

## 4.3 Open Data Policy

### Policy Statement

Data collected by or for the Province of Nova Scotia is a valuable provincial resource and strategic asset that should be made freely available to the public, barring any privacy, confidentiality, security, or legal restrictions. Government recognizes the value of open data and increasingly, citizens and businesses are demanding and expecting more access to government information and data. Open data focuses on making data freely available in recognized and machine-readable formats for anyone to re-use, re-purpose, and develop into digital applications, services, and insights that benefit citizens, businesses, visitors, and society at large.

The Province of Nova Scotia is committed to the principles of open data. This policy aims to increase government transparency and accountability by creating a framework for the public release of government data. The ultimate goal is to move government toward an “open by default” environment where government data is made available proactively, without barriers for its reuse and consumption, except where there are legitimate restrictions on its release. Data release will be in accordance with all applicable legislation, including legislation governing the protection of privacy. No personal or confidential information will be released as a result of this policy.

### Definitions

#### **DATA**

Data are facts or figures used for analysis or calculation, based on observation or record-keeping, and often in a form suitable for storage in or processing by a computer. Data, as opposed to information, is raw, unprocessed, and lacks meaning until given context.

#### **DATASET**

A collection of raw, non-manipulated data usually presented in a tabular form and with associated metadata.

#### **MACHINE READABLE**

Data that is structured so it allows for automatic intake, processing, and manipulation by a computer application.

### **METADATA**

Data that defines or describes the content, quality, format, or structure of the dataset or that defines or describes the system, location, and context in which the dataset was produced, collected, processed, or stored. Metadata allows datasets to be found, understood, controlled, and managed.

### **OPEN DATA**

Data that has undergone an Open Data Criteria Checklist assessment, meets the Open Data Principles, follows the requirements of this policy, and is listed in the open data portal. Such open data is made available to the public in formats and under a licence that allows the public to freely use, re-use, and redistribute it. Examples of open data include:

- Operational data such as: licensed childcare facilities, food inspection reports, and road conditions
- Geographic data such as: maps, hydrographic data, and postcode and address data
- Statistical data such as: produce prices, demographics, and labour market statistics

### **OPEN DATA PROGRAM**

A program within the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services that is responsible for activities to make government data available to the public as open data, such as coordinating the identification of open data candidates, managing the corporate Open Data Portal, establishing governance, and developing supporting processes and materials.

## **Policy Objectives**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Make government data more accessible to the public in a way that is responsive to the needs and expectations of citizens and businesses, and supports government transparency and accountability.
- Enhance the social and economic benefit of government data.
- Empower citizens and businesses to create value from government data.
- Provide direction, assign responsibilities, and facilitate the release of open data by government departments to allow for a single approach to open data in the Province of Nova Scotia.
- Create a single point of access for open data for the Province of Nova Scotia.

## Application

The policy applies to:

- All government departments, agencies, boards, and commissions categorized as Category I or II entities in the Corporate Administrative Policy Manuals Policy. Category III entities are recommended, but not required, application.
- All data under the custody or under the control of the province. The applicability of this policy to certain data may be limited by legal, policy, or contractual restrictions; as such, all data must undergo an open data assessment and meet specified criteria prior to being released as open data.
- All new information collection, creation, and system development efforts as well as major modernization projects that update or re-design existing information systems.

## Policy Directives

- A. The Province of Nova Scotia will proactively make data available to the public as open data in alignment with the Open Data Criteria Checklist.
- B. Departments are to identify potential datasets for release on the Open Data Portal and work with the Open Data Program on the planning and development of new open datasets, review of existing ones, publication of datasets, and disposition of datasets as required.
- C. For each dataset, departments must provide a contact person and adequate metadata in accordance with metadata standards established by the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.
- D. The Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services will provide a centralized open data portal to be used by all departments releasing open data, which includes links to datasets as well as contextual information.
- E. Data made available in the open data portal is subject to the Open Government Licence – Nova Scotia.
- F. Individuals must not be required to register or identify themselves in order to access, use, adapt or distribute open data.
- G. Only data that meets the Open Data Criteria Checklist may be posted as open data.

- H. Open data must be approved by the open data governing bodies prior to release on the portal, and if those bodies determine that the data should not be made publicly available, that decision and the reasons for it must be documented.
- I. In accordance with privacy legislation, policy, and best practices, personally identifying information must be removed from data designated for release before posting.
- J. If the information contained in a dataset has already been made publicly available or has been provided through an application under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* or Routine Access Policy, that dataset must also be considered for release as open data.
- K. The Open Data Program may issue guidelines on categories of data that should be made publicly available in the open data portal.
- L. The Open Data Program may issue procedures, guidelines, and standards to support the Open Data Policy.
- M. Data designated for release must be prepared, provided, and posted in accordance with procedures developed by the Open Data Program.
- N. The Open Data Program must create a process for engaging with the public, through the portal and other necessary means, to solicit feedback to assist the Program in ensuring the portal is relevant and useful to the public.
- O. Datasets should be made available in multiple, machine-readable formats in accordance with public needs and format standards established by the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.
- P. The Province should consider the objectives of the Open Data Policy when creating or modifying any dataset and when implementing or modifying any information system.
- Q. Information and data designated for open data release should not be sold or exclusively licensed to other agencies.
- R. Departments must use the centralized portal for releasing open data, and while data may still be released on departmental websites, it should not be branded or released as open data except in accordance with this Policy.

## Accountability

### DEPUTY HEADS OR DELEGATES WILL:

- Ensure implementation of this policy and supporting materials;

- Lead their departments in enhancing government transparency and accountability through releasing government data;
- Promote the benefits of open data initiatives, encouraging citizen participation and engagement with government.
- Designate a point(s) of contact for datasets released as open data;

**DEPARTMENTS WILL:**

- Identify and prioritize departmental data for release as open data, in consultation with the Open Data Program;
- Complete the Open Data Criteria Checklist for datasets being considered for release, determine whether or not they should be released, and submit the checklist to the Open Data Program;
- Consider the objectives of this Policy when creating or modifying data or developing information systems;
- Ensure that open data is only released in accordance with this policy.

**THE OPEN DATA PROGRAM WILL:**

- Provide a central open data portal including links and contextual information for government datasets;
- Work with departments to identify, assess, and prioritize datasets for publication and assist with completion of the Open Data Criteria Checklist;
- Issue guidelines on categories of open data that should be made available to the public;
- Issue standards, guidelines, best practices, and processes to support the Open Data Policy;
- Review completed Open Data Criteria Checklists and submit datasets to governing bodies for approval for release on the open data portal;
- Develop and administer the Open Government Licence – Nova Scotia;
- Develop a process for engaging with the public to solicit feedback to assist in ensuring the portal is relevant and useful to the public.

**OPEN DATA GOVERNING BOD(IES) WILL:**

- Review and endorse or approve open data standards, guidelines, processes, and best practices;
- Help to establish dataset release strategies and oversee the release of datasets on the provincial open data portal;
- Document any decisions not to release data;

- Resolve issues and make decisions related to the open data program and portal based on portal metrics and evaluation.

**ALL EMPLOYEES WILL:**

- Ensure they understand the policy and identify potential open datasets to their managers and/or the Open Data Program.

## Monitoring

Departments are responsible for the consistent implementation and monitoring of the policy.

The Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services will consult periodically with departments to receive feedback regarding the relevancy, usefulness, and effectiveness of the policy and supporting materials and make updates and revisions as required.

## References

### LEGISLATION

- *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
- *Personal Information International Disclosure Protection Act*
- *Personal Health Information Act*
- *Privacy Review Officer Act*

### POLICIES

- Information Management Policy
- Information Sharing Policy
- Privacy Policy

### RESOURCES

- •<<https://novascotia.sharepoint.com/sites/InformationManagement/SitePages/OpenData.aspx>>
- Open Data Infographic
- Open Data Criteria Checklist
- Open Data Dataset Metadata Template

- Open Government Licence – Nova Scotia
- Open Data Principles
- Open Data Standards

## Enquiries

Director, Corporate Information Services  
Strategy, Policy and Governance  
Nova Scotia Digital Services  
Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services  
(902) 424-2915

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