

powered by DATA

From Obligation to Opportunity

FEEDBACK FROM CANADIAN HERITAGE'S OPEN DATA CONSULTATION

About Powered by Data

With the goal of enabling the social sector to benefit from the rapidly changing ways society handles information, Powered by Data works with leaders in nonprofits, governments, and foundations to help them better use, share, and learn from data. Powered by Data also works with key stakeholders to open up their data for social impact. Powered by Data operates on Tides Canada's shared platform, which supports on-the-ground efforts to create uncommon solutions for the common good.

For more, visit <http://poweredbydata.org>

Acknowledgements

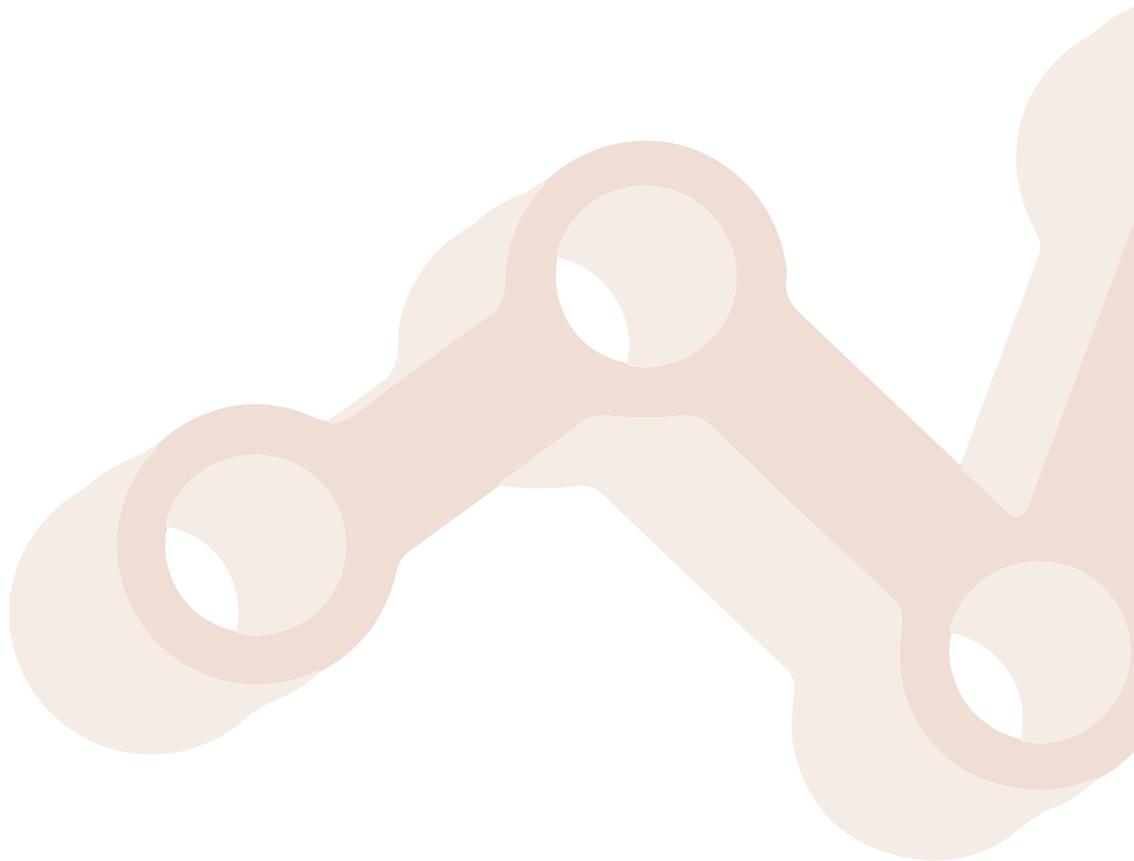
Powered by Data would like to thank the following people for their contributions towards this report: Leslie Cheung, Cedric Jean-Marie, Michael Lenczner, William Murray, and Nicholas Salter.



1124 Marie-Anne E. #11
Montreal, Québec
info@poweredbydata.org
www.poweredbydata.org
[@pwr_d_by_data](https://twitter.com/pwr_d_by_data)

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Executive Summary

Canadian Heritage has a mandate to strengthen Canada's cultural, sports, and creative sectors. Canadian Heritage also has a new obligation to make its information open by default. To that end, Canadian Heritage is investigating how it can develop an open data plan that both fulfills this new obligation and furthers the delivery of its broader mandate.

Powered by Data helps funders and governments open their data and increase the information available to the nonprofit & charitable sector. Canadian Heritage engaged Powered by Data to design and facilitate a consultation to inform their open data plans. This report is a summary of this process and the discussions that took place.

Powered by Data conducted a needs assessment, selected stakeholders, conducted outreach to those stakeholders, and then designed and delivered a consultation in-person and by phone. A total of 29 stakeholders participated.

On the whole, the identified stakeholders were enthusiastic about participating in this consultation. For many of them, this consultation presented a chance to better understand open data, to learn what data Canadian Heritage holds, and to discover the opportunities presented by this data.

The discussions not only covered the data managed by Canadian Heritage, but also various legislative, technical, and operational capacity issues involved in the sharing and use of that data. Despite their enthusiasm, many stakeholders lacked the ability to engage in advanced conversations about data. Because of this gap, the feedback does not focus on the needs for specific data sets, formats, or fields. In order to take advantage of this opportunity stakeholders require additional information, time, and for many, technical capacity.

Powered by Data has based its recommendations on our initial discussions with Canadian Heritage, stakeholder feedback, as well as our own experience assisting other government agencies and departments develop and operationalise open data policies. Each of our 8 recommendations is intended to build the capacity of Canadian Heritage to expand and improve their open data practice. The recommendations fall into three categories of activities:

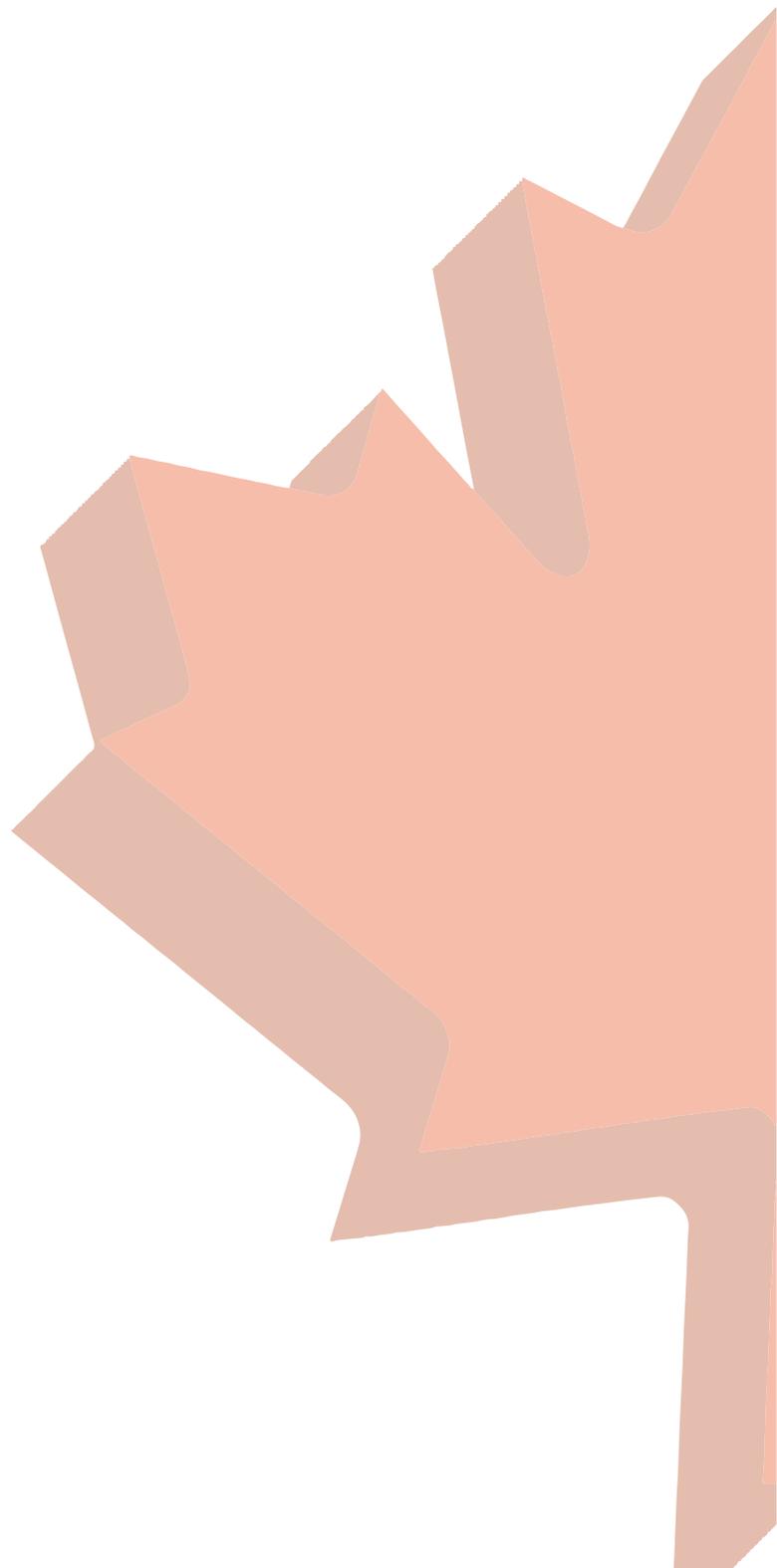
- 1. PUBLISHING DATA**
- 2. ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS**
- 3. GATHERING AND INTEGRATING FEEDBACK.**

Introduction

The Government of Canada reaffirmed its commitment to transparent and accountable government in 2012, when the Government joined the Open Government Partnership, and in June 2013, when the Government endorsed the G8 Charter on Open Data. This was followed by the Directive on Open Government in October 2014. More recently, the Government consulted the Canadian public to develop its Third Biennial Plan to the Open Government Partnership 2016-2018.

Among many others, the Third Biennial Plan contains commitments to expand and improve open data, and provide and preserve open information. These commitments reassert the obligations of each department laid out in the 2014 Directive of Open Government. The implementation of these obligations falls to the various Departments within the Canadian Government.

With this context, Canadian Heritage needed to develop its own open data plan. Canadian Heritage worked with open data experts Powered by Data to lead the design and implementation of a stakeholder consultation. The goal of the consultation was to inform the development of open data policies at Canadian Heritage that align with stakeholder needs, and to help attain the broader policy objectives of the department.



Consultation Process

Powered by Data designed and executed a five-step consultation process:

- 1. NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND DATA EVALUATION**
- 2. CONSULTATION DESIGN**
- 3. STAKEHOLDER SELECTION PROCESS**
- 4. STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH**
- 5. CONSULTATION DELIVERY**

NEEDS ASSESMENT AND DATA EVALUATION

A needs assessment was conducted with relevant Canadian Heritage staff. It was determined that Canadian Heritage wanted feedback from external stakeholders to help them prioritise the release of datasets. Canadian Heritage also shared the current inventory of their data assets which lists over 400 datasets held by the department. Canadian Heritage classified these datasets into seven categories. (See Appendix for the seven dataset classification categories.)

Powered by Data supported Canadian Heritage's goals of properly informing the development of their open data plan by designing a consultation process that deliberately targeted Canadian Heritage's existing stakeholders. Although this is a fairly normal practice in other areas of government, consulting potential data users directly represents an innovation in the open government sector, since the majority of previous consultations have been conducted online and have mostly resulted in participation from the existing open government community.

CONSULTATION DESIGN

Canadian Heritage wanted to invite their stakeholders to a full day, in-person consultation at their offices. The stakeholders that were unable to attend in-person were given the option to participate in a 2-hour telephone consultation. Both meetings would be run bilingually, so that partici-

pants would be able to speak in the official language of their choice. It was important that this stakeholder consultation did not replicate previous open data consultation efforts which only reached the existing open data community.

STAKEHOLDER SELECTION PROCESS

Powered by Data conducted a stakeholder mapping exercise based on conversations with Canadian Heritage. Powered by Data used Canadian Heritage's mandate, its 2016-2017 program architecture, and its organizational structure (reporting organizations) to identify academic, cultural, and civil society stakeholders whose areas of work intersect with Canadian Heritage's mandate. The stakeholder selection process was focused on the NCR, Southern Ontario, and Montreal area. Since time was limited and there was no budget for travel, this geographic restriction was used to maximise the number of participants who would be able to attend the in-person meeting.

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

On behalf of Canadian Heritage, Powered by Data contacted a total of 58 individuals to inquire about their interest in participating in this consultation. Those individuals represented 37 different organizations and included 14 university academics or professional researchers. Of the 58 individuals contacted, only three

did not respond. An additional four felt that their organizational mandate did not fit with the aims of the meeting. The 51 other individuals contacted showed an interest in attending the event but many were ultimately unable to participate. Eight sent representatives from their organization in their place and five asked for one-on-one follow-ups.

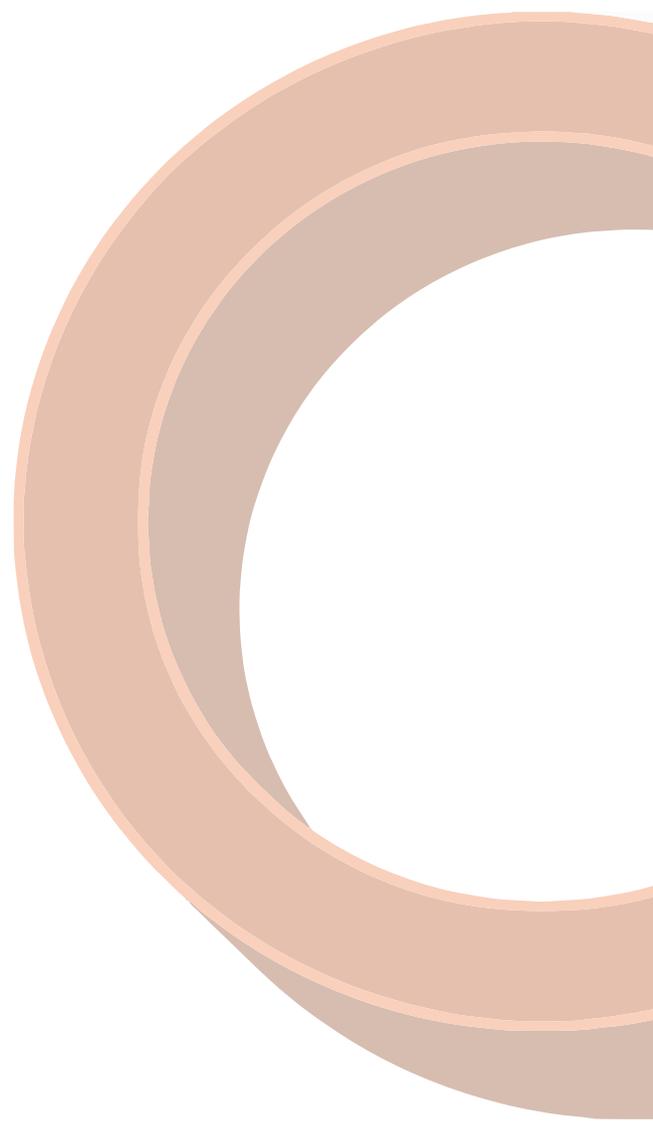
process had revealed a low level of awareness about open data among many of Canadian Heritage's stakeholders. This education was necessary in order to better engage the stakeholders and to begin to collect useful feedback.

CONSULTATION DELIVERY

Eighteen external stakeholders attended the in-person meeting. Eleven additional external stakeholders attended the telephone consultation. Canadian Heritage and government staff from other departments were present during both consultations either in presenting or observing roles.

The discussions in both meetings covered the multiple aims that Canadian Heritage hopes to achieve through its open data plan, the types of data held by Canadian Heritage, the potential beneficial applications of that data for the assembled stakeholders, and the concerns of stakeholders. Those concerns included what data should be shared, how it should be shared, and how groups would ensure that they have the capacity to use the data.

The conversations predominantly served as an introduction to the topic of open data and to starting a dialogue about Canadian Heritage's data assets. This level of conversation was necessary because the initial stakeholder outreach



Results

The overarching finding of the consultation was that Canadian Heritage's stakeholders were enthusiastic about accessing and using more of Canadian Heritage's data. The discussions during both meetings can be grouped into three main areas of consideration:

1. DATA

2. AREAS OF CONCERN

3. DATA CAPACITY

The following are detailed descriptions and summaries of those discussions organized by area of consideration.



DATA

Stakeholders indicated preferences for which data they wanted to access, how that data could be used, and the ways in which they might want it to be standardised.

DATA CATEGORIES

Stakeholders expressed interest in all of the categories of data currently held by Canadian Heritage. There was a noticeable consensus on the value of Grants and Contributions (G&Cs) data. However, there was also considerable interest in performance outcomes data, and data from Canadian Heritage's consultations and commissioned surveys.

DATA USES

Examples of potential uses of Canadian Heritage's data identified by stakeholders included:

- Benchmarking across communities or between similar organizations.
- Accountability to Canadian taxpayers as to the benefits and impact of financial investments in programs and sectors.
- Forecasting trends in programming through G&Cs data, as well as through governance data.
- Understanding similar activities in other communities
- Learning how to improve one's chances of applying for and receiving funding (types of projects, level of detail, success rate per program, etc.)
- Learning about successful programming and how to improve impact.

FIELDS

Canadian Heritage desired feedback on which fields of its data might be of interest to stakeholders. Canadian Heritage made a considerable effort to prepare and share detailed field-level information with stakeholders during both the in-person and phone consultations. However, there was not much feedback from stakeholders about specific fields. This was attributed to the stakeholder unfamiliarity with open data policies and the particular data assets of Canadian Heritage. The following points were mentioned.

- There was a clear desire for both quantitative and qualitative data
- Data enabling geographic breakdowns and comparisons was deemed necessary. Consistency in level of geography across data should be considered.
- Unique identifiers were deemed crucial (ex: project unique identifiers would permit data-users to follow project over time).

- G&Cs data: Canadian Heritage should find a way to publish information about a project at multiple points during its life cycle. In those cases where Canadian Heritage funds an organization which then distributes this funding to other partners, it would be useful to republish the grant with that additional information about secondary recipients.
- Budget data should include:
 - Estimates versus actuals
 - Budget allocations by budget item type
 - Money paid out, and money returned

DATA STANDARDISATION

Stakeholders expressed the desire for Canadian Heritage's data to be standardised for the purpose of comparison and usability, across:

- Years
- Programs
- Different Federal Departments
- Agencies of Canadian Heritage
- Other governments
(Provincial and Municipal)

Stakeholders also wanted to know how taxonomies could be created and agreed upon, the way they would change over time, and how the taxonomies for specific groups (eg. Indigenous groups) would be developed. Stakeholders were also curious about how discus-

sion and agreement on data standards would happen between Canadian Heritage and its stakeholders.

DATA FORMAT

Stakeholders identified the need to reconcile the multiple needs and capacities of potential data users with the resources and time it would take for Canadian Heritage to prepare the data:

- XML was identified as the easiest format for Canadian Heritage to prepare, but the format that required the highest data capacity from users.
- CSV was recognised as having a higher burden for Canadian Heritage and is a format that would not satisfy the high-capacity users but still required some advanced analysis and data skills for other users to manipulate.
- It was also recognised that user-friendly web services would place a high burden on Canadian Heritage to prepare but only require low capacity to use. Examples included web applications which could generate CSV files responding to specific queries. Nonetheless, stakeholders insisted that any web application or tool should also be accompanied by raw data.

There was some discussion of the applications of aggregated data. In the event that information could only be made available as aggregated data because of privacy concerns, stakeholders were concerned about how the categories and levels of aggregation would be decided. They also wo-

ndered which categories and levels of aggregation would be most useful for comparison and standardisation. Stakeholders recognised that aggregated data can prevent stakeholders' ability to innovate and manipulate data.

Stakeholders understood that Canadian Heritage had a limited capacity to provide its data in multiple formats for multiple audiences. This was seen as especially true if one includes potential dedicated web applications to share specific data. Stakeholders were aware that not all formats of data need to be released at the same time. For example, the release of a data product which may require more technical capacity on the side of the user would be useful, even while aggregated data products for less technically capable users were still being prepared.

AREAS OF CONCERN

PROTECTION OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Despite their clear interest in Canadian Heritage making more data available, stakeholders expressed their concern about how Canadian Heritage would balance protecting personal or sensitive (individual, organizational, or project) information. They wanted to know what processes could be put in place to ensure that third party information (eg. applicants for funding) could be included in the release. Stakeholders identified a potential need for a written agreement or notification during the application process which explains to applicants the various public benefits as to why such information would be released.

There was a discussion on the topic of whether or not Canadian Heritage would release information about projects, individuals, and organizations that applied for, but did not receive funding. Stakeholders recognised that this type of release would have positive impacts as it would allow other organizations to learn from failure, and increase transparency and accountability about how funding decisions are made. However, they were concerned that the publishing of such information could have negative consequences on intellectual property and the competitive edge for new projects or processes. They were also concerned about potential negative impressions of the applicant organization's reputation. Based on conversations with stakeholders during and before the consultation, it seemed that indigenous groups have concerns or needs that are not well represented by other stakeholders. It would be necessary to conduct a more targeted consultation to obtain their feedback.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Stakeholders had questions about the limitations of the specific legal and regulatory frameworks that Canadian Heritage is subject to, such as the Access to Information Act or the Official Languages Act. Some stakeholders raised the point that they did not want the obligations of either of these two legislative and regulatory frameworks to prevent the publishing of open data. Stakeholders suggested that a balance could be found whereby Canadian Heritage would ensure access to useful information, while still respecting regulatory and legal obligations.

Specifically in regards to the Official Languages Act, stakeholders recognised that while the metadata and the names of fields were often available in both languages, information keyed in by an applicant or a Canadian Heritage program officer was usually only available in one of the two official languages. Stakeholders did not see translation as the best solution to this for multiple reasons, including being concerned about the quality of translations. However, stakeholders underlined the importance of providing metadata in both languages to allow for discoverability of data in English and in French. Stakeholders also asked about the possible mechanisms that can be put in place for making translation/interpretation requests on a case-by-case basis.

DATA CAPACITY

CAPACITY BARRIERS

Beginning during the stakeholder outreach process, it was evident that Canadian Heritage's stakeholders had a lower data capacity than the open data community. For example, during the outreach process, numerous lengthy conversations were required to explain to stakeholders the potential benefits of attending and the importance of their feedback. This consisted of explanations of what open data is and sharing the potential benefits of Canadian Heritage's data for their organizations. This lack of familiarity with open data, and with some stakeholders, the lack of data capacity, led to different feedback being collected than what was foreseen. During the consultation process, the stakeholders identified numer-

ous technical and organizational barriers to them being able to take full advantage of Canadian Heritage's available data.

One key issue for all stakeholders was having information about the data that might be available from Canadian Heritage. Some stakeholders reported difficulties in imagining how they might use the data without a better understanding of what might be available.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Stakeholders discussed what tools would be needed to ensure that they could use the data. They also spoke about which tools could help them build their capacity to use data. Data dictionaries, codebooks, and codelists were identified as helpful as accompanying data products.

Stakeholders also wanted to know what types of resources would be provided to assist them to use the data. They mentioned the need for:

- Education and information about the possibilities of open data (ie. What can open data do for you?).
- Training on how to work with open data tools (eg. metadata, finding information, how to use any accompanying web applications, etc).

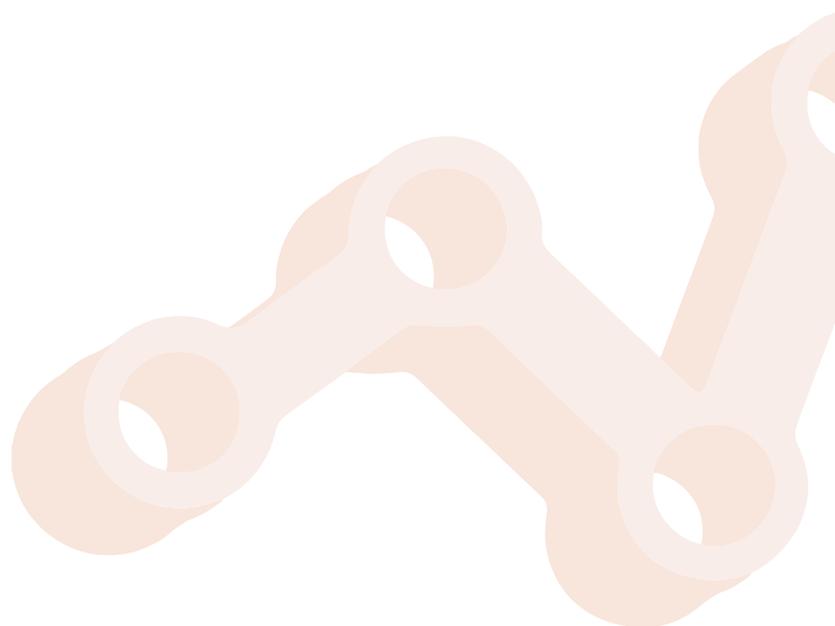
The feedback during the consultation made it clear that the consultation served to raise awareness of the potential benefits of open data among existing stakeholders.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are based on what was heard from stakeholders during the consultation and on our experience and expertise with open data. Our recommendations are not ranked in order of importance. Each recommendation is intended to build the capacity of Canadian Heritage to expand and improve its open data practice.

The recommendations are grouped into three categories of activities:

- 1. PUBLISHING DATA**
- 2. ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS**
- 3. GATHERING AND INTEGRATING FEEDBACK.**



PUBLISHING DATA

RECOMMENDATION #1

SOMETHING IS BETTER THAN NOTHING

Publish a data product or set of data products to gather feedback. It may seem daunting to begin releasing what might be judged as imperfect data. One method to improving data is to publish and then gather feedback. Publishing data will give insight into the processes and considerations required of Canadian Heritage. In addition, users may then be able to comment on more precise issues such as format, usability, and field specific information.

RECOMMENDATION #2

PRIORITISE BASED ON EXISTING FEEDBACK

Prioritise G&C data products and consultation, survey, and engagement data. Stakeholders were overwhelmingly interested in these two types of products. G&C products are the largest data asset of Canadian Heritage, and the release of this as open data would empower Canadian Heritage to consider and address some of the more pressing issues discussed above. The consultation, survey, and engagement data should be a priority because only limited data embedded in reports has previously been made available.

RECOMMENDATION #3

FORMAT MATTERS

Publish CSV and XML or JSON formats first. These formats should be a standard for the release of future data assets. These formats pose a minimal burden on Canadian Heritage, meaning that the release can be done in a timely manner. Releasing data in CSV and XML/JSON formats will permit high capacity users to provide feedback on specific data field issues, as well as help identify gaps in service for those data users unable or unwilling to access this data for manipulation. This will assist in planning future data products for different user audiences.

RECOMMENDATION #4

ACCESSORISE APPROPRIATELY

Publish codebooks, data dictionaries, and metadata to accompany data products. This is a standard best practice for open data and was clearly reiterated by consultation participants. Providing these resources and tools will dramatically increase the value and the use of the data, relative to the time taken to create them.

COMMUNICATING AND ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

RECOMMENDATION #5

OPEN DATA IS A TWO-WAY STREET

Design and implement a consultation process which engages and educates its external stakeholders on an ongoing basis. This will permit Canadian Heritage to acquire further feedback to inform their open data plan, and it can also prepare stakeholders to make use of that data when it is made available. The consultation served as a practical way to introduce external stakeholders to Canadian Heritage's data. We believe that it increased the likelihood of those stakeholders to use Canadian Heritage's data when it is made available, and therefore of the chances of achieving the stated goals of federal open data policies.

RECOMMENDATION #6

IGNORANCE IS NOT BLISS

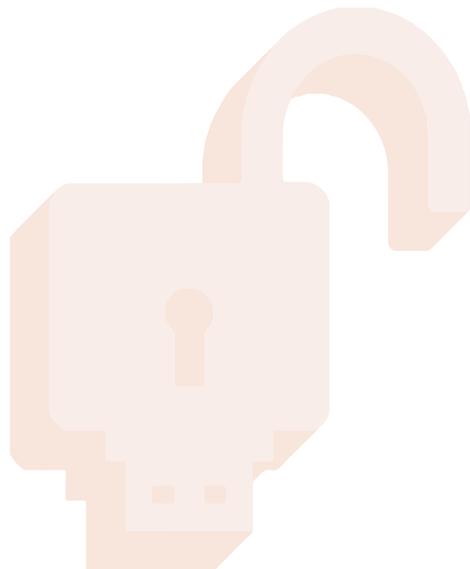
An open data plan is only as effective as its communications plan. **External communications plans are necessary to ensure that open data will be used. Internal communications are necessary to build an open data culture within the organization.** Communications are informative at the very least, but should also include training and education on how to access, re-use, and publish open data.

RECOMMENDATION #7

HELP THEM HELP YOU

It is easy to get caught up in the details, but having a larger vision for Open Data is important too. **“Government as a platform” is a vision that could be adopted to further develop Canadian Heritage’s role as a supporter of other organizations.** Government as a platform means government can serve to enable anyone with a good idea to build innovative services that connect government to citizens, give citizens visibility into the actions of government, and even allow citizens to participate directly in policy-making.

As one of the Federal departments who awards the most Grants and Contributions, Canadian Heritage already accomplishes its goals by assisting other stakeholders in accomplishing theirs. By explicitly adopting the idea of “Government as a platform” Canadian Heritage will be able to take full advantage of the opportunities presented in its open data work.



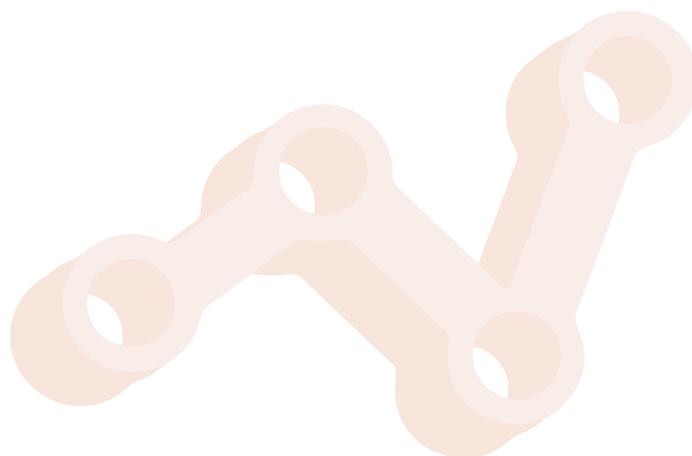
LEARNING: GATHERING AND INTEGRATING FEEDBACK

RECOMMENDATION #8

CULTURE TRUMPS STRATEGY

Promote organizational management buy-in by increasing awareness and understanding of open data.

The open data directive is a new policy and is based on data & technology. This guarantees that not everyone will have a common understanding of what operationalising it will involve. As a new policy that reaches across Canadian Heritage departments, leadership is needed from senior management in order to foster a culture of open data within the organization. Because this is new for many staff, and many may lack strong data literacy and technical ability, special training and support is required when requesting their involvement in this work.



Appendix

CATEGORIES OF DATA HELD BY CANADIAN HERITAGE

1. Procurement

- Internal data that would be released under Proactive Disclosure.
- Eg. Travel costs, Contracts over \$10K, Disclosure of wrongdoing

2. Human Resources/Workplace Management

- Internal HR of Canadian Heritage
- Eg. staffing, grievances, workplace incidents, telework

3. Governance

- Includes briefing books, committee minutes, agendas, etc.
- May be more closely related to Open Information than Open Data.
- May be text-based field datasets available

4. Consultations/Surveys/Engagement

- Surveys of individuals participating in programs, or of organizations within mandate.

5. Events

- Only includes events put on by Canadian Heritage, not those funded under grants and contributions.
- Eg. Royal tours, state funerals, Canada 150 events, Tulip Festival

6. Grants & Contributions (G&C)

- Both administrative (assessment) data and results & performance based data available.
- Information on organization & project.
- Makes up the majority of datasets in inventory.

7. Performance

- Post-Assessment of Canadian Heritage programming and external programming funded by grants & contributions.
- Evaluation of program or event.
- Can include both qualitative and quantitative data.