



Open Government

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why does the GNWT need an Open Government Policy?

Establishing the Open Government Policy is a significant action to advance the Government of the Northwest Territories' (GNWT) commitment to increase transparency and accountability. It will bring the GNWT in line with other governments across Canada and around the world who are taking steps to become more transparent and accountable to their citizens.

While the GNWT is already an open and transparent government in many ways, it is necessary to bring existing practices, ideas and principles together under one policy and to establish clear and consistent approaches across government.

The policy is an important step that will help all departments and agencies examine and improve existing practices and integrate Open Government thinking at all levels.

2. How was the Open Government Policy developed?

The Open Government Policy was developed based on the results of a public engagement process led by the Minister of Public Engagement and Transparency Louis Sebert, as well as input from GNWT departments, research on Open Government initiatives in other jurisdictions, and feedback from the [Standing Committee on Government Operations](#).

3. Why is the Open Government Policy not more specific about what GNWT departments must do?

The role of the policy is to set out principles for Open Government, to clarify who is responsible and accountable for implementing the policy, and to provide overall direction about what additional directives and guidelines are required. The policy establishes a commitment for “what” the government will do and the next step is to develop the tools required to describe “how” this will be accomplished.

As the directives and guidelines established under the Open Government Policy will serve as the working tools of government, it is important to ensure that they are effective and that all departments can understand and implement them appropriately. To achieve this, the directives and guidelines need to be developed in collaboration with departments.



4. How will Open Government directives and guidelines be developed? When will they be ready?

The policy calls for the establishment of specific directives and guidelines regarding the release of government data and information, and the government's approach to public engagement. These will be developed in collaboration with all GNWT departments through an interdepartmental working group, coordinated by the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

The development of these guidance documents will be a central focus for implementation of the policy. The goal is to establish an initial set of directives and guidelines throughout 2018 and 2019, recognizing that these will be constantly evolving as new technologies emerge and best practices in other jurisdictions are established.

5. What difference will the Open Government Policy make?

The public may not notice significant changes in the way the GNWT releases information and data or engages with the public in the short term. Early implementation of the policy will focus on developing the necessary directives and guidelines, and bringing departments together to create tools and initiatives that will advance the principles of openness, transparency and accountability within the GNWT in concrete, practical ways.

In addition, the policy will not override the protections provided for in the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy (ATIPP) Act* or any other relevant legislation. Personal information of individuals held by public bodies will continue to be protected from disclosure and there will continue to be measures in place to ensure data and information of a sensitive nature or subject to privacy, security or legal restrictions are not released.

It is important to note that GNWT departments are already taking many actions that uphold the principles of Open Government. The Open Government Policy will bring more focus and collaboration to these initiatives and provide a forum for departments to share best practices and establish common approaches where appropriate.

6. What is the GNWT doing to ensure that it doesn't release private information or information that could create security risks?

The release of all government information and data will still be subject to the protections provided for in the *ATIPP Act* or any other relevant legislation. Personal information of individuals held by public bodies will continue to be protected from



disclosure and there will continue to be measures in place to ensure data and information of a sensitive nature or subject to privacy, security or legal restrictions are not released.

7. Does the GNWT have an action plan for implementing Open Government?

It is important to recognize that while the principle of Open Government is simple, implementation can be complex and will take planning, time and effort.

The Open Government Steering Committee has already established a working group of GNWT officials from all departments to discuss the challenges and opportunities of Open Government and work collaboratively to develop the tools and initiatives needed to advance the principles of openness, transparency and accountability in concrete, practical ways. Next steps for the working group will include:

- understanding the work that is already planned or underway in departments that supports Open Government to determine best practices and areas for collaboration;
- determining what information and data departments already publish, and looking at ways to make it more accessible and available to the public;
- developing guidelines to help departments identify and prioritize data and information for release to the public;
- looking at how other GNWT initiatives are related to Open Government and can help departments make better decisions about when and how to release information and data, including the review of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the Service Innovation Strategy;
- developing guidelines for public engagement and how technology can be used to improve the quality and consistency of engagement activities;
- looking at how to get feedback from the public about the GNWT's performance on Open Government and ideas on what it can do better; and
- determining how to report to the public about progress on implementing Open Government.

8. How will the GNWT report its progress on implementing the Open Government Policy?

A reporting approach will be developed by the working group to establish indicators and reporting processes on the GNWT's progress on becoming a more open government.