The aim of the Playbook is to:

- **Promote transparency, participation**, and **accountability** within government

- **Define and promote 'open government ways of working'**, and provide a set of actions that could be undertaken to mainstream the open government approach in policymaking

- **Encourage policymakers** to learn more about open government, the Open Government Partnership, National Action Plans, and other open government initiatives

- **Enable policymakers** from all departments and areas to implement the principles of open government throughout every stage of the policy development process.

The cards define the overarching principles of open government and suggest practical steps to embed these principles in policymaking.

Each card represents a different principle of open government at a different stage of the policy/project cycle: before, during, and after.

Further reading:

OPSI have a page with a range of toolkits designed to increase public participation https://oecd-opsi.org/guide/open-government/design-an-open-government-strategy-or-initiative

Open Government Partnership participation and co-creation toolkit https://www.opengovpartnership.org/stories/ogps-participation-and-co-creation-toolkit-from-usual-suspects-to-business-as-usual/

Open Government Partnership Informed Participation Guide https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content uploads/2019/05/Deliberation_Series_Volume-2_Informed_ Participation-Guide.pdf

Involve – How to plan a participatory process https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/knowledge-base/how-do-i-plan-participatory-process/introduction-planning-participation

Spectrum of participation https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/ resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf

Open Government Guide – all topics https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/ uploads/2019/05/open-gov-guide_summary_all-topics1.pdf

You can find out more by searching Open Government Playbook at **gov.uk**

Introduction

1. What do we mean by 'working in policy'? What kind of tasks and actions do we define as policy?

- Advising ministers

- Writing policy papers

- Responding to reports

- Engaging with civil society groups

- Providing answers to questions from the public.

2. What do we mean by 'working in communications'? What kind of tasks and actions do we define as communications?

- Devising and coordinating the Government messages, including: press and campaigns, internal communications, and stakeholder relations

- Maintaining social media accounts and answering public queries on social media

- Building and maintaining strong media relations

- Advising ministers, cross-government professions, and senior civil servants on communications

- Create and implement government and departmental branding.

3. What do we mean by 'working in digital'? What kind of tasks and actions do we define as digital?

- Using modern technology and data to implement policy

- Understanding how people use technology and the impact it has on their lives

- Research, design, development and delivery of digital services (or services that have a digital element)

- Maintaining and developing digital infrastructure (like GOV.UK)

- Prototyping and writing code

- Modelling an agile, iterative approach to projects.

Transparency

Transparency — Definition

The public is easily able to locate, understand, and use information about government activities, for instance: decision making, policy formulation, service provision, results.[1]

Governments ensure full transparency of their actions, processes and data, and information is published in a complete, open, understandable, easily-accessible, and free format.

Transparency can be proactive, e.g. actively publishing data and information of government processes and actions; and, reactive, e.g. responding to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

1. The Gov Lab (2013) Open Government – what's in a name
http://thegovlab.org/open-government-whats-in-a-name

Transparency

Make information about the policy process public as soon as possible using, for instance blogs, announcements, social media or websites to publish:

- white papers
- policy proposals
- feasibility assessments
- analyses
- case studies
- lessons learnt
- timelines
- stakeholder lists (including lobbyists and informal groups)
- anticipated budgets
- procurement data

Transparency

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Transparency

Accurately capture the process of developing your project/policy.

Ensure the decision-making journey is available online in a timely manner, with opportunities for public input and feedback clearly marked.

Publish original documents and details of the meetings held, e.g. minutes and readouts, or a list of key issues discussed.

If running external consultations, capture and publish all activities and outcomes, and make them available to the public (if information and data is not sensitive, e.g. defined as GDPR or FOI exceptions).

Publish an aggregated statistical overview of the engagement, e.g. 10 roundtables with 60 stakeholders, 15 of whom were from the government, 30 from the civil society groups, and 15 from the private sector.

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Transparency

Make evaluation reports and next steps public. Consider publishing reports in different formats to make them accessible to different groups of people (e.g. pdf, doc, and html formats).

Any data (with the exception of personal and sensitive data) generated during the project should be made publicly available on gov.uk in an open, machine-readable format.

Stick to the timeline of publishing this data, and be clear if there are any delays.

Open Government Playbook

Participation

Open Government Playbook

Participation — Definition

Members of the public, equally and without discrimination, are able to influence, develop, contribute to, monitor, and evaluate government activities.[1]

Governments enable the participation of citizens in their decisions and processes; promote and accept the collaboration with citizens in the production of services;[2] and create spaces and infrastructure for citizens to become involved.

Inclusion – the range of participants should reflect and fairly represent the affected stakeholders and diversity of views and interests around the topic without discrimination.[3]

Collaboration – allowing the public to give feedback to government agencies and providing explanations to inform the public's understanding of policy, processes, and outcomes;[4] ensuring that public participation transforms into regular working partnerships and horizontal collaboration.

1. The Gov Lab (2013) Open Government - what's in a name http://thegovlab.org/open-government-whats-in-a-name

2. "Building an open and innovative Government for better policies and service delivery." Paris: OECD, 8-9 June 2010, http://www.oecd.org/gov/46560128.pdf

3. ibid.

4. The Skeptics Guide to Open Government, developed in 2018, p. 57 https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SKEPTICS-GUIDE_20180710.pdf

Participation

Consider what type of public engagement your policy/project will benefit from? Why do you require public input? What is the most appropriate method of participation?

- Inform the public about the project using an appropriate brief and unbiased presentation of policies.
- Are you making assumptions in the policy design process that come from your particular background and could only be applicable to people similar to you? You can mitigate this by engaging a diverse range of stakeholders to provide input to the project.
- When running consultations, outline expectations, mandate, scope, and follow-up of the process, i.e. clarify the scope of participation and anticipated results to manage expectations and ensure sustained engagement.
- Ensure diversity of participants, e.g. gender, ethnicity, race, class, sectors etc. Invite people with direct, lived experience, in addition to experts.
- Consider using online outreach tools and techniques to enable participation from people who would not be able to physically attend.
- When running online consultations, ensure that the sites are accessible, easy to find, and the consultation process is clearly described.

Open Government Playbook

Participation

When running consultation events, maximise opportunities for people to provide input – the time of day of the consultation can determine what groups are or aren't able to attend, and this should be taken into consideration e.g. explore options to host consultation events outside of work/school hours.

Ensure accessibility of the events and relevant pre-event content, for instance:

- circulate the agenda in advance
- circulate an advance copy of any slides that will be presented
- host public engagement events in venues with wheelchair access
- reserve front row seats for those with specific needs
- in your online forms, include written descriptions for all images
- transcribe any videos
- increase the text contrast of all your pages to make it more readable for visually-impaired people
- make large print versions of documents available.

Open Government Playbook

Participation

Seek feedback from the public to identify what part of the process, what form of engagement, what information, etc., had the greatest value to them and take this feedback into account when designing similar initiatives in the future. This can be done using online surveys or feedback forms after the events.

Create and use channels to solicit public feedback on both the process of engagement and the outcomes of the policy, for instance, thematic online forum, Slack, designated email address, and/or public Trello board.

Participation

Open Government Playbook

Accountability

Accountability   Definition

The public is able to exercise effective oversight and control over the decisions and actions taken by the government and its officials, in order to guarantee that government initiatives meet their stated objectives and respond to the needs of the communities they are designed to benefit.[6]

1. The Gov Lab (2013) Open Government - what's in a name
http://thegovlab.org/open-government-whats-in-a-name

Accountability

Assess the project plan to identify and disclose any potential conflicts of interest that the officials participating in the project may have. If there is a conflict of interest, take steps to prevent them from taking part in any decision-making processes.

Engage Civil Society actors to track delivery and raising concerns about any potential conflicts of interest.

Ensure that there are anti-corruption and fair competition measures in place. This can be done through publishing procurement and contract data, and running fair, open bids for services.

If in doubt, seek advice from bodies and institutions that guarantee compliance and oversee the exercise of public power, e.g. Financial Conduct Authority,[7] Serious Fraud Office;[8] and other about independent oversight institutions.[9]

2. https://www.fca.org.uk
3. https://www.sfo.gov.uk
4. https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/WEB_INDEPENDENT-OVERSIGHT-INS.pdf

Open Government Playbook

Accountability

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Make information about the effectiveness of anti-corruption prevention and the enforcement bodies widely available.

Keep a record of the spending of public funds with a justification of actions and decisions made during the project.

Keep an accurate and detailed record of all actions and the decision-making process, e.g. feedback provided on earlier public input, and, why it was or wasn't taken on board.

Declarations of interests should be made proactively available to the public, in a machine-readable format, and should be regularly updated.

Establish an oversight body to which individuals with ethical concerns can report or seek protection; ensure that they are sufficiently protected from reprisal for exposing wrongdoing, for instance by ensuring their anonymity.

Accountability

Open Government Playbook

Accountability

If any anti-corruption action has been undertaken, seek feedback from the public to identify the weaknesses and challenges in the procedure.

After the project is finished and/or the policy is implemented, establish a forum to have a retrospective session with the public, providing a safe space to scrutinise the project/policy.

Create an online tracker where implementation results are shared and the public can provide further feedback.

Introduce tools such as citizen scorecards or service evaluations.

Communications

Communications activities and principles of Open Government (transparency, participation, and accountability)

Strategic communications advice

'Effective' communications are understood in this context as communication oriented to advancing open government principles and that serves as a tool to improve policymaking, service design and delivery.[1]

Whenever possible, follow the strategic communications model[2] in your work process and continuously communicate progress on each stage to the policy and digital teams:

- Strategy
- Horizon scanning
- Insight
- Evaluation

1. OECD (2020) The contribution of public communication and media ecosystems to open government principles. Analytical Framework (draft)

1 of 2 (continues)

Open Government Playbook

Establish the communication objectives for the work that align with the policy objectives and ensure that these are communicated between teams in a clear, transparent manner.

Use audience insight and public participation methods (if appropriate) to develop a clear set of proposals on communicating the policy. Release information about potential consultations for generating insight to the relevant people.

Work with policy teams to decide what communications channels and format would be the most appropriate for publishing information about the policy process, for instance government websites, press announcements, blogs, social media etc. Publish information on the policy and policy process in an accessible format within an agreed timeframe.

Identify any communications-specific challenges that might conflict with the activity and take action to mitigate the risks to the delivery and overall success of the work.

Work with policy teams to decide how to communicate any potential challenges or controversies related to the policy.

2. https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/6.4611_CO_GCS-Strategic-comms_MCOM-Function-guide_FINAL_WEB_06-06-19.pdf

Communications

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Communications

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Communications activities and principles of Open Government (transparency, participation, and accountability)

Communication leadership (internally/ ways of working)

Encourage policy teams to proactively communicate about open government strategies and initiatives to the larger public, not just a select group of civil society actors or engaged citizens.[3]

Establish ways of working with the policy and digital teams:

- Agree shared objectives
- Agree implementation of activities and a timeline
- Agree practical ways of mitigating potential risks
- Use project management tools to track progress

Plan how to involve senior officials and ministers in the campaign.

3. OECD (2020) The contribution of public communication and media ecosystems to open government principles. Analytical Framework (draft)

Communications

Communications activities and principles of Open Government (transparency, participation, and accountability)

Delivery communications

Continuously report on the implementation of agreed communications activities to the policy and digital teams and other relevant teams.

Ensure a regular flow of information to the public on the progress made towards implementing the policy. Continuously work with the policy team to update relevant communications channels and ensure that publicly available information on the policy is up-to-date.

Regularly evaluate the communications work and report against set objectives.

1 of 2 (continues)

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Communications

Open Government Playbook

Make recommendation and, if necessary, implement changes to improve ways of working to ensure objectives are achieved.

Continuously gather feedback on the policy and on the communications campaign or digital delivery from the public through all available communications channels. This can include websites, blogs, social media etc. Agree the most appropriate ways of responding to the public with the policy team.

Make available feedback from communications to other relevant teams and agree what action is required in response to this feedback.

Highlight opportunities to improve ways of working and provide feedback to the wider team.

Work with policy teams to ensure two-way communications and an ongoing dialogue during which governments are willing and able to listen to citizens and incorporate their needs and preferences into policy processes. This can be done through online and in-person consultations, surveys, focus groups, etc.

2 of 2

Communications

Communications activities and principles of Open Government (transparency, participation, and accountability)

Strategic communications guidance

Complete full evaluation reporting against shared objectives of the campaign. Make sure that you include the feedback from the public in your evaluation reports.

Identify and apply 'lessons learnt' and areas for improvement for the future campaigns. Communicate these clearly to other teams (policy, digital).

Make the recommendations from the evaluation of the campaign and on the cost and process of the campaign available to the public. This can be done through publishing information on government's websites, blogs, and social media.

Ask for further feedback from the public on the policy itself and the usefulness of communications.

Make recommendations from feedback and discuss them with policy and digital teams to improve future work.

Communications

Open Government Playbook

Digital activities and principles of Open Government (transparency, participation, and accountability)

Discovery: Understanding the problem that needs to be solved

Throughout the lifecycle of your project, follow the principles and guidance set out in the Service Manual.[1]

Understand the problem that needs to be solved by exploring:

- the underlying policy intent you have been set up to address – this is the thing that government wants to change or make happen

- any constraints to making changes – for example technology or legislation

- opportunities to improve things – e.g. by sharing data with other teams.

1 of 2 (continues)

Digital

Open Government Playbook

Digital

Learn about your users and what they are trying to achieve. Conduct user research to find out:

- who your likely users are and what they are trying to do
- how they currently do it (for example, what services or channels they use)
- the problems or frustrations they experience
- what users need from your service to achieve their goal.

Scope your problem space and communicate it to others, through blogging or presentations. This will help:

- identify any similar work that has been done in the past
- link up with people working on similar problems
- identify potential users.

1. https://www.gov.uk/service-manual

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Open
Government
Playbook

Digital activities and principles of Open Government (transparency, participation, and accountability)

Alpha and Beta: developing and delivering a service, product or tool

Continue user research throughout the lifecycle of a project. This will help:

- improve your understanding of your users and their needs

- test design ideas and new features with likely users

- assess users' experience of your service, to make sure it meets their needs.

1 of 2 (continues)

Digital

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Where possible, make your product or service roadmap open, to help users understand the future of your product and new features that may be developed.

When you create new source code, you make it open so that other developers (including those outside government) can:

- benefit from your work and build on it
- learn from your experiences
- find uses for your code which you hadn't found.

Release updates to your software regularly so you:

- avoid making changes to one part of your software system that cause other parts to fail (these are known as 'breaking changes')
- have constant feedback from users - this will help you design and build your system in an iterative manner
- create a resilient and easy to change system.

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Digital

Open Government Playbook

Digital

**Open
Government
Playbook**

Digital activities and principles of Open Government (transparency, participation, and accountability)

Live: running and operating a live project

Continue all the stages above – user research, coding in the open and making releases and roadmaps open.

Continue to develop the service and work with other organisations providing services that are part of the same journey, so that you're iterating towards solving a whole problem for users.

Make strategic decisions in the open – discuss your future strategy so users are aware of where your project is going.

If your service is being retired – for example if it no longer meets user needs – then you must tell your users that this is happening. You should have a plan for redirecting those users to a new service, or telling them that the service that has permanently retired.