



OPEN GOVERNMENT DATA POLICY

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1 INTRODUCTION

Open data is digital data that is made available with a technical and legal characteristics necessary for it to be freely used, reused, and redistributed by anyone, anytime, anywhere. The data can be a simple text document, an elaborate statistical file, an image, or an audio file. For the data to be considered open, it must be uploaded in a format that allows users to benefit from the data and re-use it in creative ways that are beneficial.

Open Data can facilitate the transfer of Data between Government Entities in a way that supports the transformation of Oman into a sustainable knowledge-based economy. Open Data can also enhance government transparency, provide decision-makers with the data to make informed decisions, generate business opportunities for the private sector, and empower researchers and academics.

The objective of this policy is to set a minimum standard and a coherent approach for publishing Open Data collected or produced by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman to achieve the objectives of Open Data.



2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Create a practical policy framework that enables high-value datasets to be released to the public;
- Simplify and facilitate the release of data by Government entities in Sultanate of Oman;
- Define the principles of open data;
- Helps facilitate implementation of best practice open data principles across the public sector in the Sultanate of Oman.
- Represent the government position on how data in the public domain should be treated

3 SCOPE OF APPLICABILITY

This Policy applies to all government administrative unites.



4 DEFINITIONS

Data: Any documents, photographs, audio clips, audio-visual works, facts, numbers, statistics, and other forms of content collected or produced by the Government Administrative Units.

Government Administrative Units: All Government administrative Units, Authorities, and Public Establishments, including the Companies that Government owned more than 40% of its Capital.

MTC: The Ministry of Technology and Communications.

Dataset: A collection of Data in tabular or non-tabular format.

Bulk Download: A feature to enable the User to download entire Datasets collectively.

Machine-Readable Format: Any file format that is structured in a manner that makes it readily process-able by computer software.

Metadata: The information explaining or providing additional details about a Dataset.

Open Data: Datasets made available on the website of the Government Administrative Unit in a format that permits Users to benefit from the Data and re-use it for any purpose including commercial purposes in accordance with this policy.

Open Government Licence: The legal instrument in Schedule 1.



Use: An activity governed by the Copyright and related Rights Law promulgated by Royal Decree 65/2008 such as copying, translating, adapting, renting, performing, communicating, and making available to the public, broadcasting, and disposing of copies of the work in question in any other manner.

User: Any natural or legal person using the digital content available on the website of a Government Administrative Unit.

5 POLICY STATEMENTS

1. Government Administrative Units shall release open data in accordance with the principles set forth in this policy.
2. Government Administrative Units to assign and define a role responsible for leading open data initiative and to establish data management practice across the Unit.
3. Government Administrative Units shall publish their Datasets that satisfy the provisions of this policy as Open Data on a dedicated page on its websites
4. Government Administrative Units shall provide a feature to receive requests from members of the public to make available additional Open Data, and shall respond to such requests within a period of 15 working days by providing the requested Open Data or explaining why such Open Data cannot be provided.



5. Indicate on the website that the Open Government License applies to the Open Data. See page 13 for an example on appropriate reference to the license.
6. Government Administrative Units may display the © symbol along with the name of the Unit and the year on their Open Data page, but they shall not use the term “All Rights Reserved”
7. Government Administrative Units shall not publish any Data classified as highly confidential, confidential, limited, or restricted in accordance with the Law on the Classification of State Records and the Governance of Protected Areas promulgated by Royal Decree 118/2011.
8. If a Government Administrative Unit publishes its Data on a third-party platform, such as YouTube or SoundCloud, it shall apply to this Data an open license to enable Users to Use the Data for any commercial or non-commercial purpose and without imposing any conditions on the Use other than attribution.
9. Each Government Administrative Unit shall create an inventory of all the Datasets in its possession. Such inventory must specify at least the following information:
 - a. The name of the Datasets.
 - b. Sufficient Metadata explaining the content of the Dataset.
 - c. The person or department responsible for the Dataset within the Government Administrative Unit.
 - d. The method in which this Dataset is populated.



- e. The frequency at which the Dataset must be updated.
10. Each Government Administrative Unit shall create an Open Data Internal Framework. This Framework must include at least the following elements:
- a. The mechanism for identifying and collecting the Data held by the Government Administrative Unit.
 - b. The mechanism for determining the appropriateness of publishing such Data as Open Data.
 - c. The mechanism for ensuring that the personal information of individuals is protected when publishing Open Data.
 - d. The mechanism for promoting the Open Data published by the Government Administrative Unit.
 - e. The mechanism for responding to requests from Users for making available additional Open Data.
 - f. The mechanism for following-up international reports relating to Open Data falling within the competence of the Government Administrative Unit.
11. Each Government Administrative Unit shall assign the responsibility of creating and implementing the Open Data Internal Framework to a specific employee, department, or committee.



6 PRINCIPLES

Government Administrative Units shall comply with the following principles when publishing its Open Data:

1. **Complete:** Datasets released by the government should be as complete as possible, reflecting the entirety of what is recorded about a particular subject. All raw information from a dataset should be released to the public, except to the extent necessary to comply with valid privacy or security requirements regarding the release of personally identifiable information. Metadata that defines and explains the raw data should be included as well, along with formulas and explanations for how derived data was calculated. Doing so will permit users to understand the scope of information available and examine each data item at the maximum level of detail.
2. **Primary:** Datasets released by the government should be primary source data, not in aggregate or modified forms.
3. **Timely:** Datasets released by the government entities are required to be available to the public and updated periodically depending on the nature of the Data (at least on annual basis). Whenever feasible, information collected by the government should be released as quickly as it is gathered and collected. Priority should be given to data whose utility is time sensitive. Real-time information updates would maximize the utility the public can obtain from this information.



4. **Permanent:** Datasets are available permanently (information made available shall remain available) with appropriate version tracking and archiving over time. There shall be proper indication that an alteration has been made. (Refer to data retention as per archive law - Royal Decree 60/2007).
5. **Accessible:** Datasets released by the government shall be feasible and accessible (ability to locate and download content) easily. Providing an interface for users to download all of the information stored in a database at once (known as “bulk” download) and the means to make specific calls for data through an Application Programming Interface (API) make data much more readily accessible.
6. **Machine read-able:** Datasets shall be reasonably structured to allow automated processing and available in machine friendly formats. Information shared in the widely used PDF format, for example, is very difficult for machines to parse. Thus, information should be stored in widely used file formats (CSV,XLS, JSON, XML, etc.) that easily lend themselves to machine processing. These files should be accompanied by documentation related to the format and how to use it in relation to the data.
7. **Trusted:** Published content should be digitally signed (for example: using hashtags) or include attestation of publication/creation date, authenticity, and integrity. Digital signatures help the public validate the source of the data they



- find so that they can trust that the data has not been modified since it was published.
8. **Documented:** Documentation about the datasets, format and meaning of data goes a long way to making the data useful. The principles state that Government websites must provide users with sufficient information to make assessments about the meaning, accuracy and currency of information published.
 9. **Non-discriminatory:** Datasets are available to anyone, at any time without having to identify themselves (with no requirement of registration) or provide any justification for accessing open datasets.
 10. **Non-proprietary:** Datasets are available in a format over which no Unit has exclusive control (data can be accessed without the need for a software license).
 11. **License-free:** Datasets are available with no restrictions on dissemination and are not subject to any copyright, patent, trademark or trade secret regulation. Maximal openness includes clearly labeling public information as a work of the government and available without restrictions on use as part of the public domain. Government entities use Open Data licenses to clearly explain the conditions under which their data may be used. Examples include: Creative Commons, the Open Database License, and The World Bank Terms of Use.

Note: These principles are defined in UN Guidelines on Open Government Data



7 POLICY MANAGEMENT

- This policy is issued by Ministry of Technology and Communications (MTC).
- Ownership of this Policy is vested with MTC and it will be reviewed annually and when required.
- MTC conducts policy compliance audits and report findings to the Cabinet.
- Any exception to this policy shall be approved by MTC



8 Examples on How to Apply the Open Government Licence

Schedule 1

مثال باللغة العربية: يوضع هذا النص في أسفل صفحات الموقع الإلكتروني للوحدة

وزارة التقنية والاتصالات © ٢٠٢٠ - محتويات هذا الموقع مرخصة بموجب الرخصة الحكومية المفتوحة
- سلطنة عُمان .

**English Language Example: To be placed in the footer of the
Unit website**

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this website is licensed under the Open Government License -
Sultanate of Oman.



9 Related References

- A. Royal Decree No. 60/2007 – Records and Archive law
- B. Royal Decree No. 65/2008 - Copyright and related rights
- C. Royal Decree No. 118/2011 and 42/2015 (Information Classification Scheme)
- D. Royal Decree No. 55/2019 – Statistics and Information Law
- E. World Bank Guidelines for Open Data (data.worldbank.org/ogd)
- F. UN Guidelines for Open Data (<http://www.unpan.org>)
- G. Open Knowledge Foundation (<https://okfn.org>)
- H. Sunlight Foundation (<http://sunlightfoundation.com>)
- I. Open Government License – Oman (www.oman.om)