

Government of Canada Open Government Portal

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Organisation: Government of Canada

Country: Canada

Level of government: Central government

Sector: General public services

Type: Data, Digital, Public Service

Launched in: 2014

Overall development time: 2 year(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

Canada's Open Government Portal, [Open.canada.ca](https://open.canada.ca), is the Government of Canada's primary tool for delivering open government activities and services. This robust platform provides a unified and user-centric window into government consultations, government data and information, financial and human resources disclosures, and support tools for users. It enables Canadians to more actively engage and interact with Government. Significant innovations associated with the portal include user-centric and accessible design; excellent, single-window search functionality for open data and open information; extensive information offered through Open Maps, the government's geospatial data visualization tool; and standardized and proactive reporting of Government financial and human resources information.

Why the innovation was developed

- The Government of Canada has a long-standing commitment to being open, accountable and responsive. Openness and transparency are fundamental to ensuring Canadians' trust in their government and in democracy overall. Canada established [Open.canada.ca](https://open.canada.ca) in 2014 to facilitate citizen engagement with government. Specifically, the platform was designed to enhance transparency, enable a better understanding of what government does, and improve access to services. As such, it features enhanced navigation and search capabilities for open data and open information, improved open government consultation and engagement capacity, tools for national open government partners, and one-stop access to information provided by departments.
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Objectives

Enhance public trust, Enhance transparency, Improve access, Improve efficiency, Increase citizen engagement

Main beneficiaries

Academia, Businesses, Civil Society, General population, Government staff

Existing similar practices

Data.gov

In other countries' public administrations

United States Government

A growing number of jurisdictions have open government platforms which go beyond only providing access to open data. Some jurisdictions have adopted user- friendly approaches, including by using the same open source applications as Canada's platform. The United States' [data.gov](https://www.data.gov) houses over 185,000 datasets. Globally, over 50 countries have open data sites. However, few have integrated platforms that supplement open data with other essential components of open government.

<https://www.data.gov/>

Results

Efficiency

Effectiveness

Service quality

Accessibility:

Responsiveness:

User satisfaction

Development

Design

Open.canada.ca was conceived and implemented by the Open Government team at the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. Canada initially launched its open data portal (data.gc.ca) in 2012 to coincide with its first action plan to the Open Government Partnership. The portal has been improved on an iterative basis in consultation with other federal departments and, increasingly, with end users and other orders of government. In November 2014 Canada launched its new open government portal, open.canada.ca, which focused on three pillars of openness and transparency: open data, open information, and open dialogue. Open.canada.ca has become a single-window portal for open government data and information, as well as information on transparency initiatives and public engagement opportunities. Design time: 3 month(s)

Testing

- Open.canada.ca was subjected to usability testing prior to initial launch. New elements are also tested for usability as they are added.
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Implementation

Tools used:

- To implement the platform, work was required to adapt and improve CKAN, the open source application that is used to run the platform. As part of that process, Canada became the co-chair of the CKAN Steering Group. Significant efforts have also been required to maximize the effectiveness of the platform through enhanced data standards. Canada has therefore been working to develop common metadata and related standards that will allow Canadians to search and discover all federal digital resources.

Resources used:

- Running the platform currently involves three dedicated staff members at the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, as well as numerous partners at Statistics Canada, Library and Archives Canada, and Public Services and Procurement Canada. A large number of open datasets and open information resources have been provided by 47 federal departments, involving large numbers of officials in all those departments.

Implementation time: 1 year(s) 9 month(s)

Challenges and solutions

- In seeking to maximize the relevance, quality and quantity of data on open.canada.ca, it has been important to seek to enhance data standards and quality. One challenge was effectively establishing data quality standards for open data and developing and implementing metadata standards to enhance data interoperability and discoverability. This work has progressed such that Canada is now a leader in data standards, providing guidance to countries around the world by chairing the OGP's Open Data Working Group, and spearheading the development of common open data principles and standards for worldwide adoption.
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Partnerships

Statistics Canada, Library and Archives Canada, and Public Services and Procurement Canada

Other Public Sector

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat led the consultation, design, strategy and implementation of open.canada.ca, including liaising with federal partners to promote compliance and seek the publication of high quality data sets. Statistics Canada, with the support of Public Services and Procurement Canada, built the platform and continue to build net new functionality, as required. Library and Archives Canada is responsible for the resource lifecycle, managing standards for metadata, controlled vocabulary, Official Languages, and retention and disposition.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- Worked well: International collaboration, including through the CKAN association, to improve Canada's portal while simultaneously providing open source tools for other governments to use Diligent work to ensure that open.canada.ca meets all requirements for accessibility and official languages Development of clear standards for data and information publication, allowing departments to easily understand their obligations and responsibilities
 - Worked less well: Consultation activities on open.canada.ca are limited to open government consultations. Greater emphasis could be placed on providing consistent tools and platforms for consultation across government. Tools were developed to allow thematic community discussions where users could chat about data in particular sectors (environment, science, etc.). Lack of user interest and limited collaboration tools have made thematic community discussions less dynamic than hoped.
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Conditions for success

- Strong mandate to design and implement comprehensive solutions
 - International partners to help refine approaches and pool resources
 - Strong internal governance in government departments, ensuring consistent application of data and information management standard
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Other information

Top lessons: Build systems with next steps in mind – early adoption of consistent data standards has facilitated interoperability and integration of new data. Think of the user throughout the design process – usability has been a key consideration throughout Provide space for your community – allow users to share their own ideas, suggestions, and apps they have created.

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