OPEN GOVERNMENT STRATEGY

Alberta

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open government strategy

executive summary

In 2017 the amount of global data produced by mobile devices each month is forecast to be over 11 million terabytes. Put in context, this amount of data could store the genetic code of 11 billion people! This incredible amount of information is a result of our increasing ability to communicate, share and create content which in turn is changing relationships between citizens, businesses and governments across the world.

To the Government of Alberta these changes are manifested by the expectation of the Alberta public for greater access to information and for greater efficiency in responding to their needs. These changes mean that the government must evolve the way it communicates with Albertans while making better use of the information it already has. Although meeting these expectations will be a challenge, successfully addressing them will result in better decision making and creating efficiencies that enable efficient governance while saving public money..

To realize the potential of a new era of government-citizen interaction Service Alberta has developed the Open Government Strategy. This strategy identifies three 'streams' of effort:

1. Creating the Open Data Portal to make government data easily and publicly available

2. Developing a virtual library to enhance access to government publications

3. Leading the creation of a new public engagement framework to modernize the way government and citizens communicate

These steps position the Government of Alberta to lead Canada in sharing and using information in innovative ways to respond to the needs of the public. This leadership is needed now because data has already changed the landscape in which citizens, governments and business interact. If we do not take meaningful steps to respond to this new reality we will not be prepared to respond to today's challenges.

introduction

The Open Government movement seeks to strengthen the partnerships and relationships between government and citizens, community organizations and stakeholders. Open Government is based on the principles of:

- information sharing,
- providing citizens the opportunities and tools to participate with their government in a way that fits their lifestyle, and
- engaging citizens to help them influence and improve government policies that impact them.

The Government of Alberta took these principles and developed an implementation plan using three streams of activity:

1. **Open Data**: releasing the raw data the government has in order to increase transparency and encourage innovative uses of data.
2. **Open Information**: a focus on making information routinely available and easy to find in order to encourage informed discussion.
3. **Open Engagement**: the process of bringing more, and better informed voiced into the discussions necessary to improve outcomes for Albertans.

Open Government is foundational to building a more citizen-focused public service. Improving citizen participation and making the resources of government available will spur innovation with the goal of improving the quality of life for Albertans.

A MORE MODERN AND RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT

The information and social media revolution is changing the relationship between citizens and governments across the world. Governments are no longer asking if they should be more transparent but how they should go about it. Collaboration with citizens, businesses and non-government organizations to enrich government information resources improves communication channels, promotes citizen engagement, instills trust in government, and fosters economic opportunities.

A major cultural change will require that the government, at both the political and public service levels, make information and data more available, facilitate greater public participation in government decision-making and improve the delivery of services to Albertans. This transformation is taking place at all levels of government. Alberta has been helping to drive the national agenda on initiatives like common licensing, standards and definitions.

vision

" **A public service openly engaged with the citizens of Alberta.** "

mission statement

To create a stronger, transparent relationship between the public service and citizens by providing access to government data and information, listening, and openly engaging with citizens while strengthening the collaborative culture within the Government of Alberta.

The Government of Alberta (GoA) is committed to transforming the way it works, with the purpose of becoming more transparent and accountable to the citizens of Alberta. It will do this by:

- leveraging data across Ministries to enable better decision making
- releasing more of the information it creates, collects, and manages,
- improving the daily interactions it has with Albertans, and
- encouraging and facilitating greater engagement of Albertans with their government.

Information is the greatest resource of the 21st century. Today, governments are creating and managing large and ever-growing amounts of information. There is tremendous potential to reduce costs, create enormous efficiencies and boost productivity both within and outside of government by opening up access to this wealth of information so that politicians, public servants and the general public can readily view, analyze, interpret and re-use it while continuing to protect privacy.

Our citizens and employees are comparing their experience working with, or working within government, against their online experience, and not against the province(s) next door. By engaging citizens differently and using information more intelligently, we can create services that are responsive and effective.
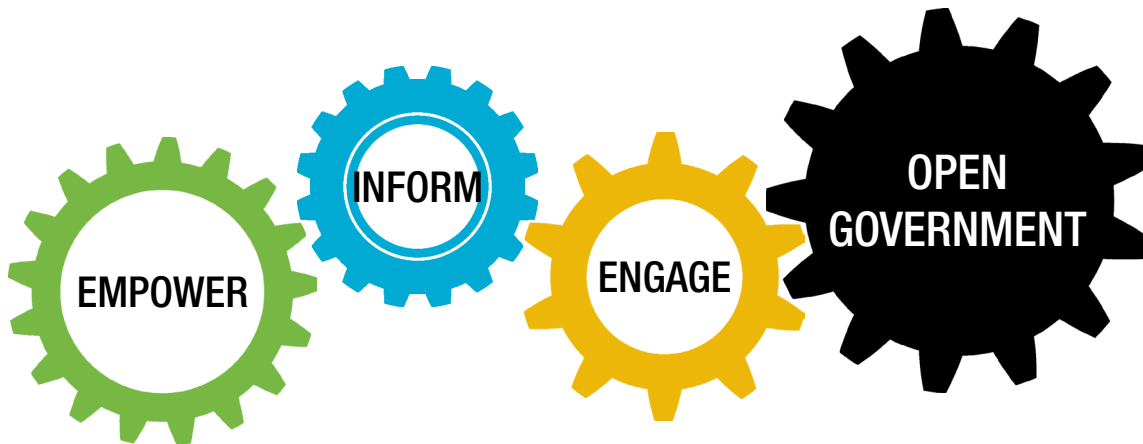

Open Government is about empowerment.

Open Government is about:

- creating a more collaborative culture within the public service,
- providing citizens with access to the storehouse of data and information the government creates,
- empowering citizens and businesses to use and re-use the data and information for their own purposes,
- enabling elected officials to have greater visibility into the institutions and ministries they oversee, and
- empowering public servants and citizens to more effectively work with one another.

drivers

Driver #1	A growing demand for **increased public access to government information** including insight into the **decision making** process.	Barriers exist to publishing information openly and routinely. The default behaviour is to classify information at the highest possible level instead of the lowest necessary increases challenges sharing across ministries and publication.
Driver #2	Increasing the **opportunities for citizen participation** in the policy development process.	Provide Albertans with a more active voice in the policy making process.
Driver #3	The need for greater coordination and **collaboration on consultation** within the public service.	Alleviate stakeholder fatigue by taking an enterprise approach; aligning engagement activities and actively sharing the results.
Driver #4	A wealth of new **digital opportunities transforming everyday life** for many citizens and companies.	Continued growth of information literacy is creating a greater demand for information available electronically. Along with this growth in demand comes a desire to interact with the information and provide feedback.
Driver #5	Need for **an engaged public service that is responsive** to the needs of the public.	Improved public participation in government allows the public service to harvest the ingenuity of external resources.

goals

1

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
- Increase civic participation by making consultation activities more valuable to Albertans by providing education and a consistent experience to build confidence in the decision making process.
- The public service working together with citizens to make government more responsive to meeting the evolving needs of Albertans.

2

COLLABORATION
- Coming together as one government to create a citizen-focused structure that best serves the needs of Albertans.
- Leverage data across the Ministries to improve execution and decision making.
- Encourage the innovative use of technology for a consistent, coordinated approach to enterprise collaboration with citizens and within the GoA.

3

AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION
- Increase the availability of information to Albertans by making it easier to find and releasing it on a routine basis.
- Educating citizens on the use and meaning of information to increase information literacy.
- Better reporting

4

ACCOUNTABILITY
- Foster accountability through transparency and meaningful communication.
- Increase the validity of decision-making in the public service by making the process more open and inclusive.

outcomes

Outcome #1
Increased Transparency

The Government of Alberta's data and information is **transparent and accessible** and Albertans have the tools necessary to engage.

Increased transparency within the government's information and processes will lead to citizens having more confidence with decisions made by the public service.

The ability of ministries within government to have increased visibility into their partner ministries will also increase opportunities to identify program overlap and develop efficiencies.

Providing Albertans with visualization and context of government data will increase understanding and awareness of government programs, measures and results.

Measures
Decreased Freedom of Information Requests.

Increases in the amount of information routinely disclosed.

An increase in cross-ministry and enterprise wide initiatives.

Outcome #2
Improved Engagement

The Government of Alberta has a **unified and consistent** approach to digital engagement with Albertans that improve government decision-making and actions.

Being more open in decision making will increase the legitimacy of decisions made by the public service and improve the engagement experience of citizens.

By improving the overall engagement process and educating citizens on how their input is used in making decision, citizens will be more likely to become engaged.

Measures
The number of citizens consulted on Initiatives.

Overall citizen satisfaction with engagement initiatives.

Outcome #3
Citizen-Centred Government

Designing policy and services f**ocused on the citizens** of Alberta will increase Albertan's satisfaction, not only with citizen services, but within the public service as well.

The Government of Alberta will ensure that venues for citizen feedback are incorporated in the services and information provided to Albertans. Internal government silos will be broken down and data shared to enable a Citizen-Centered view of services.

Measures
Citizen satisfaction with services.

Outcome #4
Better Decision Making

By leveraging internally and externally available data across ministries and harnessing its information we will achieve **better decision making**, enable real time service delivery, and promote innovation through a big data and analytics program

Open Data portals offer a central location to collect publicly available data as resources to support big data and analytics and therefore evidence based decision making.

Government wide decision and results are made more accessible and understandable to citizens by leveraging analytical reporting tools.

Measures
Ctizen understanding of government.

Citizen satisfaction with services.

Outcome #5
Increased Collaboration and Coordination

Initiatives to **increase collaboration** will help break down silos within the GoA and lead to the creation of better aligned programs and services.
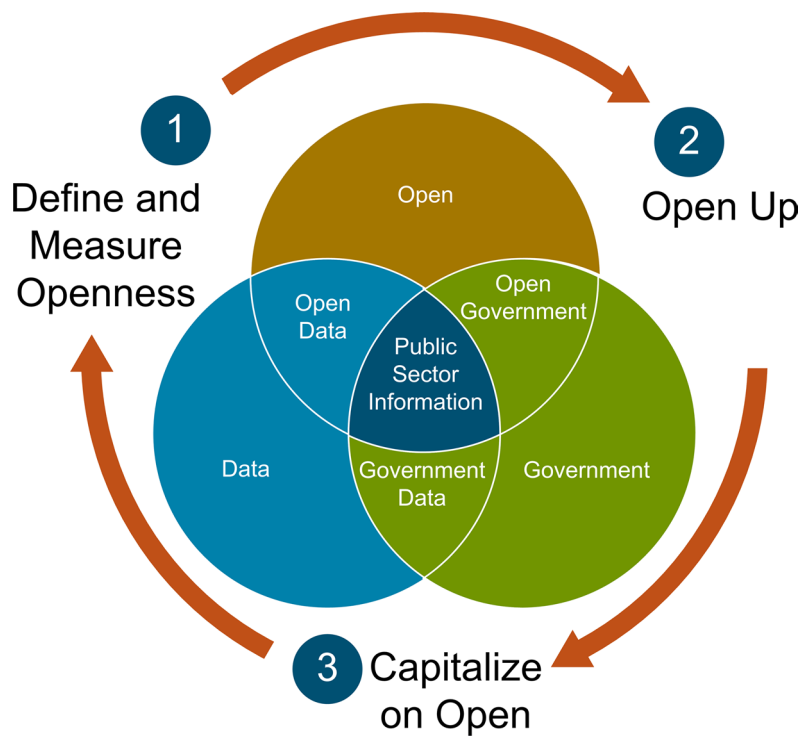
Coordination on initiatives will lead to increased citizen satisfaction and understanding and alleviate stakeholder fatigue.

Reduced costs and efficiencies will be realized by aligning services and apply evidence based decisions.

Measures
Citizen feedback.

Increased employee satisfaction and retention.

principles

OPEN BY DESIGN

- Increase accessibility of government information and data in a way that is responsive to citizens' needs and expectations.

- Embed a culture of being open by default within the Alberta Public Service.
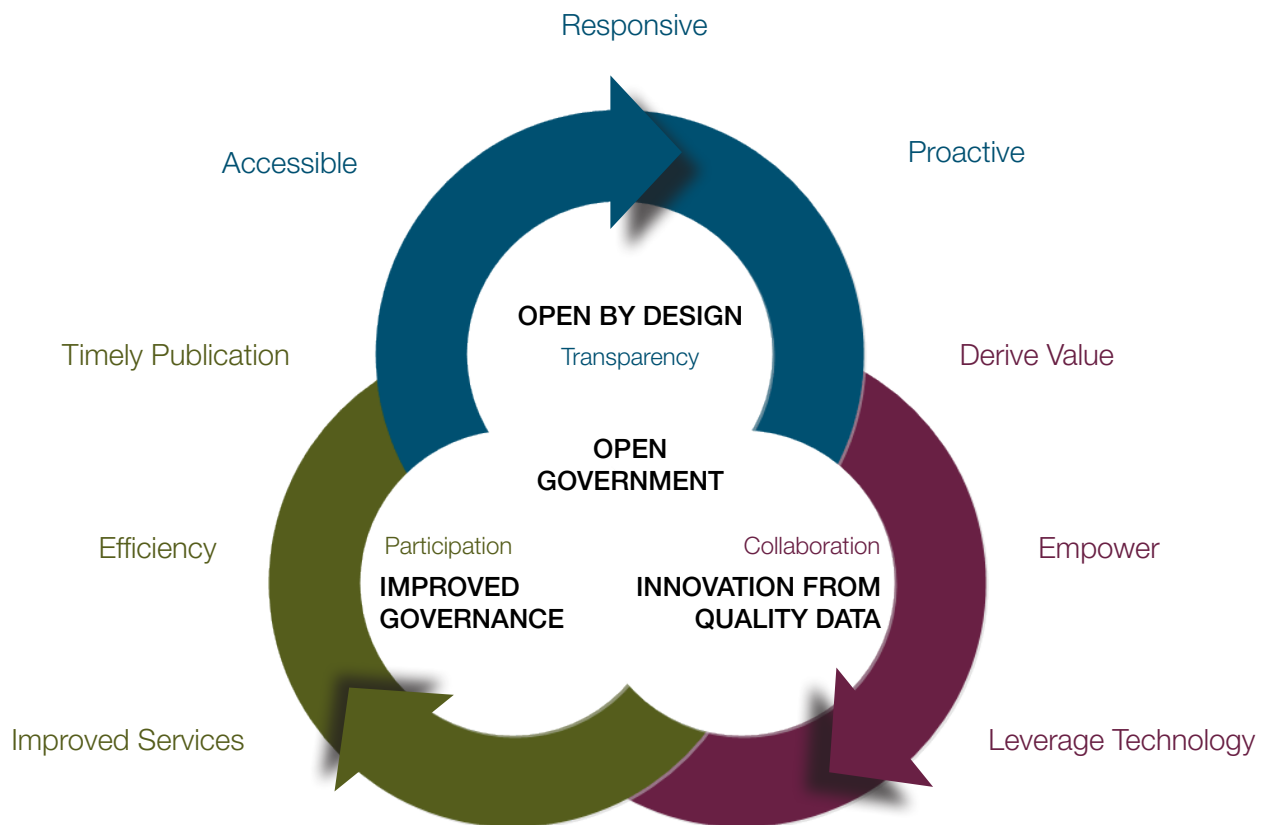
INNOVATION FROM QUALITY DATA

- Publish quality government information and data to empower citizens and businesses to derive value from government information.

- Leverage technology to enable efficient and timely access to quality information and data for an increasingly technologically enabled population.

IMPROVED GOVERNANCE

- Enable public participation in the development of government policy, programs and services through the timely publication of quality information and data.

- Utilize government data and information to identify opportunities to improve service delivery and efficiency in government.

Responsive

Accessible

Proactive

Timely Publication

OPEN BY DESIGN

Transparency

Derive Value

OPEN
GOVERNMENT

Efficiency

Participation

Collaboration

Empower

IMPROVED
GOVERNANCE

INNOVATION FROM
QUALITY DATA

Improved Services

Leverage Technology

activity streams

In order to implement the Open Government Strategy, three 'streams' of effort have been identified. These streams are based on international best practices as outlined by the Open Government Partnership, an international platform committed to making governments more open, accountable, and responsive to citizens. Canada joined the partnership in 2011 and is currently developing their second Action Plan for Open Government.

Within Canada, Alberta has been helping lead the change by pushing for the adoption of the Open Government Licence; the development of standards for information interoperability; and being the first province to formally adopt the principles of the Open Government Partnership.

OPEN DATA

During the current fiscal year the Open Data portal will be rebuilt in order to add functionality and increase usage of the data features available. Since the Open Data portal was launched, there have been numerous changes to citizen expectation for an open site. The new portal will be more sustainable and flexible in nature allowing for continued growth in functionality and number of data sets.

Using a federated approach, the program will develop a data inventory and create an initial plan for the publication of high value datasets to provide maximum value to the citizens of Alberta.

As a policy advisor, I have come to rely on the vast amount of data that is available in the Open Data repository. When investigating policy options, it allows me to see what is available already and provide insights on possible measures for new programs. The ease of contacting data owners also gives me quick access to expertise in the subject, speeding up the overall process of policy development.

OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS	MINISTRY ACCOUNTABILITIES
1. Create and maintain a public facing data repository to ensure that people have access to the information they need in a usable format. 2. Develop a government-wide data inventory in order to demonstrate what data is available and work with the citizens of Alberta to prioritize the release of data.	1. Ensure continuity in the proactive release and continued publication of datasets through annual planning. 2. Champion the sharing and publication of data for departmental, government and citizen use in standardized formats.

OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS (CONT.)	MINISTRY ACCOUNTABILITIES (CONT.)
3. Establish commitments to ensure that data continues to be released and updated on a regular basis. 4. Encourage the development of a community of practice to share experiences and practices not only within the GoA but throughout Alberta and beyond. 5. Develop and maintain the standards and processes for publishing Open Data in partnership with other provinces and the federal government and encourage the adoption of these standards by our municipalities and regions.	3. Communicate and encourage the policy of being open by default and ensure that staff know they have permission to share.

DRIVERS AND OUTCOMES

The Open Data activity stream directly responds to:

- **Driver 1.** Provide direct access to the data used to make decisions within the public service.
- **Driver 4.** Provide the data necessary for an information-literate citizenry to actively participate with the GoA.

It is a fundamental building block for achieving:

- **Outcome 1.** Provide the data necessary to create a more accountable and transparent government and validating the effectiveness
- **Outcome 2.** Provide the impetus for sharing across the public service and providing a mechanism for government agencies to demonstrate their adoption of the principles of openness.

OPEN INFORMATION

Develop a virtual library integrated with the Open Data Portal in order to provide a consistent and easy to use interface for citizens to find GoA information. The program will actively support the principles of access to information by ensuring information is published to acceptable standards according to established guidelines. Encourage the routine disclosure of information in electronic format, in consistent, easy to find locations.

> Open information has made my work as a research advisor easier and I am better able to create more holistic analysis of the subject I am working on. Having easy access to past and present research and publications from across government allows me to see what is being done and what has been tried before. This way I am able to leverage the work done in other ministries and create better solutions for Albertans.

OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS	MINISTRY ACCOUNTABILITIES
1. Develop the standards and processes to support the collection and publication of information by the GoA in conjunction with national and international initiatives. 2. Transition the GoA to a more centralized publishing paradigm allowing for an increased ease of access to information. 3. Create the governance structures necessary for a sustainable program.	1. Ensure continuity in the proactive release and publication of information by developing an annual plan for release. 2. Champion routine disclosure practices and ensure that staff knows they have permission to share. 3. Ensure compliance with information publication standards.

DRIVERS AND OUTCOMES

The Open Information activity stream is driven by:

- **Driver 1.** Give permission and make it easier to share government information with the citizens of Alberta.
- **Driver 2.** Provide the information necessary to allow citizens to actively engage in the decision making process.
- **Driver 4.** Make information available and encouraging the use of the information to drive innovative solutions.

It is a fundamental building block for achieving:

- **Outcome 1.** Increased availability of information to provide insight into, and accountability in, the decision making process.
- **Outcome 2.** Make the sharing of ideas and information across the GOA easier and more proactive.

OPEN ENGAGEMENT

Service Alberta is collaborating with the Public Affairs Bureau to lead the development of the framework necessary to create a consistent experience for citizens when engaging with the GoA. This work will provide more opportunities for citizen participation in the decision making process and work to actively promote more ongoing, routine engagement with the citizens of Alberta in order to improve service outcomes.

As a legislative advisor, I often have to get feedback on policy decisions. Open Engagement has made a huge improvement in my ability to provide excellent advice. I am now able to quickly get public feedback early in the process. This allows for identification of options I might not have considered and improves the acceptance of the decision after implementation because citizens can see that their voice was heard.

OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS	MINISTRY ACCOUNTABILITIES
1. Develop standards, tools and resources to support a new spirit of engagement and collaboration with the citizens of Alberta. 2. Develop the governance necessary to establish and meet the expectations of the citizens of Alberta on a sustainable basis. 3. Champion the adoption of the necessary tools and resources for use by the GoA in order to provide a superior consistent engagement experience for Albertans. 4. Work within the **Information Management Strategy** to collect information once and share it throughout the GoA.	1. Ensure that staff knows they have permission to actively engage with the citizens of Alberta. 2. Champion the policies and principles of active engagement. 3. Provide the resources necessary to provide meaningful engagement opportunities to the citizens of Alberta on a regular basis.

DRIVERS AND OUTCOMES

The Open Engagement activity stream is driven by:

- **Driver 3.** Ensure more collaboration and coordination across the public service when engaging citizens.
- **Driver 4.** Transform government to take advantage of the increased options for engagement available to Albertans.
- **Driver 5.** Make the public service more engaged with and responsive to the citizens of Alberta.

It is a fundamental building block for achieving:

- **Outcome 2.** Increase collaboration on engagement will set precedents and expectations on other initiatives going forward.
- **Outcome 3.** Meaningful engagement with citizens will increase confidence in the decisions of the government of Alberta.
- **Outcome 4.** Regular engagement with citizens will ensure citizen focus in the development and provision of public services.

conclusion

A key condition to the successful implementation of the Open Government Strategy is the education of elected officials, citizens and the public service in order to challenge the embedded culture. Open Government is not a panacea to solve all the challenges faced by modern governments. It does, however, lay the foundation for the cultural shift necessary to create a more transparent, responsive and innovative government accountable to the citizens of Alberta.

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