

Open Government Partnership Submission

by Ben Minerds

This is my second submission to the OGP process this year, my earlier submission generally supported the proposal on “4.3 Open Contracting” (Fri, Oct 7, 2016) and I still stand by that submission and am still happy for it to be published along with this submission. However I found the the community consultations and specifics of the commitment have issues which I feel should be addressed

In regards to the community consultation I felt there was poor outreach to local interest groups. For instance web-searches for “open data”, “whistle blowers” and “open source software” in Melbourne return high ranking results for “Open Knowledge”, the “Whistle Blower Network” and “Linux Users Victoria” respectively. However despite these and other groups prominence in the community there was no outreach I was aware of to connect and raise awareness of the OGP.

I feel it would be reasonable to connect with at least a few local community groups connected with each theme in each major city. At a minimum this should include an invitation to join any in-person consultation and instructions on how to connect with mailing lists, wiki pages or any other outreach methods employed

The place and timing of the information and consultation sessions seemed to only be convenient for public servants and special interest groups working in the city. If you were unemployed, there was the cost of traveling to the city. If you had a job, it was during business hours. Perhaps some consultation could be done on weekends or evenings to increase the possibility that people will participate

While I do commend the organizers on accepting various submission formats no feedback that submission is received was offered. So people are left without confirmation or certainty about there submissions, I for example don’t know if my first submission was accepted but not published, or lost, or unacceptable for any reason. As mentioned earlier this is my second submission and my first has not appeared on <https://ogpau.govspace.gov.au/contribute/public-consultation/>

I understand that personally responding to each commitment might be an onerous task, but at least confirming that submissions have been received should be a minimum and something like returning a link to the submission would make the system more useful and allow more dynamic sharing of OGP submissions. I would even see value in drawing similar submissions to peoples attention when their concern is being widely discussed by a segment of the community, this may save time in the long run by bringing diverse communities together to consolidate various positions before bringing them to the OGP

The consultations and cut off dates reduce the impression of a continuous feedback cycle. It may be beneficial to include messaging to the effect that the cut off date relates to getting the first round done, but that submissions would be received and considered on an ongoing basis. Also helpful would be to have

planned consultations booked in for after the round one submissions close to indicate that just because round one is over, the discussion is just beginning

OCDS

The commitment to publish review of OCDS compliance in May 2017 is promising but I am concerned that outreach to the community for feedback should be vigorous and intentioned. I feel that the review should include metrics which will be comparable to measures taken in August and through the life of the program such as the percentage of councils/states at 3 star or better compliance

As it stands it seems the goal is not very ambitious and would be almost impossible to fail, we can confirm the star rating for a state in a matter of minutes (in most cases I know of 1 or 2 star), and if a state that was at one star starts publishing non-machine readable documents by the end of 2017 we'll still call it a win, but be in about the same place

I would also like to see the federal government lead the way by setting a timeframe for 5 star compliance with the OCDS standard. 3 star compliance only requires the current practices to adopt the standard, 4 star compliance comes for free by adopting the standard in a meaningful way. Then 5 star compliance just requires linking back to the budget

Other issues

The coverage of privacy in the OGP seems to be focused on government image damage control

Please consider for a moment the four occurrences of “privacy” in the draft plan and what this says to people:

1. “address public concerns, including perceived values, risks, and attitudes towards privacy.”
2. “improve privacy risk management capability”
3. “Privacy Act underpins the open data agenda and helps build public trust”
4. “consider options for reforms to [...] the Privacy Act”

“Address attitudes”, “risk management”, “build trust”, “options”... It seems that the governments main strategy in regards to it's citizens privacy is to maintain an image and manage it's risks. I'm not saying that these are things a government should neglect, but hardly represent ambitious goals for an open government. I would think goals that actually strengthen the rights and privacy of citizens would be more appropriate such as a declaration of digital liberties or digital rights

With that in mind I wish you all the best in France and congratulate you on your first round in the Open Government Partnership

~~ Ben