

Summary

The Obama administration's release of the Open Government Directive in late 2009 launched efforts across executive branch agencies to enhance transparency, participation, and collaboration. The agencies responded with open government plans that outline specific initiatives to comply with the Directive. The plans serve as roadmaps showing how agencies can advance the key principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration through new or enhanced programs and services. The results of the Directive at the federal level have been matched by expanded open government activities in many state and local governments.

These expanded open government initiatives have not been matched, however, by an expanded capability to assess their impact or overall value. The stated goal of these programs and policies is the pursuit of transparency, participation, and collaboration, ideas that resonate in familiar and positive ways. Without further elaboration and framing, however, these ideas do not provide a basis to compare alternative initiatives, to say how they have opened government, or how much public value they may produce. There has been little attention to what actions and programs count as transparent, participative, or collaborative, and from whose perspective such judgments should be evaluated.

Through a series of initiatives, CTG considers open government from multiple perspectives, within the context of the academic field of e-government, and in a broader context in public administration. Delving into questions such as- What does it mean for government to be "open" and what are the means by which information available to citizens will be both useful and accessible? How should leaders administer agencies within the executive branch facilitate openness and how is that best assessed?

Public Value Tool (PVAT)

CTG received an Early-Concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER) from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to develop a conceptual design of a resource for open government leaders and to start the development of a research proposal that lays out the most pressing questions surrounding emerging technologies, open government, and citizen services.

- *Resource for Government Leaders* - The development of the resource for open government leaders is presented in the report *Open Government and Public Value: Conceptualizing a Portfolio Assessment Tool (PVAT)*. As part of the process, CTG held the workshop "Balancing Your Agency's Open Government Portfolio: A Public Value Approach" with federal open government leaders to test and refine the conceptual design of the tool in an open dialogue with peers from other agencies. This half day workshop was held in December 2010 at the National Academy of Public Administration in Washington, DC. It resulted in new insights in open government and public value assessment. More >>
- *A Research Proposal* - Throughout the entire investigation and development process, CTG has documented the most pressing research questions and areas of research that are critical to the understanding and evaluation of open government. A research proposal is forthcoming.

Publications & Results

Online Resources (1)



Open Government Portfolio Public Value Assessment Tool

Fri, 15 Apr 2011

The **Open Government Portfolio Public Value Assessment Tool (PVAT)** offers government leaders with an approach to making better informed decisions about their portfolio of open government initiatives. This tool provides a structured way to assess the public value of an initiative so that an agency can review the expected public value across their entire portfolio of open government initiatives. The information generated from using this tool can then support decisions about the mix of initiatives in a portfolio and how to adjust the mix to enhance the agency's public value

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Reports and Working Papers (4)



The Dynamics of Opening Government Data

Fri, 30 Nov 2012

The information polity perspective described in this paper provides government a way to identify the various stakeholders and their patterns of interaction that influence or control the generation, flows, and uses of enhanced information resources in open data initiatives. The dynamic modeling techniques used highlight the ways different constraints can impact the system as a whole and affect value creation. These tools support planners' ability to generate informed hypotheses about changing patterns of interaction among existing and potential new stakeholders. In this way, governments can better evaluate the costs, risks, and benefits of a wide variety of open data initiatives.

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Modeling the Informational Relationships between Government and Society: A Pre-Workshop White Paper

Thu, 26 Jul 2012

This white paper is part of a year long CTG thought leadership project with SAP focused on developing new research and practical tools for helping government produce public value from their open government initiatives. In June of 2012, the paper was shared with an international group of open government experts from government, academia, and the private sector; 25 of which convened at CTG in Albany, NY at the end of June. Workshop participants provided feedback on the conceptual model presented in the paper and crowdsourced ideas for improvement. CTG is using the results from the workshop to develop a final version of the paper and identify opportunities with the workshop participants for testing and implementing the approach with governments pursuing open government initiatives.

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Developing Public Value Metrics for Returns to Government ICT Investments

Fri, 01 Jun 2012

This report presents a new approach to assessing public value returns as part of an overall return on investment analysis for government information and communication technologies (ICT). The approach addresses one basic question about public value assessment: What constitutes good evidence of public value impacts? The answers provided here are intended to augment the return on investment analysis methods found in the *E-Gov Economics Model: Real Impact for Better Government*, developed by Microsoft. However, the approach here has potential uses beyond connection with that Model, and can be more generally useful in the assessment of public value returns to government programs and investments. The approach consists of a way to identify, collect, and interpret a variety of evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, that can be used to assess public value impacts. The approach is designed for use by government practitioners and analysts in connection with return on investment (ROI) analyses. It is particularly aimed at use in connection with the *E-Gov Economics Model* to examine ICT investments by national and sub-national governments. The report includes recommended methods to collect and analyze these forms of evidence. The approach is based on prior work of the Center for Technology in Government and a thorough review of available research and professional writing on the subject of measuring public value. That review includes research in the related scientific literature and a survey of best practices reported in literature about government IT value assessment in the US and other countries. A draft version of this report was shared with a sample of knowledgeable government officials and analysts for review and comments.

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An Open Government Research and Development Agenda Setting Workshop: A Summary Activity Report

Tue, 10 Jun 2011

The Open Government Research and Development Agenda Setting Workshop was sponsored and conducted by a collaborative team from the Center for Technology in Government (CTG) at the University at Albany, the Tetherless World Constellation (TWC) at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the Institute for Law and Policy (IILP) at New York Law School, and Civic Commons was organized to outline a research agenda focused on opening up, federating, and using data to improve the lives of citizens. This activity report is an account of the contributions made at the workshop. Following the release of this activity report, we will focus on the analysis of the results working toward a set of recommendations and action steps.

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Journal Articles and Conference Papers (7)



Creating Open Government Ecosystems: A Research and Development Agenda

October 23, 2012

In this paper, we propose to view the concept of open government from the perspective of an ecosystem, a metaphor often used by policy makers, scholars, and technology gurus to convey a sense of the interdependent social systems of actors, organizations, material infrastructures, and symbolic resources that can be created in technology-enabled, information-intensive social systems. We use the concept of an ecosystem to provide a framework for considering the outcomes of a workshop organized to generate a research and development agenda for open government. The agenda was produced in discussions among participants from the government (at the federal, state, and local levels), academic and civil sector communities at the Center for Technology in Government (CTG) at the University at Albany, SUNY in April 2011. The paper begins by discussing concepts central to understanding what is meant by an ecosystem and some principles that characterize its functioning. We then apply this metaphor more directly to government, proposing that policymakers engage in strategic ecosystems thinking, which means being guided by the goal of explicitly and purposefully constructing open government ecosystems. From there, we present the research agenda questions essential to the development of this new view of government's interaction with users and organizations. Our goal is to call attention to some of the fundamental ways in which government must change in order to evolve from outdated industrial bureaucratic forms to information age networked and interdependent systems.

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Beyond Open Government: Ontologies and Data Architectures to Support Ethical Consumption

October 22-25, 2012

Two important trends on openness are promoting improved accountability from government and private organizations. The case of private transparency finds its roots in consumer and other stakeholder movements. The open government movement in the US is looking for alternatives to "smart disclosure," which implies providing consumers with better information to make better buying choices. We explore current knowledge on ethical consumption, as well as two influential technological tools to support consumer decisions. Our initial discussion suggests that the use of ontologies and data architectures, together with the appropriate policy environment and governance system, may solve some of the current problems identified.

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Exploring the Motive for Data Publication in Open Data Initiative: Linking Intention to Action

January 5, 2012

This research study was designed to broaden understanding of the publishing of research datasets by distinguishing between the intention to share and the action of sharing. The data was generated from preliminary survey results conducted by DataONE work groups. The final data used in this paper is based on 587 observations. The analysis results show support for all of the path coefficients of the theoretical model except for the path of perceived self-efficacy, and legal context and policy variables. The intention to share a dataset was found to be a significant determinant in the action of sharing data. Acknowledging the key determinants of intention to publish datasets arguably entails significant policy implications on data sharing.

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Open Government and E-Government: Democratic Challenges from a Public Value Perspective

June 12, 2011

This paper considers open government (OG) within the context of e-government and its broader implications for the future of public administration. It argues that the current US Administration's Open Government Initiative blurs traditional distinctions between e-democracy and e-government by incorporating historically democratic practices, now enabled by emerging technology, within administrative agencies. The paper considers how transparency, participation, and collaboration function as democratic practices in administrative agencies, suggesting that these processes are instrumental attributes of administrative action and decision making, rather than the objective of administrative action, as they appear to be currently treated. It proposes alternatively that planning and assessing OG be addressed within a “public value” framework.

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Stewardship and Usefulness: Policy Principles for Information-based Transparency

October 2010

This paper is a conceptual and empirical exploration of the tensions inherent in the drive to increase openness and transparency in government by means of information access and dissemination. The idea that democratic governments should be open, accessible, and transparent to the governed is receiving renewed emphasis through the combination of government reform efforts and the emergence of advanced technology tools for information access. Although these initiatives are young, they already exhibit daunting complexity, with significant management, technology, and policy challenges. A variety of traditional and emerging information policy frameworks offer guidance, while diverse research perspectives highlight both challenges to and opportunities for promoting information-based transparency. Early experience with Data.gov, a central component of the U.S. Open Government Initiative, suggests that two fundamental information policy principles, stewardship and

usefulness, can help guide and evaluate efforts to achieve information-based transparency.

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Information Strategies for Open Government: Challenges and Prospects for Deriving Public Value from Government Transparency

2010

Information-based strategies to promote open government offer many opportunities to generate social and economic value through public use of government information. Public and political expectations for the success of these strategies are high but they confront the challenges of making government data “fit for use” by a variety of users outside the government. Research findings from a study of public use of land records demonstrates the inherent complexity of public use of government information, while research from information science, management information systems, and e-government offer perspectives on key factors associated with effective information use. The paper concludes with practical recommendations for information-based open government strategies as well as areas for future research.

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Designing electronic government information access programs: a holistic approach

December 13, 2003

That electronic government information repositories are growing in number, use, and diversity is one manifestation of the emergence of e-government. These information-centered programs both shape and respond to user demand for electronic government information as computer-mediated user access has displaced traditional staff-mediated access. These programs are no longer concentrated in statistical agencies but increasingly are offered by a wide array of mission-driven operating agencies to complement their other services. This study identified the design dimensions of electronic information access programs by examining mature existing programs. These dimensions address users, uses, organizational capabilities, data characteristics, and technology. The study then explored the application and interdependence of these dimensions in three efforts to design and develop new access programs. The study produced an empirically based, testable model of observable dimensions that shape the cost, complexity, and potential performance of these programs. In addition, the article offers government managers some insight into the practical implications they will face in designing and operating electronic information access programs.

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Partners

Government Partners

- United States General Services Administration, Office of Citizen Services

Funding Sources

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Press Releases & News Stories

Press Releases

Center for Technology in Government at UAlbany Publishes New Findings on Opening Government
Tue, 04 Dec 2012

UAlbany's Center for Technology in Government Collaborates with SAP on Open Government Thought Leadership Program
Thu, 26 Jul 2012

UAlbany's Center for Technology in Government To Work with Republic of Moldova on Social Media and Open Government
Mon, 12 Mar 2012

CTG Hosted Open Government Research and Development Agenda Setting Workshop
Fri, 29 Apr 2011

CTG Releases Tool for Assessing Open Government Initiatives
Fri, 29 Apr 2011

News Stories

The Future of Open Data

SAP.info

April 8, 2013

Data Drive: Push is on to release municipal info to developers

Urban Tulsa Weekly

March 20, 2013

Big Data Encourages Governments to Transparency and Innovation

Cloud Times

February 12, 2013

Government Technology Ideas Worth Importing

Governing

February 2013

Big Data Opens Governments and Fosters Innovation

Forbes

February 13, 2013

Big Data Opens Governments and Fosters Innovation

SAP Community Network Blog

February 12, 2013

The dynamics of governing Open Data

California Forward Blog

February 08, 2013

Transparency, Social Media and Gun Safety

Governing

February 5, 2013

Open government requires usefulness not just data

FierceGovernmentIT

January 30, 2013

Transparency: What to Consider Before Releasing Data to the Public

Government Technology

January 18, 2013

Smarter Cities Use Software to Engage Citizens

The Triple Pundit

December 24, 2012

Open data advice for government managers

The Guardian

December 8, 2012

The Dynamics of Opening Government Data

Open Health News

December 5, 2012

Government CIOs Strive to Embrace 'Open Data'

CIO Insight

December 6, 2012

Practical Advice for Open Data Managers

All About Open Data Blog

December 8, 2012

Boston unveils BAR app, or Boston About Results, a virtual score card for city services

Boston Globe

December 3, 2012

How Edmonton embraces open data

it World Canada

December 5, 2012

Tech Trends Targeting Cities

United Business Media's Future Cities

December 4, 2012

10 Trends That Are Changing Cities Forever

Business Insider

December 11, 2012

Transparency Demands Cost Governments Money

Government Technology

October 31, 2011

The Future State: Resilient, Sustainable and Inclusive

FutureGov Asia

October 1, 2011

Why Does Open Government Matter?

GOVERNING

July 01, 2011

Asia speeds up e-government efforts

ZDNet Asia

June 14, 2011

Open Government Initiatives Evaluated by New Assessment Tool

Government Technology

May 13, 2011

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