Release Framework of Data and Information

Open Government and Data Governance Branch

Royal Canadian Mounted Police   Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Canada

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History of document

As this document is a "living" document, please find below a table of updates/edits.

Version	Author	Description	Date
0.1	**Open Government and Data Governance Branch (OGDG)**	Document created and steps assembled	
0.2	**OGDG**	Revised document	July 2022
0.3	**OGDG**	Presented to OGWG	July 2022
1.0	**Version 1 finalized**	Approved by OGWG	August 2022

Overview

Purpose of document

The purpose of this document is to provide an in-depth view into the stages to release data and information, in the interests of transparency and Open Government (OG) within the RCMP. This document will outline each step thoroughly and provide you with context. Should you want to publish open data and/or information the Open Government and Data Governance team will support throughout the entire process and can provide additional resources, such as the [Step-by-Step Infographic](#).

OGDG & ADIM

The Analytics, Data, and Information Management (ADIM) directorate is responsible for enterprise development and delivery of policies, analytics, and information management. ADIM enables information and data, as an asset, across the RCMP to empower business lines to meet their mandates. One of the four branches under ADIM is the Open Government and Data Governance branch.

Open Government & Data Governance Branch

The Open Government and Data Governance (OGDG) branch aims to foster openness, accountability, trust, and transparency to enhance civic participation in policy making, provide access to data and information proactively and create a more efficient, accountable, and responsible government. The term "government transparency" captures a broad array of activities from access to information legislation to open data policies. Historically, research on government transparency has focused on the political and social benefits of increasing openness. Through promoting good governance there is an increase in transparency that can lead to an increase in government accountability, efficiency, and civic participation.

Open Government Vision & Mission

OG Vision: To create an open by default RCMP that is more trusted, efficient and a responsive public safety department.

OG Mission: To provide citizens and partners with valuable open data, open information and open dialogue opportunities to enhance trust, accountability and improve day to day community policing services.

What is open data?

Open data is defined as structured data that is machine-readable, freely shared, used and built on without restrictions. [1]

- **Availability and access:** the data must be available as a whole and at no more than a reasonable reproduction cost, preferably by downloading over the internet. The data must also be available in a convenient and modifiable form.
- **Re-use and redistribution:** the data must be provided under terms that permit re-use and redistribution including being layered with other data sets and the ability to manipulate it as one sees fit.
- **Universal participation:** everyone must be able to use, re-use and redistribute. There should be no discrimination against fields or against persons or groups who have access to the data.

Importance of open data and information [2]

Data, information, and knowledge have become a critical strategic asset for modern organizations, the concept of "open data" originated from a paradigm to make and share open knowledge. Open Government data and information has the potential to provide many benefits for citizens, including the government itself, businesses, academics, etc... Apart from the obvious benefit of readily having access to datasets with sample sizes in the hundreds or more, several related benefits are also important to consider. Some of the benefits of open data and information include the following:

A. **Supports Innovation**

   a. Access to data supports innovation in the private sector by reducing duplication and promoting reuse of existing resources. The availability of data in machine-readable formats allows for creative layering that can be used to analyze markets, predict trends and requirements, and direct businesses in their strategic investment decisions.

   b. **Public safety lens**: As the RCMP strives to be an international leader in police transparency and OG principles it is essential that the organization continues to evolve. By releasing RCMP open data and information resources, this provides an opportunity to collaborate with internal and external organizations to advance policing initiatives. In turn, it may lead to the development of innovative services and new business models in regards to community policing.

B. **Supports research**

   a. Access to federal research data supports evidence-based primary research in Canadian and international academic, public sector, and industry-based research communities. Access to collections of data, reports, publications, and artifacts held in federal institutions allows for the use of these collections by researchers.

   b. **Public safety lens**: Through leveraging RCMP data and information, this provides an opportunity for several multidisciplinary organizations to provide recommendations and

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[1] Government of Canada Open Data 101
[2] TBS Open Government Presentation "New Features Preview"

improve every day policing initiatives. There is a growing demand from academia across Canada to access the RCMPs data. An example of this would be access to RCMP race-based data. Providing access can enable academia opportunities to contribute to the department's efforts in addressing the current systemic challenges.

C. **Supports decision making**

   a. Providing access to public sector service information to support informed decision-making; for example, real-time air travel statistics can help travelers to choose an airline and understand the factors that can lead to flight delays. Giving Canadians their say in decisions that affect them and the resulting potential for innovation and value (builds trust and credibility)

   b. **Public safety lens:** Providing access to RCMP data and information regarding services, neighborhood crime statistics, traffic collisions, etc…, social welfare can significantly be improved. Since society benefits from information that is more transparent and accessible, RCMP resources will allow individuals to make informed decisions to advance social innovation. In addition, directly contributing to the RCMP's Vision 150 and Beyond commitment of "Supporting a well-functioning organization through effective governance and evidence-based decision-making" as increasing transparency and accountability are key factors in increasing public trust.

D. **Reduces administrative overhead**

   a. Proactively providing data that is relevant to Canadians reduces the amount of access to information requests, email campaigns and media inquiries. This greatly reduces the administrative cost and burden associated with responding to such inquiries.

   b. **Public safety lens:** As per [the report](#) by the Information Commissioner on November 17, 2020, the OIC demonstrated an inability by the RCMP to respond to requests for Access to information (ATI) within legislated timeframes. Proactive release and regular open data publications can help reduce the administrative overhead on the department to respond to requests such as ATI and media inquiries over time. In-turn providing cost-saving opportunities for the RCMP.

E. **Increases government accountability**

   a. Increased access to government data and information provides the public with greater insight into government activities, service delivery, and use of tax dollars. This helps to create accountability in government decision-making and fosters citizens' trust.

   b. **Public safety lens:** Due to heightened attention and awareness of police brutality and racial bias within law enforcement and the criminal justice system, there have been emerging calls for improving the role police play in communities. Increasing access to RCMP data and information such as Police Intervention Options, RCMP calls for service, and RCMP employee and diversity statistics will contribute to ensuring the RCMP is held accountable and further enhances trust within society.

Not all data can be open

As a Canadian police organization, the RCMP is duty bound to protect individual's rights to privacy, protect officer safety and safeguard national security and community safety interests. This unwavering requirement to protect the rights of Canadian citizens must be taken into consideration when publishing open data and information. Below are some of the most common reasons why Government of Canada information and data **might** not be open or open in part:

>
> **Privacy**: A dataset or information that contains personal information about an individual must not be released. Personal information, as defined by the Privacy Act includes, but is not limited to, information about race, national or ethnic origin, religion, age, marital status, and medical, criminal or employment history.
>
> **Security**: Information or data that may pose security risks to the institution, to the government, or to vulnerable or targeted individuals or organizations must not be released. Data must conform to the requirements of the Policy on Government Security and its related instruments.
>
> **Confidentiality**: Information or data that impairs the government's ability to make some decisions cannot be released. Examples include court rulings or police investigations, Budget and policy decisions that may impact financial markets, negotiations such as collective bargaining or international trade agreements, and Cabinet confidences.
>
> **Legacy information or data**: Sometimes there is a substantive cost to making the resource eligible for release (for example, digitizing the resource, formatting it, ensuring it's accessible and in both official languages) and there may not be a huge demand from the public to justify the cost.
>
> **Legal and contractual limitations**: A dataset may be subject to legal or contractual agreements that prevent it from being released.

Open Government Portal

Canada's Open Government Portal[3] provides one-stop access to the Government of Canada's searchable open data and open information, together with open dialogue, as part of the federal government's commitment to enhance transparency and accountability.

In March 2011, the Government of Canada first launched the 'Open Data portal', a common, integrated online access point for datasets from departments across government. The Portal re-launched in 2013 as the 'Open Government Portal' to provide access to open data and open information resources. At this time the Open Government Licence was issued enabling the use of the of the data and information that is available under the licence with a few conditions.

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[3] Canada Open Government Portal

Release Cycle Overview

The disclosure of data and information is broken down into three stages which are composed of eight steps in total. Below you will find a brief outline of the three stages and steps within each, which will be further flushed out within this document.

Stage 1

1. **Identify** – Potential data and information can be identified/suggested to be released by individuals, business lines and/or the OGDG branch.

2. **Evaluate** - Data and information must be evaluated to consider the privacy, security, and ethical considerations prior to release.

3. **Prioritize** - Data and information will be prioritized based on four principles to determine when to release.

4. **Align** - Data and information will be aligned with Government of Canada and RCMP priorities/mandates.

Stage 2

5. **Approve** - Data and information will be reviewed and subsequently approved or not approved for release during this step.

Stage 3

6. **Prepare** - Once the data and information has been approved for release, you must prepare the data to ensure it is high quality and meets the requirements for publishing.

7. **Release** - The data and information is released during this step.

8. **Manage** - Manage how frequently the data and information will be re-released and make any changes if required.

Release Cycle Stages

Stage One

Step One **Identity**:

The first step in releasing data and information is to identify what to release. This is an opportunity to list data/information that business lines intend on publishing. As per the Directive on Open Government, applicable organizations are required to maximize the release of open data and open information by ensuring that all data and information resources specified below are considered for release, through the [Open Government Portal](#).

Open Data   All data resources of business value held by Government of Canada departments are to be open by default and released as open data
Open Information All mandatory reporting documents (e.g. reports to Parliament, proactive disclosure reports), all documents posted online or planned for publication via departmental web sites or print (e.g., statistical reports, educational videos, event photos, organizational charts), and all other documents deemed valid for open publication. *Business lines that identify national policies for release will communicate with the [Policies and Publications Section.](#)

How are data and information resources identified?

1. Requested

    a. In some scenarios, specific data and information may be requested by mandates, senior executives, civil society, etc. to be released. An example of this is a request the RCMP received from the 5th National Action Plan on Open Government, requesting specific data sets to be released.

    b. Requested data and information resources may also arise from ATIP and media requests.

2. Situational or Purpose Based

   a. Social climate plays a large role in the depiction of public safety organizations; given the trends over the last few years there has been an increased presence of police matters brought to light. Thus, in a situation like this, datasets would be released to increase trust and transparency based on environmental instances.

   b. Another example would be to release data and information pertaining to large social events to drive trust and promote accountability.

      i. Pre Event – In situations where an organization is aware that a major event will be occurring, data and information may be published ahead of time to drive trust.

      ii. Post Event – In situations where an event has occurred, the organization would release data and information to take accountability and drive transparency.

3. Open by Default

   a. Datasets/information that are open by default; the directive on Open Government is a policy tool, that aims to maximize the release of government information to support transparency, accountability, citizen engagement, and socio-economic variables, thus through fostering an open by default environment, this leads to enhanced accountability and transparency within the RCMP.

   b. Open data/information by default goes a step beyond transparency, as it promotes the provision of reusable data/information from its source, without requiring requests for data/information and increasing access in equal terms for everyone; while at the same time, assuring the necessary protection to personal data in accordance with laws and regulations already established.

What to consider when identifying a data and information resources to release

A. Ensure that the data sets are machine readable, reusable, and in open formats

B. Identify whether the data and information you want to release is a high value dataset; a high value data set is defined as a dataset that is likely to be of interest to public and civil society, and/or a dataset that has potential for valuable reuse

    a. A dataset is considered 'high value' if it:

        i. is central to the department/agency functions

        ii. has been frequently requested

        iii. contributes to current environmental factors

        iv. has previously/regularly been provided

        v. supports a major reporting process of government

        vi. planning data

To determine value and importance of data and information resources to the public, consider the following: [4]

Service to the public: assign points to information and data that will provide a benefit to Canadians either by improving services or allowing for innovation and economic growth.
Engagement: assign points to information and data that will help the public meaningfully engage in ongoing and current discussions.
Public interest: assign points to information and data that has been frequently requested through an Access to Information request.
Government transparency and international priorities: assign points to information and data that will allow the public to further understand GC priorities and commitments.
Reuse potential: assign points to information and data that can be easily updated and used to fuel innovation and economic growth.
Government efficiency: assign points to information and data that will provide value to other GC institutions and provide services that are more effective.

For examples of data and information resources to release, see <u>Government of Canada Open Portal</u>
Step Two **Evaluate:**

 Once you know what information and data resources you have, you will begin evaluating it to

determine what other assets should be included in your release cycle plan. You should consider

reviewing your information and data assets against value and importance to the public, readiness, cost,

and risk.

Table 1: Evaluation Checklist

Factors to Consider	Description	Business Lines to Consult with
Privacy	A dataset or information that contains personal information about an individual must not be released. Personal information, as defined by the Privacy Act includes, but is not limited to, information about race, national or ethnic	Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP)

Factors to Consider	Description	Business Lines to Consult with
	origin, religion, age, marital status, and medical, criminal or employment history.	
Security	Information or data that may pose security risks to the institution, to the government, or to vulnerable or targeted individuals or organizations must not be released. Data must conform to the requirements of the Policy on Government Security and its related instruments.	Departmental Security Branch
Feedback Loops	Feedback loops have been developed at the relevant stages of data/information release, enabling the audience to provide input and for the institution to provide a response (ex: "What we Heard Report", comms lines, etc..) that addresses the audience feedback, creating a loop. Feedback loops can be created at single points (ex: once data is released) or at multiple stages (ex: at point of consultation/co-creation, at midway point and at point of final release). Feedback loops can be as simple as open communications/messages or as robust as detailed consultations, open responses and action plans addressing what was heard. Determining the level of feedback loop will be dependent on the nature of the open data and/or information being released and the current environmental factors.	The Business Line that is releasing the data/info & Communications Note: Assistance from OGDG as needed
Priorities	The institution has the mandate, legislative authority or permission from a third party provider to publish the data or information resource.	The Business Line that is releasing the data/info
Data Ethics	Protect identities by fully declassifying data. ● Remove anything that identifies the subject: this might include names, addresses, workplaces, occupations, or salaries.	OGDG & Professional Responsibility Office

Factors to Consider	Description	Business Lines to Consult with
	● Take out unnecessarily precise information: for example, you can replace date of birth with age. ● Generalize where you can: for example, replace subjects' specific area of expertise with more general definitions ● Use pseudonyms ● Avoid listing the upper or lower ranges of variables: this will disguise outliers, such as salary range for example.	
EDI, GBA+, Sociodemographic	Given the current social climate, it is crucial to take into consideration socioeconomic variables when releasing open data and information. This includes factors such as, race, income, education, gender, etc..	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion & Gender Based Analysis Plus Team
Cost	**Format:** assign points for information and data that is in a suitable format. ● Is conversion required for the resource to be shared or used? ● Estimated overall cost for preparation? ● Estimated time to prepare data/record for release? ● Is the material already translated and accessible? **Frequency:** assign points for information and data that can be easily updated. It is important to consider : ● How will changes be identified after initial release? ● How frequently will refreshing be required? ● Estimated overall cost for maintenance? **Review:** assign points for information and data that does not require review ● Are processes required to allow for sharing? ● Is the involvement of your legal department anticipated to be significant?	The Business Line that is releasing the data/info

Factors to Consider	Description	Business Lines to Consult with
	● Are there regulatory (privacy, security, OL, accessibility, etc.) concerns to address? **Operations and maintenance:** assign points for the release of an asset that will not cause greater costs to be incurred. ● Are there additional lifecycle costs to sharing the data/record? ● Will additional technology resources be needed? ● Will system changes be required? To determine risk, consider the following: ● **Legislated requirements:** assign points to data and information that will not create confusion with existing legislation, regulations and policies. ● **Privacy and security:** assign point to data and information that is not classified nor protected, and does not contain personal information. See the privacy and security section for more information.	
Environmental	Political, economic and social events are constantly occurring, thus, it is crucial to take into account these different environmental factors when evaluating which data and information resources to release. Many conversations are shaped around confrontation between the "do not harm" principle and concepts of transparency, accountability. Take into consideration if the identified data or information resource would cause harm given current/evolving environmental factors.	Communications Team & The Business Line that is releasing the data/info
Completeness	● *Quality of the primary data/record*: assign points for verified quality. ● *Extraction and updates*: assign points to data and information that is updated automatically. ● *Ease of release*: assign points if data/records are already translated, anonymized or accessible.	The Business Line that is releasing the data/info

Step Three **Prioritize:**

Prioritizing data and information for release begins with knowing what kind of information released and then looks at the nature of the data/information, environmental factors, risks, etc… Some high-value information and data can be determined by the level of internal usage, external requests for the information (e.g. ATI requests or other), and the significance to historical or ongoing operations of the department/agency.

1. **Three Key Elements to Consider** Value – Some examples include, but are not limited to the following:

   a. Which datasets would be of the greatest interest to the public?

   b. Which datasets are most frequently requested?

   c. Which datasets could inform my agency's current legislative or policy priorities?

   d. Which datasets would simplify our work or support our efforts to engage the citizens, researchers, or other government officials?

2. Readiness

   a. completeness and consistency of the information to be released, following relevant
      standards, ensuring the information and data are consistent over time and readily
      accessible.

   b. Ensure a scan of environmental factors has been complete to avoid releasing data and
      information a political, economic, or social inappropriate time.

3. Cost & Risk

   a. reflects the level of effort required to prepare the information under consideration for
      release, along with the sensitivity of it.

Step Four **Align:**

Once the data and information resources have been selected to release, there are a few metrics that

must be taken into account. The following criteria should be reviewed prior to the release of a data set

or information asset.

Table 2: Considerations when aligning data and information resources

Considerations	Description
Format	The data or information resource is in an open and accessible format that complies with the Standard on Web Accessibility.
Frequency	Determine the frequency of release (annually, bi-annually, quarterly, etc..)
Official Languages	The data or information resource is available in both official languages and conforms to the requirements of the *Official Languages Act*.
Metadata	Metadata describes your dataset to others in a standardized way. Having good quality metadata helps people discover and use your dataset. (Title, description, tags/keywords, etc..)

Considerations	Description
	[Open Data Metadata Template](#)
Categories/Sub-categories	This will change based on the type of data and information that is being released; ensure all categories and subcategories of data are identified.

Stage Two

Step Five **Approve:**

The approval stage in the release cycle is crucial, as the data and information resources go through three stages of approval prior to the release process. The two approval bodies at the RCMP, include the **business line** and the **Chief Information Officer (CIO)**. Guidance and consultation on data/information releases will also be discussed with the RCMP's Data, Information and Analytics Committee, as needed. OGDG will review against the release cycle process and will prepare a final recommendation and approval package to the CIO.

<mark>** Once this is created into an actual form, we will link it here.</mark>

Table 3 [5]: TBS Checklist - to be completed in all three-approval stages, by the designated representative

Release Checklist	True	False
Confidentiality The data or information resource is not subject to confidentiality restrictions, such as Cabinet confidences, solicitor-client privilege, personal information, classified or protected information, advice or recommendations, third party information, or information obtained in confidence.	☐	☐
Authority to Release	☐	☐

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[5] TBS Open Government Guidebook

Release Checklist	True	False
The institution has the mandate, legislative authority or permission from a third party provider to release the data or information resource under the <u>Open Government License – Canada</u>.		
Formats The data or information resource is in an open and accessible format that complies with <u>the Standard on Web Accessibility</u>.	☐	☐
Privacy The data or information resource is not personal information, as defined in section 3 of the Privacy Act, unless the individual to whom it relates has consented to its release or unless it meets criteria outlined in section 8(2) of the Privacy Act.	☐	☐
Official Languages The data or information resource is available in both official languages and conforms to the requirements of the *Official Languages Act*.	☐	☐
Security The data or information resource does not increase security risks to the institution, to other institutions, or to the government as a whole and conforms to the requirements of the *Policy on Government Security* and its related instruments.	☐	☐
Other - Legal / Regulatory / Policy / Contractual The release of data or other information resource complies with all other relevant legal, regulatory, contractual, and policy requirements (e.g., it is confirmed that there are no relevant legal, contractual, or third party, policy restrictions or limitations).	☐	☐

Stage Three

Step Six **Prepare:**

Data preparation, another important part of the release plan, involves extracting information from its sources, transforming it as needed to suit the purpose of release, and reviewing it for compliance and other issues before publishing it.

Open Data Requirements [6]

1. A standardized, bilingual metadata record describing the dataset. The portal registration process requires metadata based on the [Open Government Metadata Application Profile](#)

2. Online access to one or more data file(s) in an open and accessible format(s). More than one open format may be provided (e.g., CSV and JSON), provided each file instance contains the same information.

3. A data dictionary or product specification file that contains definitions for data elements in the dataset (e.g. if the data files are CSV files, the data dictionary would describe the column headings).

4. Data resources must meet a minimum three star rating on the [Openness Rating](#) scale. To achieve a 3-star rating, a data resource must be:

    a. Available on the web under an open license

    b. Available as structured data (xml instead of a pdf scan of a table)

    c. Available in an open, non-proprietary format (a .csv file instead of an Excel file).

Open Information Requirements [7]

1. A standardized, bilingual metadata record describing the asset. The portal registration process requires metadata based on the Open Government Metadata Application Profile

2. One or more compliant document(s) using open and accessible format(s). Files may be provided in multiple compliant formats (e.g., TXT, HTML, PDF-U/A and EPUB3) provided each file instance contains the same information.

3. Open information documents must comply with the Standard on Web Accessibility and the *Policy on Official Languages*.

4. Open Information assets can be uploaded to the Open Government Registry; however, this should only be a copy, and not the authoritative or original version. It is important to note that this original version should be maintained within the organization's records management system.

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[6] TBS Open Government Guidebook
[7] TBS Open Government Guidebook

Step Seven **Release:**

Once you have completed steps one to six, it is now time to release the data and information resources. During this step you will need to determine the initial release date and follow the guidelines below on how to publish the resources to the Open Government Registry.

- In order to add a dataset or information to the Open Government Registry, https://registry.open.canada.ca you will first need to request an account by filling out the 'Request an Account' form found on the registry. An active account linked to your organization lets you create or modify records in the Open Government Registry. Organizations act like publishing agents for records, this means records can be released by, and belong to an organization rather than individual users.

- Once you have created an account you will be able to add open data and open information records to the registry. In order to do so, you will have to include essential metadata information such as the catalogue, dataset and asset type.

- The Open Government Registry Guide provides details on the required steps to release a record on open.canada.ca.

Step Eight **Manage:**

 Managing open data and information resources that have been released is one of the most crucial subsequent steps in ensuring police transparency and accountability. Given the constant evolving social, political, economic, and technological climate, we must continue to ensure the data/information released is relevant, up-to-date, and maintains quality assurance.

Table 4: Review Standards

Standards	Description
Metadata	It is recommended that you bundle similar datasets / information assets together and create one metadata record in the Open Government Registry, rather than creating a record for each individual resource. For example, datasets that are released annually, or in subsets should be added on the same record.
Release Frequency	Although the release frequency was identified in

Standards	Description
	a previous step, given constant evolving circumstances, it is crucial to revisit the release frequency during this step.
Relevance	When completing a review of published data and information resources, keep in mind the relevance of the resource and whether it is worthwhile to continue publishing "x" type of data.
Application Programming Interface (API)	Consider whether API is available to use.
Review Process	Identify a regular review cycle to evaluate the released data for any discrepancies, outdated information, or amendments that must be made. Updated releases do not require the completion of stage one.

References

1. https://open.canada.ca/en/open-data-principles
2. TBS Open Government Presentation "New Features Preview" – We can provide the deck if requested
3. https://open.canada.ca/en
4. TBS Open Government Guidebook – We can provide the guide if requested
5. TBS Open Government Guidebook - We can provide the guide if requested
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