

Letter of intent to co-develop commitments for the Open Government Partnership National Action Plan

A permanent dialogue mechanism should be established through which the Government of Canada co-develops and agrees the commitments for its Open Government Partnership National Action Plan (NAP) with civil society representatives of the Civil Society Network (CSN). Specifically:

Government and civil society should work together to agree a process for developing the NAP. This may include developing a partnership agreement outlining how each party will work and how decisions will be made, along with a work plan with clear milestones for when activities need to be completed leading up to the publication of the NAP.

The work plan should include adequate time for relevant signoff processes within the CSN and government. It should be discussed and agreed at an early stage of the process how sign-off will occur.

With regard to signoff, it is understood that government has the final decision over which commitments to include in the NAP. In turn, the CSN has the final say over whether the process has met the conditions of a partnership or not, based on the principle that a partnership requires joint ownership of the NAP. Robust discussions and communication are necessary to find compromise on these tensions between what civil society wants and what government is prepared to do.

The lead OGP officials should facilitate engagement by policy officials with the development of a NAP. In partnership with the CSN, they should connect relevant policy officials with relevant CSOs to develop commitments. Internal stakeholder engagement should be built into the early stages of the process to ensure buy-in and ownership and to benefit fully from policy officials' expertise.

Government should ensure that adequate and consistent staff capacity is devoted to the development and implementation of a NAP and to ongoing engagement with the CSN. Likewise, CSN members need to allocate adequate staff time to engage in the process.

Meetings should be held on a regular basis between government officials and the CSN to scope out, develop and agree to the commitments to be included in the NAP. These meetings should take place in a neutral location and be open to remote participation. The chairing of these meetings should alternate between government and the CSN to reflect the partnership nature of the OGP. Meeting notes should be published to enable any interested individuals to review what was discussed and agreed.

Web based tools (e.g. Google Docs, webinar platforms) should be used to enable collaborative working between meetings.

Both government and the CSN should have responsibility for expanding the group of stakeholders involved in the process. Beyond ensuring the process is accessible to any interested parties, targeted outreach is needed to reach beyond the self-selected groups that proactively engage.

Signatories

BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association
Canadian Civil Liberties Association
Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic (University of Ottawa)
Canadian Journalists for Free Expression
Canadian Legal Information Institute
Canadians for Tax Fairness
Centre for Law and Democracy
Evidence for Democracy
GeoAlliance
HumanIT
International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group
Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
MTL Data
New Brunswick Social Policy Research Network
Open Calgary
Open Data Institute Toronto
Open Data Ottawa
Open Data Society of BC
Open Democracy Manitoba
Open North
OpenDataWindsorEssex
Our Right to Know
PlaceSpeak
Powered by Data
Right to Know Coalition of Nova Scotia
Urban+Digital