process. An updated Open Data Guidebook was published online on the Ontario Public Service intranet in early January 2018. As of February 2018, this document remains behind a government firewall and has not been examined by the IRM researcher. Some 500 public servants have engaged in training about opening data,[83] members of the advisory committee have attended and audited the training, and in June 2017 Ministries were asked to develop their own open data plans in accordance with IODC principles.[84] A key

distinguishing feature of the training as compared to previous training activities is that it is broken down into modules. In accordance with feedback received from those who participated in the training sessions offered prior to July 2017, efforts are being made to better tailor the content to specific audiences, and to improve the format of the webinar sessions.

Early results: did it open government?
Access to Information: Major

The focus of Commitment 1 on strengthening the government's commitment to open government builds on the province's existing efforts at changing the organizational culture and practice within the Ontario Public Service. Commitment 1 combines the goals of increasing access to information and ensuring a more robust implementation of the Open Data Directive and maximizing the release of, increase access to, and promote great impact of Ontario's data. This was to be achieved by: (i) setting out clear time-bound actions for the release of datasets and inventories as well as concrete methods to demonstrate progress towards clearly defined and communicated targets; (ii) establishing concrete measures for proactive civil society engagement with data; and (iii) engaging with domestic and international standards bodies and other standard setting initiatives to increase the interoperability and comparability of Ontario's data. Civil society and government representatives attached great importance to adopting the International Open Data Charter, and early results emerging from the implementation of Commitment 1 suggest it is making a major contribution to opening government in Ontario.

The three implementation priority areas for Commitment 1 were: (i) provide updated tools, guidance and training; (ii) establish a feedback mechanism for datasets on Ontario.ca; and (iii) external data and standardized data.[85]

Training about Ontario's Open Data Directive was conducted across the Ontario Public Service starting in March 2017, in the form of sessions lasting 90 minutes that took place in-person and via WebEx. Between April and July, members of the advisory committee attended and provided feedback on these training sessions, which included participants from 23 different government agencies as well as representatives from federal and municipal levels of government, the Canadian Forces, private sector organizations, and non-profit organizations.[86] Of the 157 participants who responded to a post-training survey:

- 83% reported having "*a greater understanding of the Open Data Charter and how it relates to Ontario's Open Data activities*"
- 82% reported having "*a greater understanding of how to identify data and complete an inventory of datasets*"
- 80% reported "*the training session was relevant to my work*"

Training was one of the focus areas of the July 12 meeting of the advisory committee. Here, members expressed favouring a modular approach to training that meets the diverse learning needs of staff, and whose content spans from introductory to more detailed subject specific instruction. Suggestions also were made about developing specific courses for expert groups about topics such as freedom of information and privacy. In addition to emphasizing the need to measure training performance and address complaints, members advised the OGO to look to other jurisdictions and organizations for inspiration, and to build capacity by 'training the trainers'. In terms of training content, it was noted that the inclusion of more information about standards, interoperability and related best practices would be beneficial. This feedback served to inform a September launch of revised training sessions that were divided into modules and which had specific learning outcomes. Likewise, the Open Data Guidebook was revised to include sections dealing

with International Open Data Charter principles. At the advisory committee's November 7 meeting, members were updated on the revised training and asked to provide their feedback.

As a result of the actions undertaken in 2017, the look and feel of the data catalogue has been altered, and a user feedback mechanism for datasets released on the Ontario.ca data catalogue has been created and implemented.[87] The advisory committee for Commitment 1 played a key role in informing these changes. At the July 12 and September 20 meetings time was allocated for the OGO to present beta versions of, and received feedback from the committee members about, the beta feedback mechanism being developed. At both the September 12 and November 7 meetings the OGO specified how the tool had been modified in accordance with the previous round of committee members' input. The feedback mechanism went live shortly after the advisory committee's final meeting. The IRM researcher notes that the user feedback mechanism is not prominently displayed on the data catalogue homepage. This could limit its utility.

Issues pertaining to external data and standardized data were part of the discussions that took place at the March 1 and May 4 meetings. The input received from committee members highlighted the complexities involved on this front, which, in turn, informed the OGO's decision to 'park' this idea for 2017. Nonetheless, ongoing efforts to establish relationships and engage with a diverse range of actors involved in all levels of open government and open data continued throughout the year.

In addition to the more tangible changes in government performance described above, the members of the Commitment 1 advisory committee were unanimous in asserting that their efforts around operationalizing the International Open Data Charter was changing the culture of government. In the words of one civil society member, "*we've come a long way.*" The central change highlighted in this regard was a perceived increase in the frequency of conversations about open government and open data advisory committee members and their respective colleagues were having with entities inside and outside of government. For instance, the representative from the City of Toronto pointed out that since the Ontario government's adoption of the International Open Data Charter a growing number of the Ministries were engaging with the City to investigate collaborative opportunities around open government and open data. It was further noted that, the City's approach to user-centered design for program delivery was a matter of particular interest to the Ministries' whom were reaching out to it.

On the government side, it was noted that open data conversations were now taking placing with portions of government where previously this seemed impossible. The advisory committee Chair, Nosa Ero-Brown, was quick to note that the group's work had been

> "*an interesting journey… It was a new team doing new work that brought together very different perspectives ready to come together. And, its worked quite well. People were honest about openness and this structure helped us breakout of old molds of working.*"

In terms of future approaches, the committee members all supported the idea of continuing with similar forum structures, including more opportunities to interact between meetings.

Commitment 1 and its milestones explicitly focus on ensuring infrastructure is in place to support and facilitate access to information in a legal context that mandates government information be provided in both official languages (English and French), and that it meets a range of accessibility standards. In addition, in the case of Ontario we observe clear efforts to facilitate the obtaining user feedback, and to provide information in useful formats that transcend simply providing raw data. The changes in practice outlined above are expected to directly impact the amount and quality of data being released. However, it is still too early to measure whether this commitment has led to the release of more relevant and/or better information. This said, given the training that has taken place across ministries and the ongoing work at transforming the public

service and government culture, expectations are high among participant civil society organizations and government. Echoing the importance that government and civil society representatives attach to adopting the *International Open Data Charter* in the move toward government that is more open, and the onus these parties place on "getting the fundamental rights" the IRM researcher maintains that the ongoing efforts to strengthen Ontario's commitment to making government data open by default and the adoption of the IODC mark an important a step forward for government openness, that remains limited in scope or scale simply because still too soon to adequately assess the full implications of the outcomes discussed above. In accord with the definitions set out in the *IRM Procedures Manual,* the completion of Commitment 1 is deemed to have made a major contribution to opening government in Ontario.

Recommendations

It will be crucial in moving forward to implement monitoring and evaluation practices that assess compliance with IODC principles, the Open Data in Ontario strategy and implementation plan, as well as how and the extent to which Ministries are using the tools developed by the OGO. Equally important is the need to implement more effective record keeping, and more user-friendly information access practices. This, of course, points to the need for the government of Ontario to allocate greater resources to its open government activities as well as the monitoring thereof.

---

70 Open Data Charter. See, http://opendatacharter.net [last accessed 10 February 2018]

71 *Ontario's Open Data Directive*. See, http://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-open-data-directive [last accessed 10 February 2018]

72 *Ontario's Open Government Partnership Action Plan.* See, https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-open-government-partnership-action-plan [last accessed 5 July 2017].

73 Established in October 2013 by the Minister of Government Services, the Open Government Engagement Team was tasked with finding ways for the Government of Ontario to be more open, transparent and accountable. See, *Open by Default – A new way forward for Ontario*, https://www.ontario.ca/page/open-default-new-way-forward-ontario [last accessed 17 September 2017]. See also, *Backgrounder: Ontario's Open Government Initiative,* https://news.ontario.ca/mgs/en/2013/10/ontarios-open-government-initiative.html [last accessed 17 September 2017].

74 The participants reportedly included elected officials, government officials, public servants, the Queen's Park press gallery, representatives of aboriginal community, academics, along with other individuals and stakeholders. Unfortunately, information about the numbers of participants and, whom they represented is not publicly available.

75 See, *Open by Default – A new way forward for Ontario*, https://www.ontario.ca/page/open-default-new-way-forward-ontario [last accessed 17 September 2017].

76 According to the IRM Procedures Manual, access to information commitments "pertain to government-held information, as opposed to only information on government activities. As an example, releasing government-held information on pollution would be clearly relevant, although the information is not about "government activity" per se…" Because of lack in specificity, we can't distinguish whether this information to be published (implementation schedule and plan) is related to general government activities, instead of information that is inaccessible by citizens.

77 A breakdown of the project plan for Commitment 1 is available at: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d6p4z87fuzhngkx/AAAduEneBi6Rvn6aUTbCkMXYa/Project%20Plans%20-%20Plans%20des%20projets/Adopt%20International%20Data%20Charter%20-%20Adoption%20de%20la%20Charte%20internationale%20sur%20les%20donn%C3%A9es%20ouvertes?dl=0&preview=Adopt+Data+Charter+Project+Plan.docx [last accessed 10 February 2018]

78 For the official announcement see, Adopting the International Open Data Charter, https://www.ontario.ca/page/adopting-international-open-data-charter [last accessed 10 February 2018]. See also: Public Sector Digest, Go Open Data 2017 Conference Review https://publicsectordigest.com/digest/GOOD17ConferenceReview1.pdf [last accessed 10 February 2018]

79 See, http://2018.go-opendata.ca/about/ [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[80] For details about the plan, see: Treasury Board Secretariat (n.d.), *Open Data in Ontario: Adopting the International Open Data Charter*. https://files.ontario.ca/open_data_in_ontario_-_2017.pdf [last accessed 10 February 2018].

[81] See, *Adopting the Open Data Charter 2017-1-10 pptx* at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19q3VVpUKyYD0RYKUuGjmEelHc7zLgCX6 [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[82] The implementation schedule is available at: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d6p4z87fuzhngkx/AAAduEneBi6Rvn6aUTbCkMXYa/Project%20Plans%20-%20Plans%20des%20projets/Adopt%20International%20Data%20Charter%20-%20Adoption%20de%20la%20Charte%20internationale%20sur%20les%20donn%C3%A9es%20ouvertes?dl=0&preview=Adopt+Data+Charter+Project+Plan.docx [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[83] For information about the status of *Open Data Directive Training as of July 10, 2017* see: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19q3VVpUKyYD0RYKUuGjmEelHc7zLgCX6 [last accessed 10 February 2018]. The latter is, at the time of writing, the most up to date information available.

[84] See, *Open Government Executive Leads: Meeting Follow-up Email* - Sent June 2nd 2017 https://docs.google.com/document/d/12RhFLUnChcAEeUOjBt4MjOVmEd4EgwEqNjsW2yQ3L_I/edit [last accessed 10 February 2018].

[85] See, Open Government Partnership: Advisory Committee Meeting, Adopting the International Open Data Charter https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ms9hij0zzy8o7kv/AABYEL6CHkO-TJhJAGt-XI1ra/International%20Open%20Data%20Charter%20-%20Charte%20internationale%20sur%20les%20donn%C3%A9es%20ouvertes/July%2012%20-%20%2012%20juillet?dl=0&preview=Advisory+Committee+Meeting+Charter+FINAL.pptx [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[86] See, *Open Data Directive Training as of July 10, 2017* https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19q3VVpUKyYD0RYKUuGjmEelHc7zLgCX6 [last accessed 10 February 2018].

[87] See, *Survey: Ontario data catalogue*. https://www.ontario.ca/form/survey-open-data-catalogue [last accessed 10 February 2018]

2. Give young people more opportunities to contribute to the development of government programs and services by working in partnership with youth to implement a digital engagement tool.

Commitment Text

Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed: Youth are digitally connected like never before and have the skill sets and passion to solve problems affecting them locally and globally. Unfortunately, they are not engaged to civic processes in the same way as previous generations so the methods to engage them need to evolve.

Main objective: To engage youth on implementing a digital engagement platform that harnesses their collective energy and existing ways of connecting (e.g. social media, mobile-focused, digitally) to contribute to government policy and program development processes on an ongoing basis.

Brief description of commitment: Ontario will engage youth on how they currently participate civically, how they want to be engaged and how digital tool(s) would support that.

Ambition: Engaging youth in the design and implementation of a new digital access tool is a significant undertaking with the benefit to have substantial impact on the next generation of voters.

Milestones

1. Engage the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities and their youth networks on how young people currently engage in civic participation through digital means, as well as in-person, to develop insight on how they want to engage government.
2. Host design lab(s) with the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities and their youth networks to inform the implementation of a digital engagement tool in a beta phase, for testing and evaluation.
3. Beta-launch a digital engagement tool and establish a baseline for evaluating digital youth civic engagement, and identifying opportunities for improvements.
4. Use feedback from beta testing to launch an updated version of the digital engagement tool and test/measure its impact on digital youth civic engagement, with concurrent evaluation.
5. Continue making updates to the digital engagement tool with the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities and their youth networks through design lab(s) or other open government tools (e.g. PoliHack).

Commitment Overview

Status of Completion	Complete
Start Date	January 2017
Intended Completion Date	Date not specified
Responsible Office	Sean Twyford, Youth Strategies Branch Ministry of Children and Youth Services
Did It Open Government?	Major

Is it a STAR commitment?	No
Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria: - It must be specific enough that a judgment can be made about its potential impact. Starred commitments will have "medium" or "high" specificity. - The commitment's language should make clear its relevance to opening government. Specifically, it must relate to at least one of the OGP values of Access to Information, Civic Participation, or Public Accountability. - The commitment would have a "transformative" potential impact if completely implemented. - Finally, the commitment must see significant progress during the action plan implementation period, receiving an assessment of "substantial" or "complete" implementation.	

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Tech. and Innov. for Transparency and Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Complete	Worsens	No Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
Overall			✓			✓		✓			✓					✓				✓	
2.1 Engage with youth to develop insight.			✓			✓		✓			✓					✓					
2.2 Host design lab(s) to inform the digital engagement tool.			✓			✓		✓			✓					✓					
2.3 Beta-launch the tool.			✓			✓		✓			✓					✓					
2.4 Launch an updated version.			✓			✓		✓			✓					✓					
2.5 Continue updating with input from youth groups.			✓			✓		✓			✓					✓					

Commitment Aim

Overall Objective & Relevance

The issue that Commitment 2 seeks to address is the low levels and changing nature of youth engagement in the development and design of the Ontario government's programs, policies, and services. Some of the key barriers to youth engagement in Ontario include time constraints, financial restrictions, transportation, experiencing social stigma, having reduced levels of self-confidence, as well as inadequate support from community members and organizations.[88] The understanding of youth civic engagement underpinning Commitment 2 transcends equating civic engagement foremost with participating in elections toward a broader view of technologically mediated digital citizenship.[89] The stated objective of Commitment 2 is to "engage youth on implementing a digital engagement platform that harnesses their collective energy and existing ways of connecting (e.g. social media, mobile-focused, digitally) to contribute to government policy and program development processes on an ongoing basis." The Youth Strategies Branch of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services hopes that this exercise will have substantial positive impact on the next generation of voters by demonstrating that their contributions can and do make a difference in the functioning of government policies, programs, and services.

This commitment entails the Youth Strategies Branch of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services working in consultation with the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities (PCYO) to find where and how to use social media platforms as appealing modes of civic engagement for youth. In the words of Sean Twyford, Director, Youth Strategies Branch, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and the responsible contact for this commitment, the open government pilot initiative

> *"provides an effective framing for youth engagement. It moves us from being youth centered to having a frame to tie our work and rationale to something more easily understood in terms of why government would do this. The commitment gave us the ability to dedicate staff and resources to this initiative"*

The relevance of this commitment, as presented, centers on the OGP values of civic participation, and technology and innovation for openness and accountability. Each of the five milestones seek to open up decision making to Ontario's youth and solicit meaningful input from this demographic to inform decision-making as well as promoting new technologies – or in this case online platforms – offering opportunities for information sharing, public, participation, and collaboration.

At the core of the five cumulative milestones is the development and design of a digital engagement tool that solicits and collects social media and anonymous responses to youth policy questions "for the purpose of improving government programs and services for Ontario's youth."

This commitment builds on long standing efforts by the Ontario government to enhance youth engagement in policy development. In recent years this has included such activities as, engaging with youth in pre-budget consultations through both an online forum created to engage Ontarians about decisions affecting them and on Twitter (#budgettalks),[90] provincial support for numerous #PoliHack events bringing together various youth sector stakeholders including data specialists, researchers, policymakers and youth who bring their collective knowledge to propose strategies and develop apps aimed at tackling real-world youth-related issues.[91] As noted by Mr. Twyford the benchmark for assessing the success of Commitment 2 will not rest on the number of participant youth voices per se, but rather on demonstrating to the youth of Ontario that "*your voice is actually having an impact on how government is working.*"

The commitment language of the individual milestones for Commitment 2 is relatively uniform across milestones 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4. In each instance the language used describes an activity that can be construed as verifiable but requiring some interpretation on the part of the reader to identify what the activity sets out to do and determine what would the deliverables be. As such, each of these milestones is assessed as having medium specificity. Although there currently are low levels of youth civic participation[92] in the province of Ontario, and despite the tool being created in collaboration with relevant beneficiaries, the lack of specificity among the milestones in Commitment 2 precludes one from understanding the scope and scale of the tool to be created. This said, even in the absence of clear indicators or deliverables, the milestones are self-explanatory verifiable activities, and the same holds true for the commitment overall. Based on this assessment Commitment 2 is assessed to be of medium specificity.

The starting point for considering the potential impact of Commitment 2 is rooted in the premise that, *"the increasing popularity of technology means that civic engagement activities need to be redefined to fit a new era of digital citizenship"* and *"civic engagement via online activities is under-examined."[93]* For Commitment 2 there is a clear link between the specified objective and the five milestones set out for realizing this goal. Working with Ontario's youth to design and implement a digital engagement tool is a novel method for offering young people opportunities to contribute to the development of government programs and services. It cannot, however, be taken for granted that this particular undertaking will *necessarily* serve as a bridge to engagement across a wider range of youth issues. The common feature across of the five cumulative milestones is a seeming effort at determining how best to apply "existing ways of connecting (e.g. social media, mobile-focused, digitally)" to beget enhanced youth engagement. However, realizing the full transformative potential of these "existing ways of connecting" is contingent upon also identifying and addressing the conditions under which they can most effectively give young people more opportunities to contribute to the development of government programs and services. This said, Commitment 2 is assessed as being a major step forward in the relevant policy area.

Status
Complete

The aim of providing young people with more opportunities to contribute to the development of government programs and services has been a long-standing desire of the Ontario government that predates Ontario's participation in the OGP subnational pilot program. According to Sean Twyford, Director, Youth Strategies Branch, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and the responsible contact for this commitment, and Tsz-Lung Cheung, Acting Manager, Youth Initiatives and Engagement Unit, Youth Strategies Branch, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, a plan to create a digital engagement platform targeting youth engagement preceded the launch of the Open Government Partnership Action Plan. In 2013, for instance, the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities (PCYO) was created as an advisory body comprised of 25 youth, young professionals, and leaders, aged 16 to 25, to provide the government with "advice on how to improve the delivery and design of government programs and services for youth, report on specific challenges and share ideas on how to best support youth."[94] Throughout 2015 and 2016[95] listening tours were used to collect information about key themes, action items, and questions to be considered vis-à-vis leveraging digital communication technologies to promote youth engagement. Some of the main themes covered during these meetings included: how to engage with students; types of resources needed to facilitate conversations; feedback mechanisms; engaging youth using their mother tongue; dealing with digital inequalities; meeting the needs of vulnerable youth; understanding the impact of feedback; protecting privacy; evaluation frameworks to demonstrate impact of the YouthVoice platform. The Ontario

government's involvement in the subnational pilot program was pivotal in helping to hasten the design, implementation and launch of the platform.[96] The individual milestones accompanying this commitment were completed within the twelve months of the pilot program and updating is ongoing.[97]

Milestone 2.1. Engage with youth to develop insight

Since its founding in 2013, staff from the Youth Strategies Branch of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) meet regularly with representatives of Premier's Council on Youth Services (PCYO). In January and February 2017, a Subcommittee consisting of representatives from the Ministry, the Treasury Board Secretariat, and the PCYO was formed to provide input and feedback about the YouthVoiceON digital engagement platform. As previously noted, throughout 2017 elements of Commitment 2 were discussed at three meeting of the PCYO (March 10-11, Timmins; May 28-29, Toronto; October 1-2, Toronto) and one teleconference meeting of the PCYO Subcommittee on YouthVoiceON.[98] At each of the PCYO meetings time was scheduled to discuss issues regarding YouthVoiceON. For instance, at the Timmins meeting, the discussion involved members of the Mattagami First Nation and served as a soft launch of the YouthVoiceON platform. Here, the discussions focused on challenges associated with reaching and connecting with rural and remote youth. The May meeting in Toronto set aside 40 minutes for providing and overview and receiving feedback about the platform. The meeting of the PCYO Subcommittee on YouthVoiceON (YVO) coincided with the release of the OGO's self-assessment and online survey. Participants at this meeting offered ideas and feedback on: strategies for making YouthVoiceON a feature in schools; strategies for increasing levels of youth feedback about the platform; strategies to diffuse information about the platform throughout PCYO networks; linking the platform to PCYO meetings; and a general discussion about youth engagement.[99] At the October PCYO meeting 90 minutes was allotted for Council members to provide advice on the tool and its formal launch.

A consistent theme throughout the meetings was the need to make clear how youth feedback obtained via the YouthVoiceON platform was being used to guide and inform government policies and programs. PCYO members made it clear that, a key aspect of building a trust relationship was ensuring that youth knew why they were spending time providing input and advice to the government. It appears that the government has acted on this advice insofar as Step 4 of the '*How this works*' explanation provided on the http://youthvoiceontario.ca homepage specifies that "*Feedback submitted to the YouthVoiceON site via Twitter or anonymous commenting below will be moderated to remove personal or identifying information. It will then be collected and grouped for analysis by the YouthVoiceON team. The YouthVoiceON team will help government work through the analysis to ensure youth voice is heard and understood.*"

Milestone 2.2. Host design lab(s) with the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities and their youth networks to inform the implementation of a digital engagement tool in a beta phase, for testing and evaluation.

In operationalizing this milestone, representatives from the Youth Strategies Branch of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) hosted meetings and workshops (i.e., Design labs) with PCYO members and a range of subject matter experts from the public sector. The Design labs brought together members of the PCYO and subject matter (e.g. Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario) to co-create protocols for the YouthVoiceON platform, to influence its design, was well as to evaluate its effectiveness by providing feedback to its beta launch. Specific outcomes emerging from this process include:[100]

- Co-development of a privacy protocol through a process involving the following subject matter experts: the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services' iNetwork; the Ministry of Children and

Youth Services' Legal Services Branch and Access and Privacy Office; the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario.

- Co-development and design of the YouthVoiceON platform through interactions with the following subject matter experts: members of the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities; youth attending the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities Listening Tour.

Other subject matter experts engaged in this process included: Toronto Police Services; the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario; and members of the Directors' Working Group on Youth Opportunities (consisting of 20 youth-serving ministries).

According to the OGO's July 2017 Self-Assessment Report,[101] the design labs and workshops along with the interactions with subject matter experts resulted in the co-creation of a series of documents – Privacy Impact Assessment, Privacy Risk Assessment, Privacy Risk Design Assessment, Social Media Risk Spectrum Protocol, Ongoing Accessibility Assessment – to guide the platform protocols. These documents are not publicly archived online.

In the autumn of 2017 the PCYO embarked on a listening tour/open government work shop, the aim of which was, in part, to gather further information about how best to continue moving forward with the development and implementation of YouthVoiceON. The 2017 listening tour visited the Fort William First Nation and Sault Ste. Marie in Northern Ontario, and Peterborough, Brantford, Kitchener, and London in Southern Ontario.[102] The information gathered from this tour was not directly relevant to Ontario's OGP Action Plan but is reflective of continuing efforts to update, improve, and promote the platform in accordance with the views of Ontario youth.

Milestone 2.3. Beta-launch a digital engagement tool and establish a baseline for evaluating digital youth civic engagement, and identifying opportunities for improvements.

Beta-testing of the YouthVoiceON platform took place from August to October 2017. This platform is linked with a Twitter account and solicits and collects anonymous responses to youth policy questions "for the purpose of improving government programs and services for Ontario's youth."[103] As outlined at the www.youthvoiceontario.ca website, the platform works on the basis of four steps (see the image below):

How this works

Open Dialogue: Youth voice informing government decision-making

STEP 1

We post and share youth policy questions.

Explain Step 1

STEP 2

You have your say and share on social media or anonymously below.

Explain Step 2

STEP 3

We listen to your advice.

Explain Step 3

STEP 4

See how you made a difference for youth in Ontario.

Explain Step 4

Privacy Pat

Hi, I'm Privacy Pat! I'm a guide on topics of privacy and protecting personal information. Hover on any underlined text you see to find my tips. More tips can be found in the Terms of Service.

Français

The technical design of the platform was conducted in-house in accord with feedback obtained from members of the PCYO and was led by Tsz-Lung Cheung. This process involved – and continues to involve – presenting suggested modifications to the platform to Council members, soliciting their feedback, modifying the platform accordingly, and soliciting additional feedback. To this end, the PCYO was and continues to be the driving-force for many aspects of this process from conception to execution to outreach insofar as its input and counsel was actively sought prior to the implementation of Commitment 2, and it will continue to play a key advisory role on a diverse range of activities affecting youth-serving Ministries. The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario also is involved given the need to protect the privacy of those youth using the tool.

A core consideration throughout the development and implementation of the YouthVoiceON platform has and continues to be that this platform is meant to function as a tool to support dialogue between youth and government about salient policy issues rather than platform for party-politics. To facilitate dialogue, new questions are regularly posed on the platform, to which young people from across the province are asked to comment. For those overseeing the implementation of Commitment 2, the hope is that with the platform now in place other Ministries will begin to use it as a mechanism for engaging with youth about issues falling under their respective Ministerial jurisdictions. For example, the current climate dialogue was an initiative of the province's Climate Change Secretariat. In the words of Tsz-Lung Cheung,

> "We're [MCYS] not driving the discussion or policy topics. Our ultimate goal is to have editorial control [on what is being discussed]. People, Ministries, etcetera submit topics, and we select them. We have the thing to use, and they [other agencies] ask to use it. The key is the tool. As for the topic itself, we want to see the youth angle."

As of February, 2018 there have been three topics of discussion, selected by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. During the beta-testing phase, discussion focused on youth mentorship. This was followed by a discussion about post-secondary education in the province, and, most recently, a discussion about

46

climate change.[104] Two planned future discussions include one about improving concussion awareness in the Ontario school curriculum and ensuring better treatment (i.e., Rowan' Law),[105] and one about access to refugee settlement services in the province. Visitors to the platform are able to respond to the questions, read Tweets, and contribute to the conversations. Once conversation periods have ended, the results are meant to be reported via the @YouthVoiceON and @VoixDesJeunesON twitter accounts. In addition, information is meant to be provided about how the comments, ideas, and views received are contributing to government policy. At the time of writing no such information has been posted about the preceding discussions.

Milestones 2.4. *Use feedback from beta testing to launch an updated version of the digital engagement tool and test/measure its impact on digital youth civic engagement, with concurrent evaluation.*
Milestones 2.5. *Continue making updates to the digital engagement tool with the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities and their youth networks through design lab(s) or other open government tools (e.g. PoliHack).*

Milestones 2.4 and 2.5 are directly connected to milestone 2.3. They focus on the gathering user feedback from the beta-testing to revise/update the http://youthvoiceontario.ca/ website to guide and inform platform updates in consultation with the PCYO.[106] As noted, above, the planned beta-testing period (i.e., Milestone 2.4) took place between August and October 2017. When asked about this process, Tsz-Lung Cheung, noted that despite people engaging with the platform throughout this period and their having ample opportunity to provide feedback via the platform, very minimal public feedback was actually received. In his words, "*feedback was requested, but not received*." Efforts to obtain public feedback about the platform remain in place as is evidenced by prominent posting of a *Help us improve!* icon on the platform.

Early results: did it open government?
Civic Participation: Major

Commitment 2 aims to facilitate and enhance youth engagement in the development and design of the Ontario government's programs, policies, and services through the development and implementation of an online platform. The commitment is rooted in the notion that youth-government dialogue can be enhanced by seeking to connect with youth through their preferred communication channels. The implementation of the YouthVoiceON platform and its accompanying Twitter accounts marks an important development in the government's youth engagement efforts.

Considering it is still the early days of the platform, much is yet to be discovered about how this tool can be most effectively used to catalyze change in policy issues of importance to youth. To this end, those most closely aligned with Commitment 2 maintain that it is still early days and that there is institutional inertia to overcome not least in terms of catalysing change in established channels of government communication. One clear sign of hope rests in the number of Twitter followers the @YouthON account has acquired in a very short period of time. The English language @YouthVoiceON account has, as of February 2018, more than 2500 followers. Its French language companion account, @VoixDesJeunesON, has 72 followers. These figures mark a notable increase in the total number of followers since August 2017.

Thus far, the platform has been well received. A central feature of Commitment 2 that has not yet materialized given the short implementation timeframe is the issue of clearly demonstrating to those who interact with the platform and the @YouthVoiceON and @VoixDesJeunesON Twitter accounts how their input/feedback is contributing to policy decision-making in Ontario (i.e., Step 4). This will be a crucial step in conveying to youth in Ontario the value of their engagement with the platform and policy processes more broadly. It is the necessary closing component of the desired government-youth feedback loop. As noted by

members of the PCYO Subcommittee on YouthVoiceON, this step is vital to building a trust relationship.[107]

Considering the partnership created between the OGO, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and the PCYO and its youth networks on the one hand, and the creation of a digital tool to collect feedback from youth to shape government policies on the other hand, the IRM researcher considers the implementation of Commitment 2 to have opened government in a major way. Given the novelty and innovativeness of this initiative it is not surprising that the extent to which the views expressed via this platform directly inform and/or contribute to formal decision-making processes is not yet measurable. It remains to be seen how the platforms untested features might further the open government movement. Central to this process will likely be the extent to which other Ministries and agencies in the Ontario government choose to engage with their youth constituencies via the communicative mechanisms the YouthVoiceON platform affords.

Recommendations

Enhancing opportunities for youth to contribute to the development of government programs is laudable, offering the potential to catalyse youth engagement both in the present and in coming years. Attempting to communicate with this demographic via their preferred communication channels is a noteworthy undertaking. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that, digital platforms are mediators. They neither create nor guarantee engagement. In the coming months and years, the government will need put in place performance measures and mechanisms capable of assessing whether the engagement-related affordances of the YouthVoiceON platform and Twitter accounts are being realized. Likewise, measures need to be put in place to ensure this communication channel does not become a substitute for face-to-face consultation not least because digital inequalities persist across the province and an over-reliance on digital tools can exclude large numbers of youth who do not have access to the requisite platforms and bandwidth. Attention also needs to be given to developing an awareness building communication plan that encourages youth to participate in the consultations. Should this Commitment remain in a future action plan, it is recommended that:

- 'youth engagement' be clearly defined in a manner that accounts for differing age demographics (e.g., what matters to a 14 year old, may not be relevant to a 21 year old), as well as distinguishing between differing types of engagement (i.e., what types of engagement are we seeking to nurture, for what purpose, and why?);

- Metrics be developed to enable measuring and tracking of the types of engagement this commitment seeks to promote;

- Commitments or milestones be put in place to ensure that participants in the conservations hosted via the YouthVoiceON platform are informed of how their contributions are influencing policy and/or the reasons why their contributions did not influence certain policy decisions;

- Commitments or milestones relating to addressing digital inequalities among youth be included; and

- Commitments or milestones that combine the use of the online platform with concomitant off-line activities be included.

[88] See, Chan, Meanne, and Joe Lee (2016). *Youth Impact Summit: Redefining Youth Civic Engagement in Ontario 2016/2017 Report.* https://studioy.marsdd.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/MaRS-YIS-Public-Report-2.pdf [last accessed 10 September 2017].

89 See, Turcotte, M. (2015). Insights on Canadian Society: Political participation and civic engagement of youth. Statistics Canada, 1-17. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14232-eng.pdf [last accessed 10 September 2017]. See also, Samara (2015). *Message Not Delivered: The Myth of Apathetic Youth and the Importance of Contact in Political Participation.* http://www.samaracanada.com/docs/default-source/default-document-library/samara-messagenotdelivered-g.pdf?sfvrsn=2, and Hamel, A. V. (2011). From Consumer to Citizen: Digital Media and Youth Civic Engagement. Media Awareness Network, 1-36. http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/pdfs/publication-report/full/civic-engagement.pdf [last accessed 10 September 2017].

90 See, http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/english/youthopportunities/steppingup/steppingup2015/civicengagement.aspx, and http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/documents/youthopportunities/steppingup/2015exec_summary.pdf [last accessed 18 October 2017].

91 See, http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/steppingup/steppingup2016/civicengagement.aspx [last accessed 18 October 2017].

92 See, Chan, Meanne, and Lee (2016), and Samara (2015), op. cit

93 See, Chan, Meanne, and Lee (2016) op. cit.

94 See, *First-Ever Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities* https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2013/03/first-ever-premiers-council-on-youth-opportunities.html [last accessed 10 February 2018]. A list of current members is available at: https://www.pas.gov.on.ca/scripts/en/BoardDetails.asp?boardID=142820 [last accessed 10 February 2018]. Minutes of the July 19, 2017 PCYO Subcommittee teleconference meeting on YouthVoiceON (YVO) are available at: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d6p4z87fuzhngkx/AACxEQOBWatvJevAYXPYJfRJa/Advisory%20groups%20-%20Groupe%20consultatif/Digital%20engagement%20tool%20-%20Outil%20de%20mobilisation%20num%C3%A9rique?amp%3Bpreview=PCYO+Subcommittee+Feedback+-+YouthVoiceON+(2017-07-20).docx&dl=0&preview=PCYO+Subcommittee+Feedback+-+YouthVoiceON+(2017-07-20).docx [last accessed 10 February 2018].

95 The PCYO 2015-2016 listening tours heard from some 400 youth across ten areas of the province: the Greater Toronto Area (East and West), Hamilton, Windsor, Sudbury, Chatham-Kent, Centre Wellington, North Wellington/ Mapleton Township, Uxbridge, and Amherstview. See, http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/oyap/PCYO-blog.aspx [last accessed 10 February 2018]

96 See, *PCYO Listening Tour / Open Government Workshop – Key Themes Summary, Action Items and Follow-Up Questions 02-02-2017* https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d6p4z87fuzhngkx/AACxEQOBWatvJevAYXPYJfRJa/Advisory%20groups%20-%20Groupe%20consultatif/Digital%20engagement%20tool%20-%20Outil%20de%20mobilisation%20num%C3%A9rique?amp%3Bpreview=PCYO+Subcommittee+Feedback+-+YouthVoiceON+(2017-07-20).docx&dl=0&preview=PCYO+Listening+Tour+-+Open+Government+Workshop+Key+Themes+(2017-02-22).docx [last accessed 10 February 2018]

97 A breakdown of the project plan for Commitment 1 is available at: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d6p4z87fuzhngkx/AABFkd_o8p_1Cup0kUuOBnUCa/Project%20Plans%20-%20Plans%20des%20projets/Youth%20Engagement%20-%20Participation%20des%20jeunes?dl=0&preview=Youth+Engagement+Project+Plan.docx [last accessed 10 February 2018]

98 See, https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ms9hij0zzy8o7kv/AADtTwrBJJHZMSdKUmiiaZ6_a/Digital%20engagement%20tool%20-%20Outil%20de%20mobilisation%20num%C3%A9rique?dl=0 [last accessed 10 February 2018]. Note: Agendas and summary notes of the PCYO meetings are not publicly available.

99 See, *PCYO Subcommittee on YouthVoiceON (YVO) Summary Notes, Teleconference Meeting July 19, 2017.* https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ms9hij0zzy8o7kv/AADtTwrBJJHZMSdKUmiiaZ6_a/Digital%20engagement%20tool%20-%20Outil%20de%20mobilisation%20num%C3%A9rique?dl=0&preview=PCYO+Subcommittee+Feedback+-+YouthVoiceON+(2017-07-20).docx [last accessed 10 February 2018]

100 Agenda's, minutes, and other salient information about these meetings and workshops is not publicly available. Nor was any such information provided to the IRM researcher

101 See, *Open Government Partnership: progress update* https://www.ontario.ca/page/open-government-partnership-progress-update#section-7 [last accessed 10 February 2018]

102 Agendas, minutes, and other salient information about the Listening Tour stops are not publicly available. There is, however, summary document available online. See, *PCYO Listening Tour / Open Government Workshop – Key Themes Summary, Action Items and Follow-Up Questions.* https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d6p4z87fuzhngkx/AACxEQOBWatvJevAYXPYJfRJa/Advisory%20groups%20-%20Groupe%20consultatif/Digital%20engagement%20tool%20-%20Outil%20de%20mobilisation%20num%C3%A9rique?amp%3Bpreview=PCYO+Subcommittee+Feedback+-+YouthVoiceON+(2017-07-20).docx&dl=0&preview=PCYO+Listening+Tour+-

+Open+Government+Workshop+Key+Themes+(2017-02-22).docx [last accessed 10 February 2018].

[103] See also, *Ontario Creating More Opportunities for Youth to Shape Policy*, https://news.ontario.ca/mcys/en/2017/10/ontario-creating-more-opportunities-for-youth-to-shape-policy.html [last accessed 10 February 2018].

[104] Visitors to the http://www.youthvoiceontario.ca website are asked three questions: *What motivates you to take action on climate change? How are you fighting climate change in your home, school or community? How can we encourage young people in Ontario to help lead the fight against climate change?* Users have the option of submitting responses via the platform or joining a twitter-based conversation about these issues.

[105] See, http://rowanslaw.ca/ [last accessed 10 February 2018].

[106] See, Open Government Partnership – Project Plan, https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d6p4z87fuzhngkx/AABFkd_o8p_1Cup0kUuOBnUCa/Project%20Plans%20-%20Plans%20des%20projets/Youth%20Engagement%20-%20Participation%20des%20jeunes?amp%3Bpreview=Youth+Engagement+Project+Plan.docx&dl=0&preview=Youth+Engagement+Project+Plan.docx [last accessed 10 February 2018].

[107] See, *PCYO Subcommittee on YouthVoiceON (YVO) Summary Notes, Teleconference Meeting July 19, 2017.* https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ms9hij0zzy8o7kv/AADtTwrBJJHZMSdKUmiiaZ6_a/Digital%20engagement%20tool%20-%20Outil%20de%20mobilisation%20num%C3%A9rique?dl=0&preview=PCYO+Subcommittee+Feedback+-+YouthVoiceON+(2017-07-20).docx [last accessed 10 February 2018]

3. Further embed open government principles in the day-to-day work of the Ontario Public Service through the development of a new guide and training.

Commitment Text

Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed: Staff has differing levels of understanding and capacity to embed open government principles (regarding data, info and public engagement) in their daily tasks.

Main objective: To create an Open Government literate with common principles embedded into daily responsibilities that promote accountability, transparency and public participation.

Brief description of commitment: As open government increases in prominence it will change the way that public-sector employees engage with their responsibilities.

Ambition: Develop an Open Government guide and training in collaboration with other levels of government that offers clear and tangible ways for public servants to align their daily work with the principles of open government.

Milestones

1. Develop (draft) guide with input from government ministries and agencies.
2. Establish a community of practice
3. Undertake pilots
4. Training of Trainers

Commitment Overview

Status of Completion	Complete
Start Date	Not specified in the action plan
Intended Completion Date	Not specified in the action plan
Responsible Office	Kelly Villeneuve, Manager, Outreach and Organizational Change, Treasury Board Secretariat
Did It Open Government?	Major

Is it a STAR commitment?	No
Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria: - It must be specific enough that a judgment can be made about its potential impact. Starred commitments will have "medium" or "high" specificity. - The commitment's language should make clear its relevance to opening government. Specifically, it must relate to at least one of the OGP values of Access to Information, Civic Participation, or Public Accountability. - The commitment would have a "transformative" potential impact if completely implemented. - Finally, the commitment must see significant progress during the action plan implementation period, receiving an assessment of "substantial" or "complete" implementation.	

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Tech. and Innov. for Transparency and Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Complete	Worsens	No Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
Overall		✓			Unclear Relevance					✓						✓				✓	
3.1 Develop (draft) guide.		✓								✓						✓					
3.2 Establish a community of practice.		✓								✓						✓					
3.3 Undertake pilots.		✓								✓						✓					
3.4 Training of Trainers.		✓								✓						✓					

Commitment Aim

Overall Objective & Relevance

Commitment 3 targets a challenge identified during the Open Government Engagement Team's 2013/2014 consultations that informed the province's Open Data Directive. Specifically, the recognition that successfully

implementing Open Government in Ontario will be contingent upon a culture shift and 'leap of faith' among its politicians and public servants. Common issues raised by the approximately 100 Ontario Public Service staff whom participated in these discussions included: [108]

- recognition that Open Government constitutes a dramatic change in how government conducts its affairs, and engages with the public
- the need for sustained, enterprise-wide commitment to successfully implement Open Government; and
- successfully shifting public servant culture would require: *"building staff capacity in the areas of dialogue, information and data; trusting in staff to be more open and responsive to the public; and motivating or encouraging staff to embrace the principles of Open Government."*

It is these concerns that undergird Commitment 3's focus on addressing the differing levels of understanding of, and competencies for, operationalizing and embedding open government principles into the day-to-day work of Ontario's public servants and the stated objective of creating, "*an Open Government literate OPS with common principles embedded into daily responsibilities that promote accountability, transparency and public participation.*"

It is unclear how this commitment, as written, aligns with any of the four OGP values, considering it is principally an internal-facing administrative initiative. As identified in the action plan, the implementation of this commitment can potentially change the ways in which public servants engage with their responsibilities, embedding open government principles in their day-to-day work. While the commitment might help to foster a culture within the public service that is more conducive to open government, none of the milestones contain a public facing element that is vital to the notion of relevance as defined by the OGP.[109]

Specificity and Potential Impact

The commitment language is vague. For each milestone, the language used contains no measurable activity or deliverable. The IRM researcher could verify whether the guide was developed or if a training took place during the implementation period, however, the lack of specificity requires interpretation from the reader to identify how these activities are to be carried out, what their scope and reach will be, among other variables. Given this situation, the commitment is assessed as having low specificity.

Creating a guide and training for public servants clearly is a positive step toward facilitating a better understanding of how to operationalize open government across the Ontario Public Service. However, the low specificity of Commitment 3 and its associated milestones, combined with its divergence from the OGP's call for commitments to be SMART, precludes any substantive assessment of its potential impact. The transformative potential of successfully shifting public servant culture through training notwithstanding, Commitment 3, as written in *Ontario's Open Government Partnership Action Plan,* is assessed as having minor potential impact.

Status
Complete

The aim of further embedding open government principles into the day-to-to operations of the Ontario Public Service by developing and implementing new and coordinated training continued apace throughout the duration of the twelve-month subnational pilot program.[110] Support for this internal training-oriented approach to implementing open government was virtually unanimous among the government and civil society representatives with whom the IRM researcher spoke throughout the assessment exercise. For

instance, when asked which of Ontario's three commitments was the most important, the response almost always was, "one *and* three" precisely because these two commitments are widely seen as directly linked to successfully delivering open government over the long-term.[111] The stated focus of Commitment 3 for 2017 was twofold. First, to build a foundation that supports the longer-term objective of creating an open government literate Ontario Public Service "*with common principles embedded into daily responsibilities that promote accountability, transparency and participation*."[112] Second, to support the realization of three longer-term outcomes: improved design and delivery of public polices and services; having Ontario become a global leader in open government training for staff; and establishing a proactive and dynamic culture "*supporting public sector innovation and collaboration with partners.*"[113] These objectives were to be operationalized by "*develop[ing] an OG learning framework that maps out a phased strategy to develop OG skills across the OPS*" and to "*Identify and prioritize foundational learning tools and resources that start to build capacity across open data, open dialogue, open information.*"[114] None of the milestones is directly linked to a measurable practice per se, focusing instead on the provision of organizational infrastructure to facilitate and sustain open government practices. The individual milestones accompanying Commitment are highly instrumental in nature and have all been largely completed.

Milestone 3.1. Develop (draft) guide with input from government ministries and agencies.

The inaugural meeting of the advisory committee for Commitment 3, in March 2017, focused on how to move forward with open government training of Ontario Public service staff in the light of Ontario's OGP Action Plan. Some of the key inputs put forward by members of the committee included: liaising with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat about its open government training resources; for OGO to identify its existing tools and resources as well as those of the Privacy Commissioner of Ontario; recognize that different open government skills required across government; and that any curriculum would need to transcend the Ontario government's existing pillars (Data, Dialogue, Information) through a user-centric approach. By the meeting's end, it was decided that the OGO team would move to create key principles and a first draft of a learning framework in accord with this feedback.[115] At the May 2017 meeting of the advisory committee, members were presented with a draft learning framework that was based on four principles (i.e., timely; relevant; feasible; and user-centric) and three learning components (i.e., tools and resources; community of practice/building champions; and interactive learning), and which extends to 2020.[116] Support for the framework was unanimous. The broad outline of the OGO's draft Open Government Guide was presented at the July meeting of the advisory committee, along with the parameters of a conversation kit to facilitate the delivery of open government sessions by open government leads. Plans for proceeding with pilot training programs involving two as of yet to be selected Ministries also were set out.[117] The Committee members provided substantive feedback about each of these items. The November meeting provided an opportunity for the committee members to be updated and provide feedback on the latter initiatives and for the IRM researcher to speak with members about their committee experience and their views regarding next steps. The draft open government guide was completed in late 2017. It cannot be accessed by members of the public but is available to all Ministry staff via the Ontario Public Service intranet.[118]

Milestone 3.2 Establish a community of practice

This milestone involved a number of activities throughout 2017 aimed at establishing a community of practice by developing and strengthening relationships with interested parties. The formation of the Open Government Advisory Committees was one aspect of this milestone. Although this commitment, as written in the Action Plan, was deemed not relevant to civic participation, its implementation included the expansion of the government's relations with external stakeholders. The OGO actively worked to expand its relationships with government Ministries,[119] government agencies,[120] and external stakeholders. In terms of

the latter, the OGO was involved in no less than 15 events with a range of interested actors spanning civil society, education, government and private sectors. [121] As previously mentioned, there were five OpenON Forums focusing on various open government related topics. These online forums showcased examples of open government at work to the open government community and the broader public. They were advertised via social media for a few weeks prior to taking place, and provided opportunities for individuals to learn about, and get involved with, Ontario's open government initiatives. In June 2017, the OGO hosted an Open Government Pop up event targeting government stakeholders and ministry staff. The objective of this activity was threefold: (i) to assist Ministries formulating open government plans; (ii) to foster opportunities of Ministries to learn about, and collaborate on, joint-initiatives; and (iii) broaden awareness of Open Government among Ontario Public Service staff.[122] In September, the OGO led an interactive workshop that brought together executive and staff leads working to implement open government.[123] Based on cross-cutting themes gathered from submitted Ministry Plans, the workshop was structured into five working groups (Data Sharing, Data Prioritization, Engagement, Culture Change and Open Licence), with the participants bringing questions, experiences, and challenges to be resolved. After the workshop those who had participated in the Engagement session were invited to join[124] a slack channel to carry on the discussion with members of the Civic Tech Toronto community.[125] Throughout the autumn, the OGO furthered its relationship with the Civic Tech Toronto community with a series of meetings as well as face-to-face and slack channel-based conversations aimed at refreshing its Public Engagement Framework.[126] For example, a November 7 session with Civic Tech Toronto focused on ways of improving the government's engagement and dialogue with the public.[127] Later in the month, members of the OGO delivered a Breakout Session at the Brookfield Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship[128] focusing on how to apply public engagement strategies in the policy process.[129] Taken together the activities pursued in working to actualize milestone 3.2 combined opportunities for building a community of practice and for members of the OGO and other government representatives to learn and share.

3. Undertake pilots
Milestone 3.3 centered on conducting pilot sessions to test the open government training materials. In October pilot training sessions were conducted with staff from the Ministries of Citizenship and Immigration, Status of Women, Seniors Affairs, and International Trade. Updates on these sessions were provided to members of the Commitment 3 advisory committee at its November 7 meeting. Training schedules with staff from four other Ministries was scheduled for early 2018. At the time of writing there is no publicly available information about these sessions, nor information about the participants' perspectives about the sessions.

Milestone 3.4. *Training of Trainers*

This milestone dealt with developing training materials to assist staff leads on conducting training events. In September, one training session took place with representatives from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport. One month later, in October, sessions for conducted with participants from the Ministries of Citizenship and Immigration, International Trade, Seniors Affairs, and Status of Women. The materials used for these sessions is only available via the Ontario Public Service intranet site. Updates on these sessions were provided to members of the Commitment 3 advisory committee at its November 7 meeting. As with the pilots, there is no publicly available information about these sessions, nor information about the participants' perspectives regarding the sessions.

Early results: did it open government?

Access to information: Major
Civic Participation: Major

Openness training for members of the Ontario Public Service has been ongoing since 2015, preceding Ontario's participation in the OGP subnational pilot program. Commitment 3 marked an updating and continuation of this experience, focusing on changing the day-to-day operating culture of the Ontario Public Service and operationalizing principles of the International Open Data Charter. The aim of this commitment focuses on putting the foundations in place to create an open government literate public service. Central to this task in the short term is the development of an open government training guide that public servants can use in their daily work. Given its vague language and lack of a public facing element, Commitment 3 was initially deemed – in accord with the definitions set out in *IRM Procedures Manual* – as not relevant to OGP values. It was nonetheless assessed as having minor potential impact on open government insofar as creating a guide and providing training for public servants was seen by civil society and government representatives as an important step in operationalizing the implementation of open government across the Ontario Public Service. This said, the activities associated with the implementation of Commitment 3 have led to an opening of government in the areas of civic participation and in access to information. Early results suggest these activities are making a major contribution to opening government in Ontario

Although this commitment, as written in the Action Plan, was not considered to be aligned with OGP values because of its internal focus, the actualization of the Commitment 3 milestones did contribute to opening government in Ontario. The milestones are oriented toward facilitating and enhancing the disclosure and quality of government information, creating improved opportunities and capabilities for members of the public to inform decisions, and to improve opportunities to hold offices answerable for their actions. Training was developed and implemented in accord with a learning framework that was vetted and approved by civil society advisory committee members as well as their provincial and federal and government counterparts. At present, the training sessions are conducted in person and via the WebEx platform, and are assessed via post-training participant surveys. Unfortunately, no results about the pilot and the 'train the trainer' sessions were made available to the IRM researcher. It is too soon to assess whether or how the open government training members of the Ontario Public Service receive is altering their working practices. At the time of writing, the OGO is working, as part of the OPS Internal Audit and a review of the OGO's performance measurement framework, on developing a metric for assessing measurable changes in OPS employee behaviour resulting from the training it has offered. This said, the IRM researcher's discussions with members of the Ontario Public Service and civil society interests were filled with anecdotal examples supporting the notion that the OGO's activities are contributing to change that is opening government.

A new guidebook is serving as a basis for training Ontario Public Service staff about open government principles, clear progress has been made in seeking to establish a community of practice that includes internal and external actors, pilot training of ministerial staff is ongoing, and staff leads are receiving training about how to conduct additional traditional training sessions. The focus here is on ensuring the requisite knowledge infrastructure for successfully delivering open government is in place. This is an obvious and necessary compliment to facilitating the ability of citizens to access government information.

Another noteworthy aspect of this commitment is the extent to which it has fostered external outreach and engagement with the open government community. To date, the bulk of this engagement has been concentrated in the Greater Toronto metropolitan area and its immediate surroundings. In going forward, it will be beneficial to expand the reach of engagement activities further afield across the province. In the light of the institutional and subnational context within which Ontario's OGP Action Plan has been implemented,

the IRM researcher maintains that the ongoing efforts to transform the day-to-day culture of the Ontario Public Service through training marks a crucial on-going component for openness, that remains, at this time, limited in scope or scale largely because it still too soon to adequately assess the full implications of the outcomes discussed above. In accord with the definitions set out in the *IRM Procedures Manual,* and despite the seeming incongruence between OGP values and this Commitment as articulated in the Ontario's Action Plan, the completion of Commitment 3 is deemed to have made a major contribution toward opening government in the province.

Recommendations

It will be crucial in moving forward to implement ongoing monitoring and evaluation practices to assess the effectiveness of the OGO's training activities and, specifically, their outcomes. Coinciding with this, is the need to implement more effective record keeping, cataloguing, and information access practices. At present, the public mainly has access to summary accountants of OGP-related government activities, and only very limited access to incomplete documentation and evidence sources upon which the summary accountants are based.

If Commitment 3 is to remain in a future action plan, it is recommended that there be clear goals specifying the types of activities that are meant to be realized and what they are meant to accomplish. This specificity currently is lacking. The government of Ontario and the OGP are also urged to continue working together to ensure alignment between the types of initiatives implemented and the performance metrics through which they are assessed.

A final recommendation for moving forward regards catalysing citizen engagement. The OGO has made commendable efforts with a limited budget via-à-vis public outreach. Further work needs to be continued on developing strategies for transforming the implementation of open government from a supply-driven to demand-driven phenomenon. It is recommended that future action plans include a commitment focused on increasing levels of public engagement from across the province, including the implementation of a formal communication campaign extending beyond heavy reliance on social media tools.

---

[108] See, *Open by Default – A new way forward for Ontario*, https://www.ontario.ca/page/open-default-new-way-forward-ontario - section-9 [last accessed 17 September 2017].

[109] See, Open Government Partnership, 2016. *IRM Procedures Manual.* https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/IRM-Procedures-Manual-v4_Sept2017.docx [last accessed 17 September 2017].

[110] The open government training project plan is available at: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d6p4z87fuzhngkx/AAA6IAEByWYYEHOIqGCQjLvKa/Project%20Plans%20-%20Plans%20des%20projets/OPS%20Training%20Program%20-%20Programme%20de%20formation%20de%20la%20FPO?amp%3Bpreview=OPS+Training+Program+project+plan.docx&dl=0&preview=OP [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[111] By contrast, the importance attached to Commitment 2 was anchored in the observation that it is a shorter-term open government deliverable with the potential to directly benefit youth and to provide a technological civil engagement infrastructure that can also be easily be adapted to extend beyond youth.

[112] See, *Open Government Partnership: Create an open government training program for staff across the Ontario Public Service* https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ms9hij0zzy8o7kv/AADcSFbmgYfRzazY_FH_L7nta/Training%20Program%20-%20Programme%20de%20formation/March%208%20-%20%20Mars?dl=0&preview=OG+Training+Program+Deck.pptx [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[113] Ibid.,

[114] Ibid.,

[115] For minutes of the meeting see, https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ms9hij0zzy8o7kv/AADcSFbmgYfRzazY_FH_L7nta/Training%20Program%20-%20Programme%20de%20formation/March%208%20-%208%20Mars?dl=0 [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[116] See, *DRAFT Open Government Learning Framework for the Ontario Public Service*, https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ms9hij0zzy8o7kv/AACP9x1SARUsfzBMxwQY_kFda/Training%20Program%20-%20Programme%20de%20formation/May%2010%20-%2010%20mai?dl=0&preview=Learning+Framework.docx [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[117] See, *Open Government Partnership: Advisory Committee Meeting, Open Government Training Program for OPS Staff* https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ms9hij0zzy8o7kv/AABJTRsLVmWGhlDJMMKA9JS9a/Training%20Program%20-%20Programme%20de%20formation/July%2012-%20%2012%20juillet?dl=0&preview=Advisory+Committee+Meeting+July+12.pptx [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[118] The researcher was provided with access to not yet publicly available 2017 Guide via googledocs. See, *Draft_OG_Resource Guide_Clean.docx* https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1jcEkIX327hQVC7hfnGpOkKEbQor1KS6r [last accessed 10 February 2018]. Access to the Open Information training deck also available on the OPS Intranet site but is password protected.

[119] The received requests for support on consultations and public engagement strategies from some 18 Ministries. See, https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16fkieCEbrKfkM8NHfGupRUQVms5IQkjt [last accessed 10 February 2018].

[120] The OGO posted materials and shared information via the governments Agency intranet http://www.agnes.gov.on.ca. Note: This site is password protected. The IRM researcher was not able to access its contents

[121] A list of 2017 stakeholder engagements is available at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u7WVv-B1bdpStSbKM_quOyv0swvJUnP7u0Q2yX6uYOg/edit [last accessed 10 February 2018].

[122] The invitation is available at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1iMsOMocNYFQcNlHToVzEc6GI0Src0lSxZjKAzl8sdyM/edit [last accessed 10 February 2018]. Shortly after the event, a short report https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1OfAXOxzbdtJbs0QLG7-RyyCpY1ewf7Qw [last accessed 10 February 2018] and a blog post < https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BMxWv_3S_iDefP-1OrrexJ3H-5Smi630kdKNeX3sDnE/edit> [last accessed 10 February 2018] were posted to the Ontario Public Service intranet site.

[123] The workshop invitation email is available at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1v3dfkSwNlC7fnhoMY54hzdeh8wf3AczVuPuKoXlnQi4/edit [last accessed 10 February 2018],

[124] A copy of the follow-up email is available at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Lsmu9iY_Eo6jZcx54LSNrx5ppi-cRSGZfDwe1SB1qcCA/edit [last accessed 10 February 2018]. Materials from the engagement working group are available at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1y-LOXZA0PLuiFMa_pIFOfv56AxxWQgZc [last accessed 10 February 2018].

[125] See, http://civictech.ca/

[126] See the email message sent to Toronto Civic Tech and OPS staff: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1R39j9L7ixECmwxgVtR6-Ln86uaoXenVzsOpvlECi7L8/edit [last accessed 10 February 2018].

[127] See, Civic Tech Public Engagement Session 2 November 7th 2017 https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18QrQKPINFhHT30-nYhdO-jh1cNrtQtq8 [last accessed 10 February 2018]

[128] See, http://brookfieldinstitute.ca/

[129] The materials provided to the participants are available at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1R0ZB7v6K88BW6mZFxrjWIO2VoadvsZ1J [last accessed 10 February 2018]. After the session participants were invited to join a slack channel to carry forward the dialogue about public engagement. See, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rpraMWs-3kVDWWbTvIdF6IjKciOK8cKyYkR0S48HUlU/edit [last accessed 10 February 2018].

Method and Sources

The IRM report is written by well-respected governance researchers. All IRM reports undergo a process of quality control to ensure the highest standards of research and due diligence have been applied.

Analysis of progress on OGP action plans is a combination of interviews, desk research, and feedback from nongovernmental stakeholder meetings. The IRM report builds on assessments of progress put out by civil society, the government, the private sector, or international organizations.

The first and primary objective of the IRM is to verify completion of action plan commitments and the level of participation. Beyond this, the IRM seeks to assess potential impact and early changes in behavior around open government. There are two intended outcomes: accountability and learning. The method follows these aims. A second, important function of the IRM is to act as a "listening post" for the concerns of civil society.

Each report undergoes a 4-step review and quality control process:

- Staff review: IRM staff reviews the report for grammar, readability, content, and adherence to IRM methodology
- International Experts Panel (IEP) review: IEP reviews the content of the report for rigorous evidence to support findings, evaluates the extent to which the action plan applies OGP values, and provides technical recommendations for improving the implementation of commitments and realization of OGP values through the action plan as a whole
- Pre-publication review: Government and select civil society organizations (at the discretion of the researcher) are invited to provide comments on content of the draft IRM report
- Public comment period: The public is invited to provide comments on the content of the draft IRM report.

Interviews and Focus Groups

Each IRM researcher is required to hold at least one public information-gathering event. Care should be taken in inviting stakeholders outside of the "usual suspects" list of invitees already participating in existing processes. Supplementary means may be needed to gather the inputs of stakeholders in a more meaningful way (e.g. online surveys, written responses, follow-up interviews). Additionally, researchers perform specific interviews with responsible agencies when the commitments require more information than provided in the self-assessment or accessible online. If IRM researchers wish to substitute a stakeholder meeting with another format, they should communicate this to IRM staff.

Citing the Ontario Government's Privacy Statement <https://www.ontario.ca/page/privacy-statement> and the privacy legislation to which the Ontario government is bound, throughout most the assessment period the OGO was unable to share with the IRM researcher the names and contact details of organizational representatives who participated in the consultation and implementation processes. It was not until late October 2017 that the IRM researcher was informed who the members of the advisory committees for commitments 1 and 3 were (the latter information was not made publicly available until early January 2018). In early November, he was able to attend the final meeting of each of these committees and to ask the committee members questions. It was also during this period that he was able to identify and engage with other interested parties when he was the main speaker an OpenON Forum event focusing on the OGPs Independent Report Mechanism. The work of the IRM is an essential component of the Ontario governments' participation in OGP. In moving forward, the OGO will need to work closely with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario and the OGP to develop an approach for handling

IRM assessments that operates within the boundaries of existing provincial privacy legislation while minimizing impediments to the effective monitoring and evaluation of the OGO's OGP-related activities.

The IRM researcher conducted 10 individual interviews with government officials and civil society representatives, and three group interviews consisting of: 10 members of the Commitment 1 advisory committee; 11 members of the Commitment 3 advisory committee; and 39 individuals who participated in an IRM-focused online OpenON Forum on November 7, 2017.

1. List of Individual Interviews and meetings

- Nosa Ero-Brown, Nosa Ero-Brown, Director, Open Government Office, Treasury Board Secretariat. Multiple meetings, discussions and email exchanges throughout 2017 and early 2018.
- Kelly Villeneuve, Manager, Organizational Change and Outreach, Open Government Office, Treasury Board Secretariat. Multiple meetings, discussions and email exchanges throughout 2017 and early 2018.
- Merlin Chatwin, Senior Policy Analyst, Open Government Office, Treasury Board Secretariat. Multiple meetings, discussions and email exchanges throughout 2017 and early 2018.
- Rob Davidson, Open Data Institute (CSO). Multiple meetings, discussions and email exchanges throughout 2017 and 2018.
- Don Lenihan, Canada 2020 (CSO). Multiple meetings, discussions and email exchanges throughout 2017
- Sean Twyford, Director, Youth Strategies Branch, Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Multiple meetings, discussions and email exchanges throughout 2017 and early 2018
- Tsz-Lung Cheung, Acting Manager, Youth Initiatives and Engagement Unit, Youth Strategies Branch, Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Multiple meetings, discussions and email exchanges throughout 2017 and early 2018.
- Anonymous civil society representative #1 identified via participation in OpenON Forum. January 12, 2018 via telephone
- Anonymous civil society representative #2 identified via participation in OpenON Forum. January 12, 2018 via telephone
- Anonymous civil society representative #3 identified via participation in OpenON Forum. January 22, 2018 via telephone

1. List of Group interviews

Commitment 1 Advisory Committee, November 7, 2017, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

- Nosa Ero-Brown, Nosa Ero-Brown, Director, Open Government Office, Treasury Board Secretariat

- Paul Vet, Senior Policy Advisor, Policy and Partnerships, Treasury Board Secretariat

- Cara Dowden, Data Analyst, Policy and Partnerships, Treasury Board Secretariat

- Christine Hagyard, Manager, Policy and Partnerships, Treasury Board Secretariat

- Catherine Bickram, Senior Advisor, I&IT Portfolio, Information Coordination Section, Natural Resources and Forestry

- Sebastian Prins, Issues Manager & Policy Advisor, President of the Treasury Board, Treasury Board Secretariat

- Denis Carr, Open Data Supervisor, City of Toronto

- Jean-Noé Landry, Executive Director, Open North (CSO)
- Ryan Doherty, President, iamsick.ca (CSO)
- Tracey Lauriault, Carleton University (Academia)

Commitment 3 Advisory Committee, November 7, 2017, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

- Rob Davidson, Open Data Institute (CSO)
- Don Lenihan, Canada 2020 (CSO)
- Kowsy Bala, Planning & Projects Coordinator, Corporate Planning and Projects Unit, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)
- Amelia Quintanilla, Senior Project Advisor (Acting), OPS of the Future team, Treasury Board Secretariat
- Kelly Villeneuve, Manager, Organizational Change and Outreach, Open Government Office, Treasury Board Secretariat
- Merlin Chatwin, Senior Policy Analyst, Open Government Office, Treasury Board Secretariat
- Paige Roberts, Advisor Organization Change & Outreach, Open Government Office, Treasury Board Secretariat
- Rosshane Vignarajah, Advisor Organization Change & Outreach, Open Government Office, Treasury Board Secretariat
- Skye Collishaw, Advisor Organization Change & Outreach, Open Government Office, Treasury Board Secretariat
- Diana Dalfino, Senior Organizational Change and Outreach Advisor, Open Government Office, Treasury Board Secretariat
- Sarah MacLeod, Senior Project Officer, Service and Open Government, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Government of Canada

OpenON Forum, *The OGP Independent Review,* November 7, 2017, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Venue: Online

Synopisis: This was an online forum that provided participants with an update about progress on Ontario's OGP Action, and information about the OGP and the Independent Reporting Mechanism. The 39 participants had the opportunity to interact directly with the IRM researcher and to provide feedback about the co-creation and civic participation during the development of implementation of the commitments. The discussion was centered around four questions:

1. Which commitment is most important and why?
2. Did you or your organization play any role in monitoring the development or implementation of the Action Plan? Did you or your organization have sufficient opportunities to comment and participate?
3. Which themes or areas would you like to see in Ontario's next Action Plan that are not addressed in the current plan? What policies and policy areas should be prioritized?
4. Do you have suggestions for moving forward? Ways to improve the plan?

A copy of the powerpoint presentation that accompanied the forum discussion is available at: https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1RcjcywnxLrg69ZMMGT6Y64WAF_vk4Zi5