

Canada Open Government Working Group  
Canada Joint Councils Update Report (September 2022)

## Summary

- Overview on the Canada Open Government Working Group 2021-2022 priorities
- Outline of 2021-2022 activities and internal meetings
- Process of shifting from a working group to community of practice
- Priorities moving forward

## Background

### *Open Government and Why it Matters*

Open Government is a key Federal, Provincial, Ministerial priority and interjurisdictional effort across governments in Canada and abroad. In addition to being a global movement, it is an international responsibility. Mainstreaming Open Government is an opportunity for public servants to more effectively deliver the programs and services Canadians want and expect, and it is well-aligned with the Joint Council's priorities on digital strategy and client-centric services.

### *Canada Open Government Working Group*

The Canada Open Government Working Group (COGWG) is a forum for multi-jurisdictional collaboration and advancement of key pan-Canadian Open Government priorities, such as federated Open Data search, and standardizations including developing metadata standards. COGWG is comprised of members from federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments, as well as municipal organizations.

Presently, the group is co-chaired by the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec. The group meets monthly to advance work and ensure alignment on key Open Government priorities. COGWG shares expert advice on Open Government and reports to the Joint Councils.

## Current Status

### *COGWG 2021 Priorities*

The COGWG Work Plan 2021 identified the following priorities to be actioned jointly by members:

1. Develop good practices on Open Data and COVID-19
2. Building Open Data ecosystems
3. User-centered Data Portals

### *Meetings and Activities 2021*

Over 2021, COGWG held eight internal meetings to advance the 2021 priorities. Meetings included a mix of presentations and discussions, including interventions from nine federal, provincial, or territorial departments or agencies. Some of the discussions included closing and approving of annual Work Plans, presentations on Open Algorithms, Open Data, Open Government Portals, and cross jurisdictional Director General-Level meetings. Certain meetings did not take place due to the Canadian federal election writ period and seasonal time off. A list of meetings and activities that took place in 2021 is

attached as **Annex A**.

### *COGWG 2022 Priorities*

In 2021 COGWG members jointly developed and agreed upon a Forward Agenda for 2022. This has served as a guiding document for activities to be undertaken over the course of the year in alignment with the group's mandate and based on learnings from the previous Work Plan. As the group looked to shift from a working group to a community of practice, no formal Work Plan was developed for 2022.

### *Meetings and Activities 2022*

From January to July 2022, COGWG has held seven internal meetings to advance 2022 priorities as set forth in the Forward Agenda for the year. Meetings have included a mix of presentations and discussions, including interventions from seven federal, provincial, or territorial departments or agencies. Some of the discussions have included advancement of the Forward Agenda for 2022, presentations on Moving Open Government to the Cloud, provincial Data Plans and Information Asset Registers, as well as Canada's 2022-24 National Action Plan on Open Government. The Forward Agenda for 2022 and a list of meetings and activities that took place over the year are listed in **Annex B**.

### *Shifting from a Working Group to a Community of Practice*

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat conducted bilateral calls with each provincial and territorial representative of COGWG in Fall 2021 to take stock of members' perception of the working group.

Members were asked questions about their expectations, time commitment, the working group's successes, and the preference between pursuing a working group or a community of practice model, as well as reporting on progress to the Joint Councils.

Through these bilateral discussions, it was revealed that members see COGWG as a platform to share good practices, showcase initiatives, find inspiration, and build connections. All members shared that they have limited resources and time to commit specifically to Open Government work because of concurring and shifting priorities, especially those brought about due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most jurisdictions prefer a Community of Practice model or recommend there being more flexibility with COGWG projects and deliverables, instead of a formal Work Plan where the group must report to the Joint Councils at the beginning, middle and end of year. The Community of Practice would be a place to exchange good practices and foster networking and connections across jurisdictions so that they can learn from each other.

Following these bilateral discussions, members wanted to understand how this recommended shift in working would impact the relationship with the Joint Councils. In April 2022, the secretariat met with Joint Councils representatives, who confirmed that a shift in structure towards a Community of Practice would have no repercussions on the partnership. This would mean that COGWG could still ask for insight and funding from the Joint Councils, and work across working groups.

### *Planned Work to Update the Terms of Reference*

With this information, the group is planning on moving forward in Fall 2022 with changing the structure of COGWG. This will involve:

- Altering the terms of reference and name of the group
- Seeking approval from the co-chairs and the group on the updated terms of reference
- Seeking formal adoption of the changes with the group
- Tabling the changes to Joint Councils for review and approval.

#### *Priorities Moving Forward*

In addition to the proposed changes to the group's terms of reference, COGWG members held discussions on a project that the group might drive forward this year. Potential options were devised based on themes across multiple jurisdictions. Engagement with group members provided evidence of interest in projects across two areas:

1. Developing and maintaining user-centered Open Data Portals, and
2. Strengthening public engagement on Open Data and Open Government.

An outline of the proposed projects is available in **Annex C**. Given resource constraints across jurisdictions, the group will explore several opportunities for resourcing to produce tangible results for the proposed projects. Members will have an opportunity to decide whether work on the two projects should continue in 2023.

## Annex A – COGWG 2021 Internal Meetings

The following internal meetings and initiatives, actioned among jurisdictions, demonstrate advancement of the 2021 priorities.

Date	Activities
2021-01-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation on Virtual Budget Consultation Sessions, Government of Northwest Territories</li> <li>• Discussion on closing the 2020 COGWG Work Plan</li> <li>• Presentation of Final Version of the 2021 COGWG Work Plan</li> </ul>
2021-02-09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation on GeoExplorer, Statistics Canada, Government of Canada</li> <li>• Discussion on “Suggest a Dataset” process for datasets requested from Provincial, Territorial governments through the Government of Canada Open Government Portal</li> </ul>
2021-03-09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on Open Algorithms led by the Government of Ontario</li> <li>• Brainstorming session for COGWG Director General-Level Meeting in May 2021</li> </ul>
2021-04-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on Draft Agenda for the COGWG Director General-Level Meeting in May 2021</li> <li>• Visioning Exercise on the Future of Open Government</li> </ul>
2021-05-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director General-Level meeting on The Value of Open Data (Benefits to Governments &amp; Citizens)</li> <li>• Updates on Open Government Week</li> <li>• Presentation on the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Local Program by Deputy Director, OGP Local</li> <li>• Presentation on the Canadian Open Data Summit 2021</li> <li>• Case Study on 2020 Public Budget Dialogue by the Government of the Northwest Territories</li> </ul>
2021-06-08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation on Ontario Open Data Licensing User Testing, Government of Ontario</li> <li>• Presentation on Open Reference Data, Government of Quebec</li> </ul>
2021-07-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation on OrgBook BC &amp; Corporate Transparency Government of British Columbia</li> <li>• Discussion on the 2021 Open Data Contest , Government of Nova Scotia</li> <li>• Discussion on a jurisdictional scan on proactive disclosure legislative requirements and implementation, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat</li> </ul>
2021-08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No meeting</li> </ul>
2021-09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No meeting</li> </ul>
2021-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No meeting</li> </ul>
2021-11-09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation on the Summary of Conversations on the Future of COGWG, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat</li> <li>• Discussion on Agreement on the COGWG Forward Agenda for 2022</li> </ul>
2021-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No meeting</li> </ul>

## Annex B - COGWG 2022 Forward Agenda and Internal Meetings

COGWG members jointly developed and agreed upon a Forward Agenda for 2022. This included proposing a list of topics and themes for COGWG meetings to be held in 2022, based on emerging or recurring priorities across jurisdictions. Developing potential topics in advance of each meeting set the stage for activities undertaken over the course of the year. The following internal meetings and initiatives, actioned among jurisdictions, demonstrate advancement of the 2022 proposed topics and themes, and identify pending forward agenda items.

Forward Agenda Topic	Status
Presentation on how to ensure the standardization of Open Datasets - experience of the Canadian Council on Geomatics, Natural Resources Canada, Government of Canada	COMPLETED 2022-01-11
Presentation on transitioning to cloud for Open Data Portals, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat	COMPLETED 2022-02-08
Web revitalization – how can we offer a better UX to find information and data, Government of Manitoba	COMPLETED 2022-03-08
Presentation on how Open Government can strengthen the digital transformation of government, Government of Quebec	COMPLETED 2022-05-10
<b>Pending Forward Agenda Topics</b>	
Discussion on how to develop and adopt proactive disclosure legislative requirements and implement them	
Presentation on how to create a data inventory	
Discussion on how to prioritize the release of data	
Discussion on how to raise awareness and better communicate Open Government across the public service	
Discussion on the potential of Open Data and AI	
Presentation on how to anonymize data	
Presentation on how to collect and manage disaggregated data	
Presentation on the spectrum of openness for data Portals	
Discussion on Wise Practices Guidebook for Engaging with Indigenous People and Northern Communities: Developing Policies and Programs on Harmonious Foundations	
Discussion on how we can ensure the quality and timeliness of data	
Review of the year	

In addition to the Forward Agenda Topics, COGWG also carried out the following additional activities at each meeting in 2022. No meeting was held in August 2022 due to planned seasonal time off.

Date	Additional Activities Undertaken
2022-01-11	Review of Forward Agenda for 2022
2022-02-08	Presentation OECD Scan of Open Government in Canada, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat
2022-03-08	Presentation on the Open Government Partnership Local Program, Open Government Partnership
2022-04-12	<p>Discussion on Projects for COGWG in 2022, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat</p> <p>Presentation on Open Government Week 2022, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat</p>
2022-05-10	Presentation on Open Government Week 2022, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat
2022-06-14	<p>Presentation on British Columbia Data Plan, Government of British Columbia</p> <p>Presentation on Canada's 2022-24 National Action Plan on Open Government, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat</p>
2022-07-12	<p>Presentation on Nova Scotia's Information Asset Register (IAR), Government of Nova Scotia</p> <p>COGWG updates, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat</p>

## Annex C – COGWG 2022 Proposed Projects

### *Developing and maintaining user-centered Open Data Portals*

#### Rationale

- “User-centered Data Portals” was a focus of the 2021 COGWG Work Plan but saw limited progress due to resource strains in managing projects.
- Developing user-centered Open Data Portals is currently a key priority for some territorial jurisdictions, such as Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
- This project would allow jurisdictions with existing Portals to share their practices and experiences. It would also benefit these jurisdictions, as they are continuously seeking to improve their existing Portals.
- A focus on developing and maintaining user-centered Open Data Portals ties in with other current priorities of provinces and territories, such as:
  - Building data inventories,
  - Collecting and ethically managing disaggregated data,
  - Anonymizing data,
  - Ensuring the quality and timeliness of data.
- Additional resources to support work around user-centered Open Data Portals could:
  - Work with relevant stakeholders, including provinces and territories, municipalities, and federal organizations, to collect resources and tools on developing and maintaining user-centered Open Data Portals.
  - Use the information and resources collected to develop and maintain a toolkit or guidebook on best practices around user-centered Open Data, which COGWG members could refer to when developing or improving their Portals.

### *Strengthening public engagement on Open Data and open government*

#### Rationale

- A focus on better public engagement on Open Data and Open Government aligns with current priorities of some jurisdictions:
  - Nova Scotia intends to focus the next fiscal year on improving their public engagement on Open Data.
  - Northwest Territories is refreshing their common approach to public engagement.
  - Other jurisdictions, including New Brunswick, expressed that they face a challenge of communicating the value of Open Data and Open Government programs to senior management and other departments, which could tie into how jurisdictions engage partners on Open Data and Open Government.
- Focusing on strengthening public engagement on Open Data and Open Government intersects with topics in our 2022 Forward Agenda, including:
  - Creating engagement specialists,
  - Leveraging digital consultations to reach more people,

- Raising awareness about, and better communicating Open Government across the public service.
- Additional resources could support the following activities:
  - Researching and collecting information on best practices to strengthen public engagement around Open Government and Open Data.
  - Using the tools and information collected to organize a public engagement bootcamp for COGWW members, which could include regular training activities for COGWW members and train-the-trainer sessions to help build capacity for public engagement.