**Government of Sultanate of Oman**

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**Oman eGovernment**

# Open Government Data Policy

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**Version: Final Draft**



Information Technology Authority
Sultanate of Oman

Oman eGovernment
# Open Data Policy

## Table of Content

# 1   INTRODUCTION

His Majesty's grand vision of transforming Oman into a sustainable knowledge based economy began with setting the economic vision for the Sultanate towards the year 2020 to which the Digital Oman Strategy, endorsed in March 2003, contributes in terms of developing the Oman Digital Society and e-Government.

E-Government refers to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as a tool to achieve more efficient government processes, higher quality of public services, and higher citizen engagement. As government agencies transform their process and public services into e-services, they produce, maintain and update huge amount of data electronically. The term '**Open Data**' describes the concept that this data should be made available for public to access, reuse, and redistribute without any restrictions.

Open Data policy provides the basis for public participation and collaboration in the creation of innovative, value-added services.

## 1.1   What is Open Government Data?

Open Data is data that can be accessed, reused, and redistributed by anyone, for any purposes, including commercial reuse, free of charge and without any restrictions. Open Data refers to datasets that are held in government databases.

## 1.2   Dimensions of Open Government Data

Government agencies such as ministries, municipalities, and other government authorities produce, maintain and update huge amounts of data. Some examples of data include:

- National statistics,
- Budgetary information,
- Geographical data,
- Laws and Regulations, and
- Data about education and transport.

Most of this data could become **Open Data**.

### Exceptions
There are some kinds of government data which cannot be treated as open data. Exceptions are as under:

- Personal data, that is, data which contain information about specific individual.
- Government data which is classified as sensitive. For example, for reasons of national security.

# Open Data Policy

*[Reference: For Information (data) classification scheme, refer to Royal Decree 118/2011 and 42/2015]*

## 2   Purpose

Establishing a culture of open data, and applying the right policy settings from when data is first generated or collected, has been shown to deliver benefits to communities and economies across the globe.

The eOman Strategy demands and prioritizes open data; and this Policy aims to assist government agencies across the Sultanate of Oman in embedding open data principles in their operations.

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Make explicit the Sultanate of Oman Government's commitment to open data;
- Help agencies in understanding community and industry priorities for open data;
- Simplify and facilitate the release of data by Government agencies in Sultanate of Oman;
- Create a practical policy framework that enables high-value datasets to be released to the public;
- To define principles of open data to promote information based culture;
- To increase opportunities for this raw data being used creatively to build innovative applications with a positive economic and social benefit to the public.

This Policy helps facilitate implementation of best practice open data principles across the public sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

### 2.1   Scope of Applicability

This Policy applies to all Government Agencies and Statutory Bodies in Sultanate of Oman.

Target audiences for the policy itself include government agencies, NGOs, academia, industry (including ICT developers) and members of the public who are interested in or have a specific use for government data.

## 3   POLICY

### 3.1   Policy Statements

We are working to make sure that all government agencies in Sultanate of Oman commit to releasing high value government data (open data) actively to increase opportunities for this raw data being used creatively to build innovative applications with a positive economic and social benefit to the public. Agencies are required to release open data in accordance with the principles set forth in this policy.

# Open Data Policy

Government Agencies are required to create and maintain Data Inventory that accounts for all data assets created or collected by the agency. This includes, but is not limited to, data assets used in the agency's information systems. After creating the Inventory, agencies should continually improve the usefulness of the Inventory by expanding, enriching, and opening the Inventory.

It is the policy of Government of Sultanate of Oman that government agencies must publish their open data for public use on their websites (should be .om domain), or, on National Data Portal (www.data.gov.om), or on both locations.

Agencies should also establish a process or platform for the public to request certain datasets from the Data Inventory to be published as open data. Agencies should perform due diligence while responding to such requests to publish datasets as open data.

## 3.2   Principles

The principles by which open data will be governed, managed and operated are:

1. **Complete:** Datasets released by the government should be as complete as possible, reflecting the entirety of what is recorded about a particular subject. All raw information from a dataset should be released to the public, except to the extent necessary to comply with valid privacy or security requirements regarding the release of personally identifiable information. Metadata that defines and explains the raw data should be included as well, along with formulas and explanations for how derived data was calculated. Doing so will permit users to understand the scope of information available and examine each data item at the greatest possible level of detail.

2. **Primary**: Datasets released by the government should be primary source data, with the highest possible level of granularity, not in aggregate or modified forms.

3. **Timely:** Datasets released by the government agencies should be available to the public in a timely fashion (at least on annual basis). Whenever feasible, information collected by the government should be released as quickly as it is gathered and collected. Priority should be given to data whose utility is time sensitive. Real-time information updates would maximize the utility the public can obtain from this information.

4. **Permanent:** Datasets are available permanently (information made available should remain available) with appropriate version tracking and archiving over time. There should be proper indication that an alteration has been made. (Refer to data retention as per archive law - Royal Decree 60/2007)

5. **Accessible**: Datasets released by the government should be accessible (ability to locate and download content) easily. Providing an interface for users to download all of the information stored in a database at once (known as "bulk" access) and the means to make specific calls for data through an Application Programming Interface (API) make data much more readily accessible.

6. **Machine process-able**: Datasets should be reasonably structured to allow automated processing and available in machine friendly formats. Information shared in the widely used PDF format, for example, is very difficult for machines to parse. Thus, information should be stored in widely used file formats (CSV,XLS, JSON, XML, etc.) that easily lend

themselves to machine processing. These files should be accompanied by documentation related to the format and how to use it in relation to the data.

7. **Trusted:** Published content should be digitally signed or include attestation of publication/creation date, authenticity, and integrity. Digital signatures help the public validate the source of the data they find so that they can trust that the data has not been modified since it was published.

8. **Documented**: Documentation about the data sets, format and meaning of data goes a long way to making the data useful. The principles state that Government websites must provide users with sufficient information to make assessments about the meaning, accuracy and currency of information published.

9. **Non-discriminatory:** Datasets are available to anyone, at any time without having to identify themselves (with no requirement of registration) or provide any justification for accessing open datasets.

10. **Non-proprietary**: Datasets are available in a format over which no entity has exclusive control (data can be accessed without the need for a software license).

11. **License-free:** Datasets are available with no restrictions on dissemination and are not subject to any copyright, patent, trademark or trade secret regulation. Maximal openness includes clearly labeling public information as a work of the government and available without restrictions on use as part of the public domain. Government agencies use Open Data licenses to clearly explain the conditions under which their data may be used. Examples include: Creative Commons, the Open Database License, and The World Bank Terms of Use.

*Note 1: These principles describe what open data looks like when it meets best practice requirements.*

*Note 2: Resourcing implications can affect an agency's ability to fully implement every principle with respect to all datasets, and so high-value datasets should be identified as the priority for standardization and release first.*

*Note 3: These principles are defined in UN Guidelines on Open Government Data*

# 4 Roles and Responsibilities

## 4.1 Policy Management

1 Creation and maintenance of this Open Data Policy is vested with the Information Technology Authority (ITA).

2 NCSI has the overall responsibility for facilitating the implementation of the Open Data Policy and providing advice and guidance to all government agencies, and target audience. (refer to Royal Decree 40/2014 establishing NCSI)

## 4.2 Policy Implementation

1 All government agencies and target audience are responsible for implementing, complying and reporting improvements in Data Sharing arrangements in relation to this policy.

# Open Data Policy

| Agency Actions | Target Date |
|---|---|
| • Nominate Point Of Contact and clarify/establish roles and responsibilities for overall data management, as well as promoting efficient and effective release of OGD. | 3 months after the Publication of Policy. |
| • Develop Data Publication Process<br>  o Create a process to engage with customers to help facilitate and prioritize data release<br>  o Establish Customer Feedback Mechanism<br>  o Describe Customer Feedback Processes on the OGD portal<br>  o Establish a process for interested parties to request Open Data | 3 months after the Publication of Policy. |
| • Create and maintain a Data Inventory (Inventory of all agency datasets)<br>  o Develop an Inventory development Schedule<br>  o Publish Inventory Schedule on the **OGD** portal<br>  o Create a Data Inventory of all agency datasets<br>  o Maintain the Data Inventory: Expand, Enrich, Open | 6 months after the Publication of Policy. |
| • Publish Open Data<br>  o Create and publish Open Data Listing at the OGD portal<br>  o Maintain the Open Data Listing by regularly updating the datasets as required. | 9 months after the Publication of Policy. |
| • Document if data cannot be released | 12 months after the Publication of Policy. |

## 5   Related References

Following documents/links may be relevant to this policy.

A. Royal Decree 40/2014 establishing NCSI
B. Royal Decree 60/2007 - Archive law for data retention
C. Royal Decree 118/2011 and 42/2015 (Information Classification Scheme)
D. World Bank Guidelines for Open Data (data.worldbank.org/ogd)
E. UN Guidelines for Open Data (http://www.unpan.org)
F. Open Knowledge Foundation (https://okfn.org )
G. Sunlight Foundation (http://sunlightfoundation.com)