



Open

Newfoundland and Labrador

Open Government Initiative Framework

WHAT IS OPEN GOVERNMENT?

An open government is guided by the principles of transparency, accountability, participation and collaboration. Open governments recognize that true democracy involves working with citizens and stakeholders, not just for them. Open governments acknowledge and benefit from the input, knowledge and expertise that citizens can contribute to the operations and decision-making of government. Successful open governments use innovative activities, approaches and strategies to better connect citizens and stakeholders to their governments, which in turn lead to increased knowledge-sharing, innovation, collaboration and a more engaged and involved public to ultimately support and enable the development of better policies, decisions, programs and services. Open government is about increasing access to information and data and providing meaningful opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between government and the public.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR'S OPEN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

In March 2014, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador launched an Open Government Initiative. Through this initiative, Government has committed to listening to and involving citizens and stakeholders in new and innovative ways, as well as changing the way it does business. This includes a commitment to improve access to information and data; provide meaningful opportunities for dialogue with the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador; and to bring government, partners, organizations and communities together to achieve common goals through collaboration.

Newfoundland and Labrador's Open Government Initiative is a government-wide effort which requires action by all departments. As a first step, the Office of Public Engagement will implement a comprehensive engagement process, targeting the public, stakeholders and civil servants, to help develop this province's first Open Government Action Plan, which will be based on the ideas and priorities of the people of the province.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR'S OPEN GOVERNMENT FRAMEWORK

Newfoundland and Labrador's Open Government Initiative is built upon four pillars that will guide the advancement of open government across all departments and agencies. Each pillar outlines several goals and early actions that demonstrate our commitment to the principles of transparency, accountability, participation and collaboration. The four pillars are:

I. Open Information

Open information is a key component of open government. Our commitment to open information signals our belief that the citizens of our province have a right to access government information in a timely manner, through a variety of means and in formats that are user friendly.

Goals:

- 1. Make more information available to citizens.** We will increase the amount and types of information that is made available to the public.
- 2. Improve the organization of information available online.** We will offer a more user-friendly online platform that enables the public to easily locate information that is of interest to them.

- 3. Make information sought via access to information (ATIPP) requests easier to access.** We will improve the current process to make an ATIPP request simpler and more convenient.

Examples of early action items under this pillar include: an Open Information webpage which was developed and launched in March 2014; the development of a proactive disclosure policy for departments and agencies; and a review to modernize the ATIPP application process which includes exploring the possibility of an online ATIPP request form and payment option.

II. Open Data

Open data refers to the public release of government and agency data (with consideration to licensing/copyright and privacy requirements), with an open licence, which is free of charge for anyone to use or reuse for any purpose. Open data is provided in accessible formats, meaning that it is machine readable and is structured in a logical way. For numerical tabular files (spreadsheets), some common open formats include XLS or CSV. For text files, common formats include TXT.

Goals:

- 1. Promote disclosure of open data.** To release relevant data of interest to data users in open and accessible formats in a timely manner
- 2. Encourage innovation through the sharing of data.** Create an open-source, open data webpage which is publicly accessible and promotes and fosters a culture of innovation.

Examples of early action items under this pillar include: an open data webpage which was developed and launched in March 2014 that contains samples of data sets that are currently available and is intended to demonstrate the types of data and formats that can be made available through open data efforts; the development of open data guidelines for use by departments and agencies; and the creation of an open data inventory so that data users can easily locate and benefit from the data sets available.

III. Dialogue

Dialogue refers to a range of interactive engagement activities that will facilitate and support the contribution of ideas, insights and expertise of the people of the province to the policy and decision-making processes of Government. Activities can include: online or in-person forums; formal consultations; meetings with stakeholder or community groups; workshops; kitchen meetings; interactive town hall events; online/social media activities and e-polling. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador believes that informed and involved citizens, stakeholders and employees contribute to the positive development of this province.

Goals:

- 1. Create opportunities for public and internal dialogue and participation.** Use a variety of tools, approaches and technologies to ensure citizens, stakeholders and employees of the public service have opportunities to participate in the important issues that affect them, in a meaningful way.
- 2. Support departments and agencies in the development of meaningful engagement activities.** Take steps to build internal capacity to ensure

departments and agencies undertake high-quality engagement activities. Ensure that activities are tailored to the needs of each situation and ensure a meaningful experience for participants.

- 3. Enhance understanding of the importance of engagement processes.** Take steps, internally and publicly, to create awareness of the value and importance of effective public engagement in society.

Examples of early action items under this pillar include: a dialogue webpage which was developed and launched in March 2014; the development of a Public Engagement Guide which is now available online at http://ope.gov.nl.ca/pdf/OPE_PEGuide.pdf; and the development of public engagement capacity-building materials and initiating training activities with the Centre for Learning Development. These early actions are in addition to the comprehensive public and internal engagement processes related to the Open Government Initiative, which began in May 2014.

IV. Collaboration

Meaningful collaborative structures – both formal and informal – arise when entities with a common or complementary purpose agree to work together with the objective of achieving something no single entity working alone could achieve. In a government context, partnerships, alliances, coalitions and other collaborative structures can exist between government and external entities as well as between and among departments and agencies. Effective collaboration is known to be essential when addressing complex challenges.

Goals:

- 1. Increase knowledge and awareness of the value of collaboration in addressing complex issues.** The resolution of complex societal problems often requires a cross-sector multi-stakeholder collaborative approach. A first step in building a culture of collaboration is to create awareness of the value of collaboration, as well as an understanding of how collaborative approaches differ from single-entity approaches.
- 2. Enhance capacity to effectively build and sustain appropriate collaborative structures.** A solid understanding of the nature of collaboration, the factors necessary for effectiveness and solutions to common governance challenges are essential if partners, including government, are to harness the combined impact inherent in such approaches.

Examples of early actions associated with this pillar include: a collaboration webpage which was developed and launched in March 2014; initiating a series of learning opportunities to enhance knowledge of collaboration and build capacity to assist in becoming better collaboration practitioners; working to strengthen and support community-university-government knowledge collaboration to enhance ongoing and new knowledge; completion of an assessment of models for engaging business and labour partners to explore ways to strengthen their engagement processes; and completion of an appraisal of the utilization of partnership brokering (trained facilitators of collaborative structures) in a public sector context to determine whether partnership brokering leads to better collaboration outcomes between government and its partners.

ROLE OF DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

The Office of Public Engagement (OPE) will continue to work with departments and agencies to enhance awareness of the Open Government Initiative and build on a culture which demonstrates a strong commitment to the principles of open government. Departments and agencies will continue to be fully engaged in the process of identifying open government actions and priorities. The OPE will design and lead a comprehensive engagement process where internal engagement will occur simultaneously with activities to engage the public.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to seeking public and stakeholder input to determine the broad direction for this initiative and to inform the development of the Province's first Open Government Action Plan. A wide variety of methods and tools will be employed to engage citizens, stakeholders such as: in-person citizen dialogue events; online engagement tools including social media; and other emerging techniques and technologies. The OPE will undertake a series of engagement activities to generate ideas that will frame future actions and determine areas of priority and focus for the Open Government Action Plan. Some activities will involve broad citizen input while others will focus on diverse stakeholders.

Goal and Objectives

The goal of this public engagement process is to ensure the public (citizens and stakeholders) have ample meaningful opportunities to participate in the development of a high-quality, relevant and publicly-supported Open Government Initiative and Action Plan.

Some of the specific objectives are:

- To provide opportunities for increased awareness for the public and internal/external stakeholders related to the concept of open government - what it means and how it will evolve;
- To provide information about the need to ensure that policies, programs, and activities undertaken by government must consider the priorities of the citizens of the province and government;
- To create dialogue opportunities for citizens and stakeholders whereby various open government topics, questions, and future actions can be discussed in a respectful environment;
- To seek feedback on the Open Government Framework (the four pillars guiding the Open Government Initiative - open information; open data; dialogue; and collaboration);
- To generate new and creative action ideas that should be considered for inclusion in the Open Government Action Plan; and
- To deliver a high-quality public engagement approach that demonstrates a strong commitment to open government.

This public engagement process is designed to include a range of engagement activities that will capture public insights, ideas, expectations, concerns and needs in relation to the four pillars of open government. Some public engagement activities will explore all pillars with equal emphasis while others will focus on only one.

Multi-Phased Approach: This public engagement process will unfold over one year through four inter-related phases: 1) preliminary engagement to seek input and scope ideas; 2) in-depth, targeted engagement on key emerging themes from phase one; 3) reflecting and validating what was said and the

development and release of a draft Action Plan; and 4) public release of an Open Government Policy Statement and Action Plan with built-in accountability measures.

Use of Complementary Tools/Technologies: The OPE will employ a wide variety of methods and tools to engage with citizens and stakeholders such as: in-person citizen dialogue events; online engagement tools including social media; and other emerging techniques and technologies.

Open-ended and Closed Questions: Throughout this engagement process, open-ended and closed questions on a variety of themes will be posed to participants. Questions will be developed for each of the four pillars such as: open information (what types of information currently held by Government would you like to access or have easier access to?); open data (what types of data currently held by Government would you like to access/use, and for what purpose would you use it?); dialogue (how would you like to be engaged by Government, how often, and on what type of issues? What do you want the Government of the future to look like?); collaboration (how can Government build better collaborative relations with external stakeholder groups?).

Citizens and Stakeholders May Need to be Engaged Differently: Throughout the engagement process, the OPE will undertake a series of activities to generate ideas that will frame future actions and determine areas of priority and emphasis for the Open Government Action Plan. Some activities will emphasize broad citizen-participation – such as open town-hall meetings – while others will focus on specific stakeholders (e.g., stakeholder round table discussions). Special interest groups and sectors such as youth and seniors, and those who may require additional assistance to ensure inclusion will be considered.

Flexible as Required: This public engagement process will be implemented as a result of Government's interest in harnessing public input to build a high-quality Open Government Action Plan. As such, should it become apparent that additional or different engagement activities need to be developed (e.g., a specific stakeholder group needs to be involved differently), the public engagement process will be adjusted as required.

Continuous and Timely Reporting-Back to the Public: Feedback received from the public, and stakeholders, through the public engagement process, both online and in-person, will be regularly posted on the Dialogue webpage. Near the end of this process a 'What We Heard' document will be developed and made available to the public. A draft Open Government Action Plan will be developed and made available to the public with an opportunity for additional feedback. At the conclusion of this process, the Action Plan will be publicly presented as a responsive, living document that will continuously evolve.