

Unclassified

English - Or. English

19 May 2022

**PUBLIC GOVERNANCE DIRECTORATE  
PUBLIC GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

## **Working Party on Open Government**

### **Taking an integrated approach to the promotion of transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholders' participation: Towards an Open Government Strategy**

This document presents a concept and related evidence to support the development of whole-of-government frameworks in the area of open government. It highlights the benefits of Open Government Strategies and presents concrete and practical considerations on ways to design, implement, monitor and evaluate them.

Delegates were invited to discuss this document, to share country examples to enrich section 1.4.2., and to provide comments during the meeting of the Working Party on Open Government on 18 May 2020. This revised document incorporates key comments received from delegates.

The present document is now reissued after being sent to PGC and declassified on 27 July 2020, in order to enable consultation with external stakeholders.

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**JT03495635**

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# **1** Taking an integrated and holistic approach to the promotion of transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholders' participation: Towards an Open Government Strategy

## **1.1. Introduction**

1. Governments around the world have started adopting open government principles and practices as a new way to manage the state and its resources, with the aim to develop innovative solutions to pressing challenges such as low levels of trust, the rise of populism and high levels of inequality. It also responds to the new reality of an increasingly interconnected world in which information and communication are omnipresent.

2. Open government represents a new paradigm of governance that puts citizens at the heart of all government activities. Moving away from simply seeing citizens as “users” of public services, governments are increasingly considering them as actors that fully participate in the democratic lives of their countries and communities and that can make valuable contributions to finding policy solutions to the challenges of our time. This change of paradigm has profound consequences for the way political systems, governments and public administration are run.

3. The OECD and its Members have been at the forefront of the global open government movement since its beginning. The *OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government* (2017), the first international legal instrument in the area, is the result of years of international collaboration and exchange of experiences, extensive research and data-collection, and in-country policy analysis. The Recommendation defines open government as

*“a culture of governance that promotes the principles of transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholders’ participation in support of democracy and inclusive growth”.*

4. The Recommendation provides guidance to countries that aim to consolidate their open government agendas by listing criteria for the design and implementation of successful open government policies. In particular, Provision 1 of the Recommendation encourages countries to

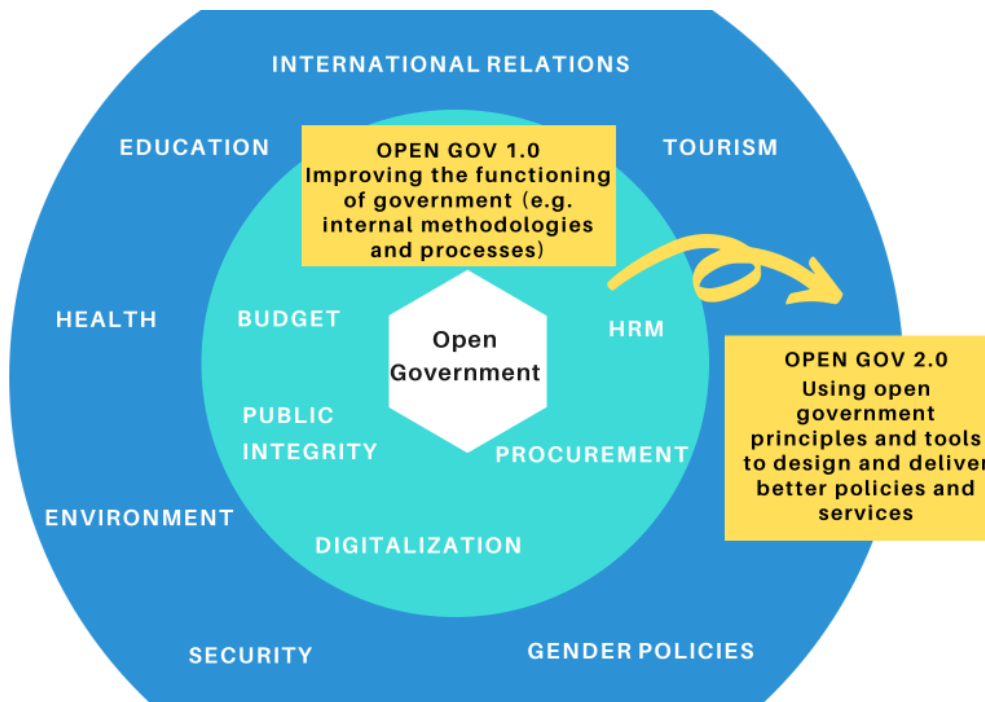
*“take measures, in all branches and at all levels of the government, to **develop and implement open government strategies and initiatives** in collaboration with stakeholders and to foster commitment from politicians, members of parliaments, senior public managers and public officials, to ensure successful implementation and prevent or overcome obstacles related to resistance to change”.*

5. While the term “open government” may be relatively new, initiatives to foster the open government principles of transparency, accountability, integrity and stakeholders’ participation have existed for a long time. With the emergence of the global open government movement, countries started developing more integrated and holistic approaches to promote the open government principles. The first generation of open government initiatives (OpenGov 1.0) focused mainly on improving the functioning of government as well as its internal methodology and processes (e.g. access to information, innovation in public sector, open processes, accountability mechanisms, procurement, etc.).

6. In recent years, governments have started rethinking and reviewing their approaches and a new generation of initiatives has started to emerge (OpenGov 2.0). Second generation open government initiatives are those that focus on the ways in which the government designs policies and delivers services, using open government approaches and applying open government tools in different policy areas, including gender, environment, health, education, urban development etc.. Second generation open government initiatives often also include a stronger focus on improving citizens’ living conditions and on a number of other impacts.

7. Both first and second generation open government initiatives are now being developed and implemented in all parts of countries’ public administration and a wide range of policy areas, ranging from initiatives to develop applications to get people’s feedback on health services, to the creation of a new open data portals for the defence sector and the promotion of youth participation in the development of environmental policies.

**Figure 1. From Open Government 1.0 to Open Government 2.0**



Source: Author’s own elaboration.

8. The cross-cutting relevance of open government approaches to achieve public policy goals, such as those related to health, defence, education or infrastructure, or, more generally speaking, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), calls for a structured approach to the effective implementation of open government agendas in each single public entity. However, evidence shows that open government initiatives are still implemented in a scattered and isolated manner and without consciously contributing to a shared government policy and to broader national policy objectives (e.g. fighting inequalities, fostering trust, etc.). These scattered approaches sometimes fail to recognise the systemic impact that a concerted open government approach can have on the machinery of government and on the functioning of democracies.

9. In countries that are participating in the Open Government Partnership (OGP), the OGP Action Plans (NAP) have contributed to giving a framework to open government reforms. Along similar lines, initiatives such as the Open Contracting Partnership, Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST), and the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) have provided structure to reform efforts in key open government areas. It is now time to take the next step: in order to take full advantage of the benefits of open government reforms and to provide an umbrella to ongoing but scattered initiatives, the OECD Secretariat suggests that countries develop a whole-of-government Open Government Strategy<sup>1</sup> as their whole-of-government<sup>2</sup> policy framework for their public sector reform agendas (e.g. OECD, 2016a; 2016b; 2018; 2019a; 2019b). This paper aims to demonstrate the benefits an integrated Open Government Strategy can have for any country, taking into account context-specific factors and different priorities.

10. The paper responds to a call from OECD Member and Partner countries to build a concept and the related evidence that can support them in developing whole-of-government frameworks in the area of open government. The paper outlines key findings from the OECD Open Government Reviews conducted by the OECD Secretariat with peers from Member and Partner Countries and reflects the discussions that took place in the framework of the informal Expert Group on Open Government and in the recently created OECD Working Party on Open Government. The paper elaborates on the following elements:

- The first section discusses the concept of open government and its core principles (1.2). It proposes four operational dimensions for the OECD definition, focusing on tangible aspects of an open government culture of governance.
- The second section on “Existing legal and policy frameworks for open government” (1.3) discusses the different approaches countries have taken to design frameworks for their open government agendas;
- The third section presents “The case for an Open Government Strategy” (1.4) and discusses its potential benefits.
- The following section presents key elements to be included in an Open Government Strategy and discusses different approaches that countries can take (1.5).
- The next section then discusses practical considerations to move from the design to the effective implementation of an Open Government Strategy (1.6).
- The last section presents “The way towards an OECD Handbook on the design and implementation of an Open Government Strategy” (1.7) and includes concrete next steps for further research.
- Finally, Annexe A consists in a template for a whole-of-government Open Government Strategy.

11. The focus of this document lies on the design and implementation of Open Government Strategies (OGS) at whole-of-government level. Most of the elements presented are, however, applicable to the

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this document, the term *strategy* will be used as a synonym for *policy*.

<sup>2</sup> According to the OECD Public Governance Review Estonia: Towards a Single Government Approach (2011), “a whole-of-government approach, where horizontal co-ordination and integration are embedded in the process of policy design and implementation, helps a government respond to complexity (...).”

design and implementation of OGS by single public institutions, different levels of government and different branches of power.

## 1.2. The OECD definition of open government and of its core principles

12. The promotion of the principles of open government – transparency, accountability, integrity and stakeholders’ participation – has been a priority in countries’ policy agendas and political discourses for the past decade. Yet, as popular as the principles are, there is surprisingly little agreement about what actually constitutes the concept of open government (Kiss, 2019). Neither academics nor civil society groups have agreed upon a single definition (OECD, 2016e) nor do they have a “clear understanding of what the term open government captures in general” and they lack “even basic and integrative definitions” (Wirtz and Birkmeyer, 2015).

13. In the 1950s, when the concept of open government was first mentioned, it mainly referred to the disclosure of politically sensitive government information. The concept was, for example, used in the debates leading to the passage of the Freedom of Information Act in the United States (Yu and Robinson, 2012; OECD, 2016). In the following years, the American legislature started to also consider open-meeting laws to be under the umbrella of open government and the term became a synonym for all kinds of actions associated with governmental transparency (Yu and Robinson, 2012).

14. Over the past years, open government has seen an ambitious conceptual expansion and has become associated with a broad range of government goals and functions, including public participation, public sector innovation, open data, the use of ICTs, as well as the improvement of public services and of government efficiency (Kiss, 2019; OECD, 2016e; Nam, 2012). Governments – both at central / federal and at subnational level, individual public institutions, international organisations and civil society organisations have adopted their own definitions of the concept. A comparison reveals that these definitions vary widely, not only across sectors but also within them (Longo, 2013). While almost all existing definitions of open government include references to the principles of transparency (and access to public information), accountability and stakeholder / citizen participation, some put a stronger emphasis on the use of ICTs than others (Clarke and Francoli, 2014).

15. The abundance of existing definitions and different (and sometimes conflicting) conceptual understandings of open government can generate wrong expectations and frustrations. Without conceptual clarity, the concept runs the risk to lose focus and become “hollow” and “blurred” (Yu and Robinson, 2012). Moreover, it is inherently difficult to theorise, measure, monitor, evaluate and compare open government reforms when there is no consensus on the definition of key concepts. Generalizations can only be valid if open government strategies and initiatives have a common meaning amongst governments implementing them.

16. The 2017 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government, the first internationally recognised legal instrument in the area, defines open government as “a *culture of governance* that promotes the principles of transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholder participation in support of democracy and inclusive growth”.

17. To further operationalise the OECD’s definition, this paper focuses on tangible aspects of an open government culture of governance. Together these aspects constitute the core dimensions of openness. At its heart, open government is about strengthening democracy through renewed government–citizen interactions. Accordingly, a government can be considered open when:

- **It makes information and data publicly available so that citizens and stakeholders can use them to see, understand, and monitor its activities and decisions (principle of transparency).** The public has access to, understand and can use relevant information and data the government creates and collects (e.g. on actions, processes, decisions, etc.). This information

provides the basis for informed participation in policy processes and service delivery and it can allow citizens to hold the government to account (if appropriate mechanisms exist, see below).

- **It hears the views, perspectives, and inputs from citizens and stakeholders. Citizens and stakeholders can influence the activities and decisions of the government (principle of participation).** They can – equally and without discrimination – participate in and contribute ideas and evidence to government policy-making and service-delivery.
- **It is responsive, assumes responsibility, explains its decisions and actions, and answers citizens’ and stakeholders’ demands. Citizens and stakeholder can demand answers and hold the government to account (principle of accountability).**
- **It consistently upholds ethical standards and prioritises the public interest over private interests and its activities and decisions are guided by shared ethical values, principles and norms (principle of integrity).** Citizens and stakeholders can expect the government to act in an integer manner and government can expect citizens to do the same.

18. In line with these considerations – and for the purpose of this paper – *open government initiatives* are those initiatives implemented by public institutions by which they 1) make public information and data available to citizens and stakeholders (fostering transparency); 2) give citizens and stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to the workings and the decision making process (fostering participation); 3) assess results and assume responsibility for their decisions and actions, and provide clear answers to citizens’ and stakeholders’ demands and concerns (fostering accountability); and 4) uphold and prioritise the public interest over private interests (fostering integrity). Open government initiatives can make a contribution to the creation of an open government culture of governance and can foster the openness of government. In order to be transformative and change a country’s culture of governance, open government initiatives should be implemented by all public institutions at all levels of government and in all sectors, respecting their specific competences, conditions and frameworks.

19. The remainder of this paper should be read with these considerations in mind.

**Figure 2. The operational dimensions of the OECD definition of open government: openness from a government perspective**



Source: Author’s own elaboration.

Figure 3. The operational dimensions of the OECD definition of open government: openness from a citizen perspective

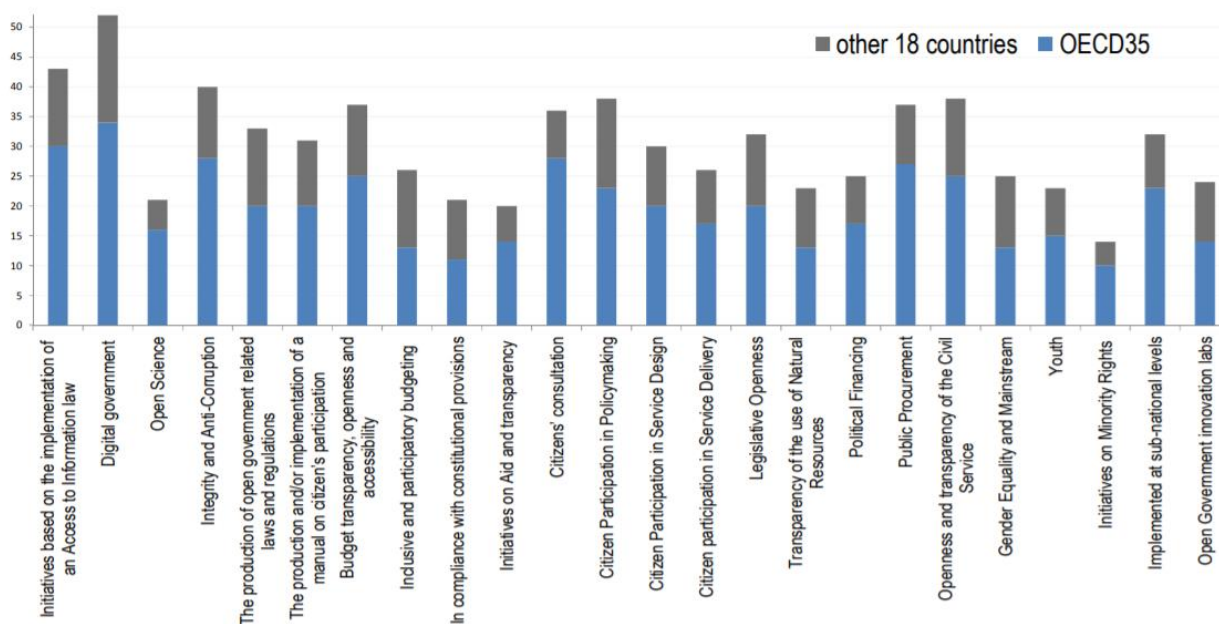


Source: Author's own elaboration.

### 1.3. Existing legal and policy frameworks for open government

20. OECD countries have long been implementing initiatives that aim to foster openness. However, in recent years, countries' open government agendas have started to become broader and to include a wider range of initiatives (**Error! Reference source not found.**). First generation open government initiatives such as those aiming to strengthen the legal framework for open government are being pursued with new emphasis while a range of new sectorial OpenGov 2.0 initiatives – often inspired by public sector innovations and ICTs – have been designed. Countries' open government agendas now include initiatives that range from those to create open government innovation labs to the promotion of open science and aid transparency. These kinds of initiatives have found their way into a wide variety of government laws and policies.

**Figure 4. Open government initiatives currently being implemented or that have already been implemented**



Source: Country responses to OECD (2015b), "2015 OECD Survey on Open Government Co-ordination and Citizen Participation in the Policy Cycle", OECD, Paris.

21. The following section discusses the different approaches that countries have taken to design frameworks for their open government agendas. It will show that given the wide range of policies and initiatives that contribute to the tangible aspects of an open government culture as described above, countries' legal, regulatory and policy frameworks for open government are usually quite broad and diverse – and, in some cases, contradictory and uncoordinated – adding to the need for a consolidated, integrated whole-of-government strategy to promote coherent reforms across sectors.

### **1.3.1. The legal and regulatory frameworks for open government**

22. The legal framework of a country sets out the rules and determines rights and obligations for citizens, stakeholders and the government. The underlying constitutional, legal and regulatory basis for open government at the central / federal level can take a variety of forms. The separation is of course not clear-cut: each law / regulation usually includes provisions and obligations regarding more than one of the principles of open government.

- Many countries have included references to the principles of open government and specific rights and obligations associated with them in their Constitutions. For example, most Constitutions establish access to public information and citizen participation as basic constitutional rights. Moreover, Constitutions usually include specific provisions on the protection of civic space (e.g. freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, etc.) which form part of the foundation of an open government ecosystem.
- Even before the existence of today's legal and regulatory frameworks, some countries included notions and concepts related to the principles of transparency, accountability and participation in their founding legal texts (e.g. Declarations). For example, Article 15 of the French Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen of 1789 includes the concept of public accountability as a fundamental characteristic of the post-revolutionary regime.

- Laws and regulations on access to public information (ATI), which usually include provisions of proactive and reactive disclosure of information, form the backbone of an open government. All OECD countries now have these kinds of laws in place, foreseeing – in most cases – both proactive and reactive disclosure of information and data. ATI laws are often coupled with laws on the protection of personal data and provisions included in national archives laws / public record laws. In some countries, access to information laws also include specific rights and obligations regarding open government data.
- In some countries, laws on citizen participation complement constitutional rights and obligations (e.g. Colombia's Statutory Law on Citizen Participation from 2015). In addition, most countries have put in place legal requirements to involve stakeholders in law-making and in regulatory policy and in specific policy processes (e.g. environment, infrastructure, land-use). Moreover, forms of democratic participation, i.e. political rights (e.g. elections, petitions, referenda, etc.), are usually regulated by law (or in the Constitution). Laws may also regulate specific participatory practices (e.g. the Government in the Sunshine Act in the United States from 1976 or the Participatory Budgeting Law in Peru from 2003).
- Laws on accountability and integrity, including those on conflict of interest, financial disclosure, lobbying, whistle-blower protection and foreign bribery, also include provisions that contribute to openness (e.g. by providing mechanisms for citizen oversight). Some countries have even adopted specific legislation on accountability (e.g. Canada's Federal Accountability Act from 2006) which specify measures regarding administrative transparency and oversight. In addition, laws regulating the functioning of independent public institutions (e.g. Ombudsman, Comptroller, Audit institutions) usually include mechanisms for citizens to complain and oversee government actions and decisions.
- Laws regulating the organisation of the different levels of government (e.g. decentralisation laws) can include provisions regarding the open government principles. In many cases, these frameworks reproduce the federal/central government responsibilities to local or decentralised levels, especially on citizen participation mechanisms.
- Laws and Constitutions regulating the separation of powers and the functioning of the legislative and judicial branches often include provisions on accountability. In many cases, those branches of the State are described as guarantors of the executive, having by definition an accountability role in the balance of power. For example, the Brazilian Constitution (Section II, Article 49) establish accountability and participation as competences and responsibilities of the National Congress.
- Laws promoting the use of digital technology (e.g. connectivity, e-government laws, etc.) sometimes foresee specific obligations regarding information transparency and / or their use for participatory practices.
- Lastly, specific / sectorial laws often include rights and obligations regarding the principles of open government. For example, in many countries, budget laws stipulate budgetary transparency and the participation of citizens and stakeholders in the budgetary process. Along similar lines, procurement laws may require the proactive disclosure of relevant information and consumer protection laws may establish complaint and feedback procedures.

#### *Adopting integrated legislative documents on open government*

23. In order to cut through this complexity and provide clarity on the legal obligations and rights associated with the principles of open government, a small number of subnational governments have gone a step further and established dedicated open government laws:

- One of the most comprehensive open government laws is that of the **Autonomous Community of Extremadura in Spain** (2013)<sup>3</sup>. The law takes a holistic approach to open government and its principles and includes chapters on open administration (transparency in administrative matters; public information) and good governance as well as participation and collaboration with citizens. The law is innovative in that it is relatively concrete in outlining what different institutions are supposed to do to foster openness (e.g. Article 2: “*Agreements concluded by the Autonomous Administration with public and private entities must be registered in the Register of Agreements, within fifteen days from the date of their signature*”).

24. An open government law can make a significant contribution to a “top-down” cultural change. Adopting legislative documents on open government gives the legislative and judicial branches the power to monitor and control the executive’s implementation and can protect open government from electoral and partisan politics. In addition, a law can be a powerful indicator of the social commitment and the multi-partisan agreement on the relevance of a particular public policy issue. A legislative basis of open government can give legal tools and mechanisms to citizens and CSOs to demand public action on a specific open government principle. Laws can further open the door for a new set of legal instruments (Constitutional Tribunal decisions, decrees, collective actions, etc.), thereby building a narrative around the need for a coherent and concerted action

#### *Adopting decrees and directives on open government*

25. Even without open government laws in place and building on their existing constitutional, legal and regulatory frameworks for the promotion of openness, some governments have used legislative documents such as executive decrees and directives to promote their open government agendas. Like laws, the adoption of executive decrees and directives is a strong indication as to the importance that a government is giving to a particular subject.

26. Decrees and directives are usually more flexible than laws and they can be used as tools to provide the governance framework of an open government agenda (e.g. mandating the development of institutional action plans, the creation of an Open Government Commission, etc.). Depending on the specific legal tradition of a country, decrees and directives may only be valid for a certain amount of time (i.e. a legislature) or apply to only certain actors (e.g. the whole-of-government). They are often complemented with (or result from) policy documents that include concrete initiatives and provide implementation guidance to public institutions. Examples include:

- The Directive on Open Government of **Canada** from 2014 applies to all federal government departments and encourages all other federal institutions to use it. The objective is to promote information management practices that enable the proactive and ongoing release of government information in order to support transparency, accountability, citizen engagement, and socio-economic benefits (Government of Canada, 2014). The Directive foresees that the Deputy Head of each department shall designate an Information Management Senior Official, which among other things is responsible for the development and implementation of a Departmental Open Government Implementation Plan, which shall be updated every year and published on the website of the respective department (Ibid.).

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<sup>3</sup> In Spain, each public administration has exclusive competence in matters of open government, except in relation to transparency, for which Law 19/2013, of December 9, on transparency, access to public information and good governance establishes obligations common to all public administrations. Thus, the State, the Autonomous Communities and the Local Entities develop their own policies and have their own competent bodies in matters of open government. In recent years, the Autonomous Communities in Spain have been developing regulations on governance, participation and citizen collaboration, among others.

- In 2009, the Office of Management and Budget of the **United States** issued an Open Government Directive. The Directive directed executive departments and agencies to take specific actions to implement initiatives to foster reforms in the areas of transparency, public participation and collaboration. In particular, the Directive required executive departments and agencies to take steps to publish government information online; improve the quality of government information; create and institutionalise a culture of open government by developing and publishing an Open Government Plan; and create an enabling policy framework for open government (Government of the United States, 2009).

### *Signing Open State Agreements and Declarations*

27. Unlike laws, decrees, and directives, declarations and agreements are usually non-binding legal documents. As tools of soft law, they reflect high level political commitments and good will intentions and provide general guidelines of conduct. Latin American countries have been at the forefront in drafting these kinds of agreements to declare their commitment to open government and open state reforms. Examples include:

- In 2017, the then President of **Colombia** signed the Declaration for an Open State (*Declaración por un Estado Abierto*) together with representatives from 14 public institutions. Former President Santos pinpointed the aim of the Declaration as “*it is about having an open judicial branch, an open congress, open control bodies, open territorial entities, and not just an open Executive*” (Presidency of Colombia, 2017). The Declaration includes 14 commitments (e.g. Commitment 4: Include open government initiatives in institutional plans).
- In November 2015, the President of the Republic of **Costa Rica** and the Presidents of the other three branches of power signed a Declaration for the Establishment of an Open State (*Declaración por la Construcción de un Estado Abierto*). In it, they committed to the drafting of a plan of priority actions to “promote a policy of openness, transparency, accountability, participation and innovation in favour of the citizens”, to be included in the respective institutional strategic plans and to be evaluated annually (OECD, 2016a). In the declaration, the branches of power further agreed to strengthen existing mechanisms of citizen participation and develop new ones in order to improve the relationship between civil society and policy makers and to provide better access to public information through the use of new technologies. In 2017, Costa Rica complemented its Declaration with an Open State Agreement which aims to “*consolidate the commitment of the Powers of the Republic to promote a transparent, efficient and effective State that promotes the fight against corruption and guarantees citizen participation*” (Government of Costa Rica, 2017). The Agreement includes a number of general commitments from each branch of the state (e.g. Strengthen strategic planning and annual operational plans by incorporating the principles of Open Government).

28. The adoption of declarations and agreements gives visibility to open government reforms and ensures high-level political commitment. The signing of this kind of political documents can further facilitate a dialogue and peer-learning between different actors and it is a first important step towards a more coordinated approach across branches of the state and levels of government. Commitments made in Declarations and Agreements need to be complemented with concrete policy tools such as action plans and guidelines to become operational.

### **1.3.2. The policy framework for open government**

29. Policies give overall directions to a country’s policy agenda and provide details of the government’s objectives and commitments to achieve them. Countries’ policy frameworks for the promotion of openness are even more diverse than their legislative frameworks, given the breadth of initiatives that are related to the promotion of openness. Depending on a country’s policymaking tradition and on the specific

terminology that a country uses, they may include whole-of-government policy documents outlining the broader government agenda (e.g. the Government Programme, Public Sector Reform Strategies, etc.), policy documents that focus specifically on the promotion of the three dimensions of openness (e.g. OGP Action Plans), policy documents focusing on one or more of the dimensions from a specific angle (e.g. open data strategies) as well as other action plans, strategic plans, institutional plans, memos, manuals, guidance documents, etc. that include initiatives to foster the principles of open government (see also section 1.4.1 below). This section will discuss the most relevant of them.

*Including commitments to open government and its principles in high-level government programmes*

30. Most countries have included specific references to open government and commitments to foster openness in its different dimensions in their high-level strategic policy documents, such as government electoral programmes and legislature's plans. Some have made open government a "principle" or a "transversal axis" that should guide the implementation of their entire government-wide strategic programme(s), while others have dedicated a section including concrete initiatives, making it *de facto* a stand-alone policy area. Different approaches that countries have taken include:

- The strategy **Lithuania 2030** identifies national long-term development policies. It was designed on the basis of consultation with Lithuanian people, communities, NGOs, business organisations and government institutions (Government of Lithuania, 2016). The overarching aim is "a creative empowerment of each and every member of the society, focusing on ideas that would help Lithuania to become a modern, energetic country, embracing differences, and with a strong sense of national identity" (Government of Lithuania, 2016). Openness is one of the three pillars of the strategy (along with creativity and responsibility). The strategy aims to promote "open and empowering governance" and gives significant importance to systematic and effective engagement of citizens in the political process.
- **Germany** highlights the importance of open government reforms in the 2018 Coalition Agreement. The agreement lists an important number of initiatives to foster transparency and stakeholder participation in Germany, including in the areas of open data, access to public information and women's participation in political processes.
- The **Mexican** National Development Plan 2013-2018 included the promotion of open government reforms as one of its transversal axes in the Programme for a Close and Modern Government (*Programa para un Gobierno Cercano y Moderno*) (OECD, 2016c). Open government is the overarching objective of the programme which states: "*The Government of the Republic developed this program to send a clear message to the entire public administration to build an open and results-oriented government, from each of the dependencies and entities that comprise it*" (Government of Mexico, 2013). The first objective of the programme reads: "*Promote an open government to encourage accountability in the Federal Public Administration.*"
- **Costa Rica** included a move toward an open, transparent and efficient government that fights against corruption as one of the three pillars of its National Development Plan (NDP) for 2015-18 (Government of Costa Rica, 2014). The plan stated that "*open government is central for this administration. It represents a renewed emphasis on reforming and modernising the state administration, drawn from an innovative relationship between the different actors for generating public value. It is not an end in itself, but an approach to promote transparency, collaboration and participation. Open government constitutes the third pillar of the Solís Rivera administration*" (Ibid.). The plan further included a number of concrete initiatives to promote inclusive policy-making, such as national policy dialogues and the promotion of gender equality in public life (OECD, 2016a).

31. These high-level government documents go across ministerial siloes and involve the whole-of-government. As such, they provide a short, medium and/or long-term visions for the government's entire

policy agenda (usually for one electoral period). The inclusion of relevant references to open government and initiatives to foster its principles in these documents gives a strategic vision to the open government agenda, raises its profile and fosters sustained political commitment to reforms. It further provides a platform for civil society and other stakeholders to push for ambitious reforms and continuously remind the government of its commitments, including by using monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Moreover, many high-level government programmes have the advantage that they already reflect stakeholder contributions and priorities, as they are consulted or even co-created with stakeholders.

32. In order to materialise into tangible reforms, governments' most high-level policy documents usually foresee the adoption of laws and regulations and are coupled with strategies, action plans, like the ones to be drafted in the context of the OGP, and / or that detail concrete implementation roadmaps and ways to achieve stated objectives.

*Including initiatives to foster openness in thematic cross-cutting reform agendas*

33. Many countries have also included concrete initiatives to foster transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholders' participation in their cross-cutting reform policies. For instance, Australia, Denmark and Greece (among many others) have included relevant open government initiatives in their public sector reform programmes. Other countries, including Luxembourg, New Zealand and Slovenia have integrated these kinds of initiatives in their digital government reform agendas (OECD, 2016e) or in their integrity agendas (e.g. UK). Examples are manifold:

- **New Zealand's** Strategy for a Digital Public Service aims to set "a whole-of-public-service direction — one that improves the efficiency of the public service, enables change, supports better services and the digital transformation of agencies, putting people and businesses at the centre of government services" (Government of New Zealand, 2019). One of the strategy's aims is to contribute to an "open, accountable public service" (Ibid.) and it includes an important number of open government initiatives. The Strategy for examples states that "Digital tools and practices can help people access personalised services where and when they need them, engage in decisions about issues they care about, and maintain trust in an open, transparent and inclusive government" (Ibid.). The Strategy is coupled with a programme of work which includes five digital focus areas and corresponding actions in order to support implementation.
  - The **United Kingdom** Anti-Corruption Strategy (2017-2022) sets out a vision and a long-term framework for tackling corruption. The strategy identifies six priorities to be the focus of UK efforts to 2022: 1. Reduce the insider threat in high risk domestic sectors; 2. Strengthen the integrity of the UK as an international financial centre; 3. Promote integrity across the public and private sectors; 4. Reduce corruption in public procurement and grants; 5. Improve the business environment globally; 6. Work with other countries to combat corruption. Each priority has specific goals and each goal is coupled with indicators to measure the level of achievement. The initiative is led by the Home Secretary, but involves multiple institutions from the wider government.
  - The **EU's** European eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 (European Commission, 2016) is an instrument to advance the modernisation of public administrations across the European Union. The plan makes ample reference to different open government principles and acknowledges the great potential contribution that digital technologies can make to improve citizen and stakeholder participation and transparency.
  - The State Modernisation Plan (2016-2019) of **Argentina's** previous administration reflects the government's recognition of the value of open government reforms as a key element of public sector modernisation. The Plan had five areas of work: technology and digital government; integrated human resources management; results-based management and public commitments; *open government and public innovation*; and a digital country

strategy. The open government area of work is sub-divided into three axes each of which has specific objectives. The axes are: 1) opening of data and public information, 2) public and civic innovation, and 3) citizen participation.

34. Whole-of-government public sector reform strategies can be an important tool to foster openness. The inclusion of open government initiatives in these strategic documents is a testimony to the transformative power that many countries attribute to open government reforms. In addition, given that most of these strategies involve the whole-of-government, they contribute to the mainstreaming of open government reforms.

35. However, anti-corruption or digital government strategies rarely capture the full potential of open government, as they are limited to its contribution to specific reform objectives (e.g. administrative simplification, digital transformation, integrity, etc.). As such, they leave out a broader and more holistic view on open government reforms which, for example, recognises their power to contribute to policy goals such as promoting inclusive growth or specific sectoral reform objectives.

#### *Adopting strategies on specific open government tools and in related policy areas*

36. Countries have also adopted an important number of strategies and policies that focus on the promotion of specific elements of openness or on specific tools (e.g. open data, open contracting, etc.). Examples include:

- **Ireland's** Open Data Strategy 2017 – 2022 recognises the important contribution that open data can make to open government stating that “openness and transparency is a key government priority” and that “opening up government data will empower citizens, foster innovation and reform public services” (Government of Ireland, 2017). The strategy is aligned with Ireland's OGP Action Plan and includes its own (quite detailed) implementation plan.
- The **State of Queensland in Australia**, through the Office of the Information Commissioner (OIC), designed an Open Data Strategy 2019-2023. Its short-term goal is to identify appropriate datasets that can easily be made available to the general public (Government of the State of Queensland, 2019). Its long-term goal is to identify opportunities to expand on the datasets that share information about contractors, workforce, overseas travel by public officials, customer satisfaction with public agencies, etc. (Ibid.). The strategy prioritises datasets that will provide value to the public and that will increase the openness and transparency of government and its processes. Apart from setting specific goals and indicators, the strategy also specifies how data concepts and practices will be communicated to public officials.
- The **Scottish government's (United Kingdom)** Open Contracting Strategy elaborates on a commitment that the government had included in Scotland's OGP Action Plan for 2016-17 (Government of Scotland, 2017). In its introduction the strategy states: “A key component of Open Government is greater transparency around public spending to ensure that the people of Scotland have a better understanding about how government works. As part of our action plan, we committed to developing an Open Contracting Strategy and publishing procurement information in accordance with international standards. This strategy will result in procurement information being proactively provided in a coherent, consistent form that is easy to understand for communities, the third sector and citizens.” The strategy is an example of how governments can use their OGP Action Plans to facilitate policy coherence and ambitious reform in relevant open government areas.

37. These strategies can make an important contribution to a country's overall open government agenda. The main challenge governments are facing relates to ensuring co-ordination and coherence between them. For example, a country's open data and integrity strategies are not necessarily linked to each other and do not pursue common whole-of-government objectives, as they are elaborated by different institutions that do not share the same understanding of open government and of ways to contribute to it.

### *Co-creating OGP Action Plans*

38. At the time of writing in April 2020, 79 countries (of which 27 of the OECD Member countries) participated in the Open Government Partnership (OGP). Members of the OGP have to develop bi-annual Action Plans which are the product of an open co-creation process in which government institutions and civil society work together to create commitments to foster open government principles.

39. In 2020, some countries are in their fourth Action Plan cycle (e.g. Canada) while others that joined more recently are implementing their first or second Action Plan (e.g. Germany). All countries that participate in the OGP co-create a number of commitments that aim to promote one or more of the “open government values” of transparency, accountability, public participation, as well as technology and innovation (OGP, 2019). According to OGP guidelines (OGP, 2019), commitments should be written following the SMART framework (i.e. they should be “specific”, “measurable”, “answerable”, “relevant” and “time-bound”). While first generation NAPs often contained an important number of commitments (e.g. more than 50), the OGP Handbook “Rules + Guidance for Participants” now recommends “plans comprising 5-15 high-quality commitments spread over multiple themes” (Ibid.).

40. OGP Action Plans have become one of the most common forms of action-oriented frameworks for the promotion of openness. The NAP process allows countries to promote the mainstreaming of the concept of open government, reinforce collaboration with stakeholders and put reforms in the spotlight of the national and international open government community. As such, OGP Action Plans are the perfect platform on which to build a holistic Open Government Strategic. In turn, an OGS can improve the internal coherence and overall impact of the NAP, linking independent commitments made by a wide variety of institutions and actors that are not necessarily connected to each other (see also the discussion about the difference between action plans and strategies in section 1.4 as well as Figure 17 below **Error! Reference source not found.**).

41. Furthermore, the NAPs’ limited time horizon of two years (which is typical for an action plan approach) is adequate for targeted commitments but it does not necessarily follow countries’ legislative cycles, at times creating challenges to sustain reform efforts in times of changes of government. Finland and Colombia are currently the first countries to move beyond two-year NAPs and experiment with action plans that cover a four-year term to support the goals of the wider Government Programme throughout its whole term (2019-2023 in the case of Finland). It will be important to evaluate this new model in the upcoming years.

## **1.4. The case for a whole-of-government Open Government Strategy**

42. In order to pursue a truly holistic approach to open government, it is now time to take the next step: The OECD Secretariat suggests that countries develop a whole-of-government Open Government Strategy that aligns existing strategies and initiatives and gives a common vision to a country’s open government agenda. The OECD Recommendation (2017), the first internationally recognised legal instrument in the area, defines an Open Government Strategy as:

43. *“A document that defines the open government agenda of the central government and/or of any of its sub-national levels, as well as that of a single public institution or thematic area, and that includes key open government initiatives, together with short, medium and long-term goals and indicators”.*

44. This section discusses existing experiences with Open Government Strategies, situates an OGS in a country’s wider policy framework and outlines the potential benefits a truly holistic open government approach can have.

### **1.4.1. Existing experiences with Open Government Strategies**

45. For the time being, only a small number of OECD Members and Partner Countries have adopted holistic Open Government Strategies. At whole-of-government level, the OECD could in fact only identify one such attempt. The greatest number of Open Government Strategies can be found at subnational level of government. Examples include:

- **Costa Rica** presented its first National Open Government Strategy in 2015. The stated aim of the OGS was to achieve the goal of an open, transparent and efficient government to fight against corruption. The strategy connected the country's OGP Action Plan with the Costa Rica's guiding policy vision, the National Development Plan 2014-18 (see OECD, 2016a). The Strategy was declared "of public interest" by means of a decree, a testimony to the importance given to the whole-of-government open government agenda by the then administration. While the strategy was progressive in many ways, it was mainly built on the country's OGP Action Plan and had limited reach beyond the initiatives included in the NAP.
  - The Open Government Strategy of the **Province of Alberta in Canada** is an example of a holistic policy framework for open government at subnational level (Government of the Province of Alberta in Canada, n.d.). It includes a vision and mission statement, identifies drivers, goals, outcomes and includes principles that shall guide policy implementation. It also lists three activity streams that include concrete commitments in the following areas: Open Data, Open Information and Open Engagement.
- The Open Government Strategy of the State of **North-Rhine Westphalia in Germany** (the "Open.NRW-Strategie") from 2014 is the first whole-of-government Open Government Strategy from a Federal State in Germany (Government of the State of North-Rhine Westphalia in Germany, 2014). The adoption by Parliament was preceded by a cross-ministerial process involving the public. The strategy includes three main components: open government data; more participation and better cooperation between the ministries / the state administration and citizens. The Open.NRW strategy also foresees cooperation with the municipalities in North Rhine-Westphalia. In order to implement the strategy, a new office was set up in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Municipal Affairs. In addition, each ministry had to appoint a contact person to take care of the implementation.

46. While there is currently a limited number of experiences, a variety of OECD Member and Partner Countries, including Finland, Italy, Argentina and Colombia have intentions to develop whole-of-government Open Government Strategies and some of these countries have already taken first steps to design them. One of the objectives of the present document is to support and provide guidance to these efforts.

### **1.4.1. Situating an Open Government Strategy in a government's wider policy framework**

47. Traditionally, a government's whole-of-government policy roadmap is outlined in speeches of the President / Prime Minister / Chancellor and / or a high-level policy document such as the Government Programme, Coalition Agreement or Development Plan. Most of these high-level policy documents are, however, rather abstract and only give limited guidance for effective policy implementation. Countries therefore usually complement their high-level documents with strategic documents which translate the policy into a strategic policy framework and provide a concrete roadmap for implementation for either the

whole-of-government or a sector. Short and medium term implementation efforts of this strategic policy framework are then guided by targeted institutional or sectorial action plans (Figure 5).<sup>4</sup>

48. The same policy hierarchy applies to the area of open government. Most countries’ high-level policy and legal documents now include commitments to foster different dimensions of openness (e.g. government commitments to foster transparency through the use of open data, etc.). However, evidence shows that most countries currently lack the intermediate layer that translates high-level directions into a strategic policy framework (or have a wide variety of intermediate layers that do not necessarily contribute to the same agenda).

49. While 49% of OECD countries reported having a single open government strategy in place in 2015 (OECD, 2016e) (Figure 5), 76% of these countries were actually referring to their Open Government Partnership (OGP) Actions Plan which, as such, does not constitute a whole-of-government OGS. As mentioned above, action plans are usually tools to implement and operationalise a broader policy or strategy. While a strategy outlines key steps to take an agenda from a starting point to selected objectives and outcomes, an action plan is a way to put the strategic framework into action. It outlines the detailed steps to take, includes concrete time horizons and deliverables and uses the resources allocated by the strategy. Table 1 can support open government teams in explaining these differences to other teams within the government or to high-level authorities who may not be convinced of developing a strategy when there is already an action plan.

**Table 1. The difference between a “strategy” and an “action plan”**

Strategy (or “policy”)	Action Plan (or “implementation roadmap”)
Translates high-level government commitments into policy objectives and implementation priorities	Makes a strategy operational
Provides a strategic implementation framework	Relies on the strategic framework to define concrete activities
Applies to the whole-of-government or an entire sector	Applies to specified institutional actors
Outlines the vision and high-level objectives	Includes targeted commitments and initiatives aimed at contributing to high-level objectives
Outlines major initiatives and projects	Translates major initiatives and projects into concrete implementation steps
Gives guideline to achieve objectives	Includes short-term deliverables
Allocates resources	Delineates how to use resources
Foresees governance arrangements	Includes a progress reporting structure and a measurable timeline
Timeframe: medium to long term (4-15 years)	Timeframe: usually 1-2 years
Outlines strategic KPIs and high-level indicators	Contributes to data collection for high-level indicators

<sup>4</sup> For example, a President’s agenda may include a commitment to improve his/her country’s touristic potential. This commitment may be vaguely outlined in the Government Programme with a focus on fostering economic growth through the attraction of tourism. In order to translate the ambition into concrete implementation efforts, the government then designs a National Tourism Strategy which outlines key objectives, areas of work and actions to be undertaken over the course of the President’s mandate. The strategy outlines how resources will be spent and which actors are responsible for implementation. Depending on the country’s policy tradition, different key actors (e.g. in this case the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Infrastructure, etc.) will then develop concrete action plans that detail their initiatives and commitments and that contribute to the objectives stated in the strategy. Alternatively, the government may design a whole-of-government action plan to support the implementation of the National Tourism Strategy.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

### 1.4.2. The benefits of an Open Government Strategy

50. An OGS constitutes the missing strategic link between a country's coherent and comprehensive high-level political direction and individual open government initiatives implemented by different public institutions (Figure 5). Open government is cross-cutting by nature. For a government, and even more a state, to become truly open and for it to take full advantage of the benefits that open government can yield, all institutions have to play their part. Section 1.5.6 below details different models through which this integration can be achieved.

#### Figure 5. Situating an Open Government Strategy in the wider policy framework

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Source: Author's own elaboration.

51. A well-designed OGS affects all public institutions, at all levels of government, and has the potential to make open government the leading paradigm in which the state operates. OECD research shows that a whole-of-government Open Government Strategy can yield a wide variety of benefits to countries' efforts to become more transparent, accountable, participatory and open. In particular:

- It ensures whole-of-government policy coherence;
- It improves efficiency;
- It enables collaboration and co-ordination;
- It acts as a tool for mainstreaming OG principles;
- It acts as a governance tool;
- It promotes public accountability; and
- It can protect the open government agenda from electoral cycles.

#### *An OGS ensures whole-of-government policy coherence*

52. As discussed above, public institutions in all OECD countries are already implementing an important number of open government initiatives, ranging from the creation of applications to interact with citizens to portals that open up public data or that facilitate access to public information. An OGS can provide the umbrella for all open government initiatives implemented in a country and ensure that they follow similar methodological guidelines and contribute to a shared vision of openness. As such, a whole-of-government Open Government Strategy, besides putting new initiatives in place, makes those policies and initiatives that are already being implemented by public institutions more coherent and stronger by working together under the same coherent (and powerful) narrative and methodological setting.

53. Concretely, a country's access to information and open data agendas may pursue different objectives. As a result, different strategic documents of a government may give different (and sometimes contradicting) directions as to how to handle data and information. In this context, an OGS can provide clarity as to the common standards which should be applied, thereby fostering policy coherence across the whole-of-government.

#### *An OGS ensures efficiency and intra-institutional knowledge sharing*

54. An OGS is a tool to save resources and reduce costs. Government institutions spend time and public resources trying to develop solutions that might already be in place or build on lessons learned by other administration that have already successfully implemented certain reforms. An OGS helps to intensify

efforts to create collaborative solutions to shared problems. A concerted OGS can help public institutions to elaborate a common understanding and shared standards relating to open government, thereby harmonising practices. As such, An OGS can enable the government to achieve outcomes – at a lower cost – that would not be possible to achieve if institutions work in isolation.

55. Concretely, different public institutions in a country may be using applications that allow citizens to provide feedback on the services they provide. In many cases, these applications are setup in different ways, using different kinds of software and interfaces, which can create confusion and frustrations for users. An OGS provides a platform for ministries to exchange good practices and share knowledge about their experiences, thereby contributing to both to policy coherence (see above) and increased efficiency.

*An OGS enables collaboration and co-ordination*

56. The main purpose of whole-of-government frameworks is to enable different government entities to pursue joint objectives in a co-ordinated manner. The Australian government defines whole-of-government as “public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated government response to particular issues (...)”. An OGS that includes clearly assigned responsibilities to the identified goals and objectives can be a valuable co-ordination and collaboration instrument.

57. Concretely, an OGS may outline the government’s commitment to create a whole-of-government open data portal in order to increase the availability of data to citizens and stakeholders and ultimately foster trust and economic growth. Setting up and implementing this portal will require inputs from and collaboration between an important number of public institutions. New partnerships may be built through the joint experience of creating the portal which may in the medium and long term result in an increasing number of open data initiatives across government and a network of officials engaged in open data efforts.

*An OGS acts as a tool for mainstreaming*

58. The design and implementation of an OGS gives visibility to the concept of open government and puts open government reforms on all public institutions’ agendas. An OGS, hence, mainstreams an openness culture by spreading and implementing the values and principles of open government across the entire administrations and all policy areas. In addition, it communicates to civil servants, citizens and stakeholders that the government embraces a new understanding of the way the state is run. As such, An OGS creates a powerful, compelling and coherent narrative that inspires policymakers to champion open government reforms in their own areas of work. Lastly, an OGS can help civil servants and citizens to better understand the added value and concrete output of open government by applying it to the policy area of their interest and expertise.

59. Concretely, certain public institutions in a country may not see the value of integrating the use of new technologies in its work or policy area. When the national government publishes a whole-of-government strategy on artificial intelligence, individual institutions start seeing the potential applied to their area. From a complex unrelated policy priority, artificial intelligence became mainstreamed and diffused across government.

*An OGS is a formidable governance tool*

60. An OGS allows for an effective management of a country’s open government agenda. The development of an OGS is usually led by a high-level official (e.g. Minister, Secretary General, senior appointee, inter-ministerial delegate, etc.) and accompanied by concrete efforts to create institutional and governance mechanisms (e.g. inter-ministerial committees; monitor and evaluate mechanisms, training modules, HR performance evaluations; budget allocations, etc.). High-level commitment of a politician can also be a tool to foster the impact of the strategy (as per the resources, mobilisation power and symbolism).

In addition, the adoption of an OGS empowers a person or office that will present the open government agenda to the wider public, monitor the follow up, and be the point of contact for the press and the wider public.

61. Concretely, governments are often characterised by overlapping institutional responsibilities in areas that are relevant for openness. A country may, for example, already have an Integrity Commission, an Access to Information Roundtable and an Open Data Working Group in place, all of them trying to make a contribution to government openness. The OGS can streamline these existing co-ordination spaces and ensure that they all contribute to a shared government vision of openness.

*An OGS functions as a tool for public accountability*

62. An OGS commits the government to certain key reforms and creates a pressure for institutions to deliver. At the same time, a strategy that commits the government to concrete, ambitious but feasible outcomes can be a message to the citizens emphasising that this is a serious endeavour. The identification of milestones and indicators allows stakeholders to monitor the government's implementation efforts and analyse their compliance with the strategy's objective. Hence, the strategy and the commitments made in it are a tool for stakeholders to hold the government to account and avoid "open washing". In addition, civil society can channel its demands through the strategy.

63. Concretely, governments are under increasing pressure from civil society and other stakeholders to provide more and better opportunities for participation in policy-making. However, governments still collect limited data on their participatory practices and on their impact. An OGS can ensure a coherent approach across the whole-of-government that allows civil society to monitor progress made, identify shortcoming and make more tailored demands for improved practices.

*An OGS can give long-term sustainability to the open government agenda*

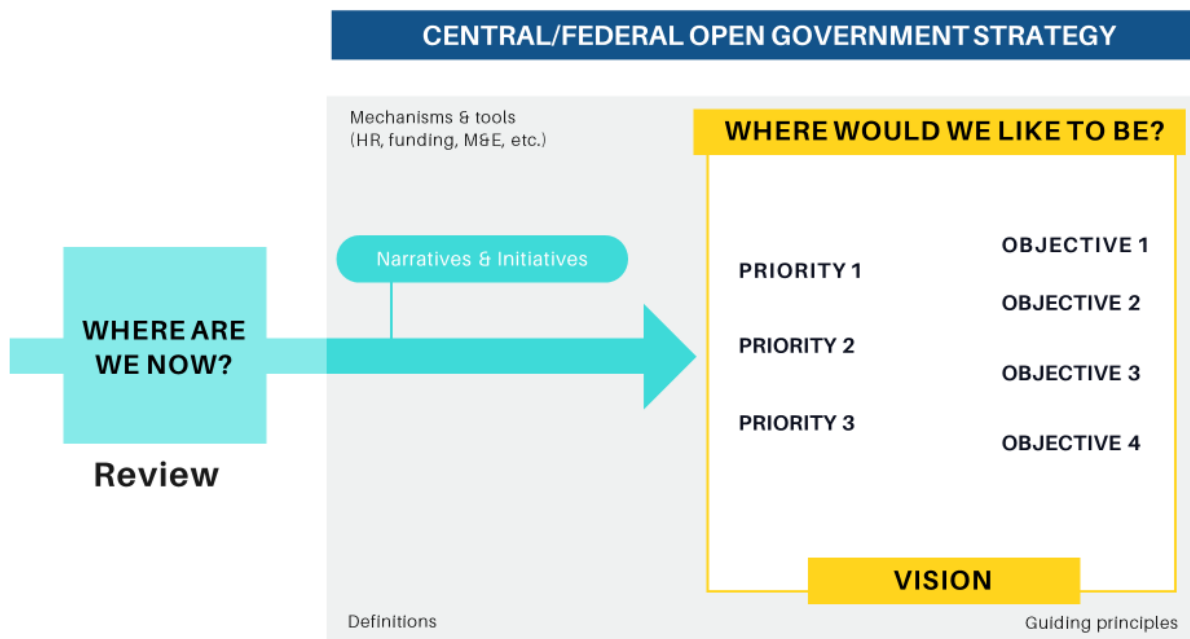
64. The lack of a national coherent strategy can undermine the long-term sustainability of open government reforms and protects it from government instability. If designed for the long term, an OGS can give open government a non-political value and anchor the implementation of open government principles in internal action plans that can continue without high-level political support.

## 1.5. Formulating and designing an Open Government Strategy

65. Having a strategy on its own is of course not a guarantee for success. To facilitate successful implementation, both the quality of its content and the process of designing and implementing it deserve attention. Countries have different traditions when it comes to the drafting of policies and use different terminologies. Whole-of-government strategies can therefore take very different forms. This section presents elements that are common to most policy documents and provides an overview of different ways to include initiatives in a whole-of-government Open Government Strategy. Based on these elements,Annexe A Annexe A below provides a template of an Open Government Strategy.

66. First of all, a Central / Federal Open Government Strategy should have a clear and compelling vision (1.5.1) that is based on a thorough review of the status quo of open government in a country (1.5.2). The vision and the review help countries establish priorities and define objectives for their OGS (1.5.3 and 1.5.4). The narrative (1.5.6) and the inclusion of concrete open government initiatives (1.5.7) then link the review with the stated vision and with priorities and objectives (Figure 6). In order to ensure that all institutions involved in the design and implementation of the strategy share common understandings, it is fundamental to also include definitions of key concepts and principles (1.5.5). Box 1 below shows the structure of the Open Government Strategy of the Province of Alberta in Canada.

Figure 6. Elements to consider when formulating and designing an Open Government Strategy



Source: Author's own elaboration.

### Box 1. The structure of the Open Government Strategy of the Province of Alberta (Canada)

The Open Government Strategy of the Province of Alberta in Canada is structured as follows:

- **Vision:** the main objective of the strategy.
- **Mission statement:** an explanation of the identified vision and the province's definition of open government.
- **Drivers:** five key elements that motivated the province to design the strategy, including "A wealth of new digital opportunities transforming everyday life for many citizens and companies".
- **Goals:** four key objectives and related sub-objectives, including "the public service working together with citizens to make government more responsive to meeting the evolving needs of Albertans."
- **Outcomes:** five main intended results, including "increased transparency" and related measures of success such as "decreased freedom of information requests".
- **Principles:** three principles that guide the implementation of the strategy, including "open by design".
- **Activity streams:** three "streams" of effort identified by the government including concrete commitments and ministry accountabilities. Activity streams link commitments to drivers and outcomes.

Source: Government of the Province of Alberta in Canada (n.d.), Open Government Strategy, <https://open.alberta.ca/documentation/strategic-plan>.

### 1.5.1. Identifying a vision

67. Any strategic government policy document needs a vision. The vision should be a clear statement of what the government and stakeholders aim to achieve through the implementation of open government reforms. As such, the vision of an OGS should be a shared long-term expectation of outcomes and of how these outcomes can contribute to broader governmental and societal objectives. The vision can motivate different stakeholders to work on the same agenda.

68. The visions should be ambitious, bold and inspiring and realizable in a realistic time horizon at the same time. The vision will guide the process to design objectives and initiatives that build the substantive part of the OGS. The clearer the vision, the more compelling it will be.

69. When identifying the vision for their OGS, countries can also reflect on its mission and the underlying values that frame both the Strategy’s vision and its mission.

#### Box 2. Examples of strategic visions

##### **Open Government Strategy of the Province of Alberta (Canada)**

“A public service openly engaged with the citizens of Alberta.”

The vision is complemented by the mission statement: “To create a stronger, transparent relationship between the public service and citizens by providing access to government data and information, listening, and openly engaging with citizens while strengthening the collaborative culture within the Government of Alberta.”

##### **United Kingdom Anti-Corruption Strategy (2017-2022)**

“Our work to combat corruption will contribute towards three long-term outcomes:

- reduced threat to our national security, including from instability caused by corruption overseas
- increased prosperity at home and abroad, including for UK businesses
- enhanced public confidence in our domestic and international institutions.

Tackling corruption is in the United Kingdom’s national interest. It helps to keep us safe from threats to our safety and security, from organised crime, terrorism and illegal migration, and from ‘insiders’ who exploit their position or access to an organisation’s assets for malign purposes. The United Kingdom’s reputation for integrity underpins our ability to boost trade and attract investment. This strategy sets out actions to strengthen this reputation and safeguard our longer term prosperity. Once implemented, the strategy will improve the business environment globally, including for UK companies, where corruption is often a barrier to open and competitive markets. The strategy will counter the insidious influence of corruption and will increase confidence that our institutions are fair and work for everyone. It will contribute to building a strong, confident Global Britain.”

##### **Ireland’s National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030**

“In the decades ahead, higher education will play a central role in making Ireland a country recognised for innovation, competitive enterprise and continuing academic excellence, and an attractive place to live and work with a high quality of life, cultural vibrancy and inclusive social structures.”

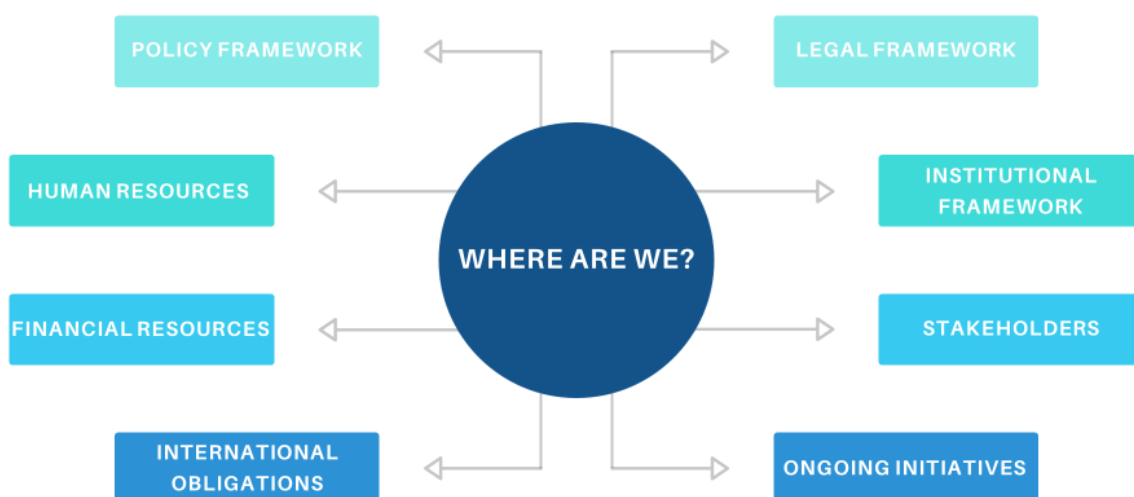
Sources: Government of the Province of Alberta in Canada (n.d.), Open Government Strategy, <https://open.alberta.ca/documentation/strategic-plan>; Irish Department of Education and Skills (2001), National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, Report of the Strategy Group January 2011, <http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-HigherEducation-2030.pdf>; Government of the United Kingdom (2017), UK anti-corruption strategy 2017 to 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-anti-corruption-strategy-2017-to-2022>.

### 1.5.2. Assessing the current situation, looking back and planning ahead

70. Before moving forward, it is essential to look back and analyse past experiences. A whole-of-government Open Government Strategy should be based on a thorough review that maps efforts to date, discusses achievements and highlights challenges ahead. This initial and fundamental step provides both the government and stakeholders with the necessary information and data to make better decisions. The review should take a holistic approach at open government, analysing what kind of initiatives to foster transparency, accountability, integrity and stakeholders' participation public institutions and the government as a whole have already implemented.

71. Whenever possible, this kind of review should also include forecasting and the analysis of data and evidence of impact of previous open government reform efforts. OECD Open Government Reviews can provide a basis for a country's own review. In countries that participate in the OGP, the evidence gathered through and the Independent Reporting Mechanism and through the government's own monitoring (e.g. the Self-assessment Reports) should be included. Figure 7 **Error! Reference source not found.** shows key elements that could be part of an open government review.

Figure 7. Elements of an open government review



Source: Analytical framework of the OECD Open Government Reviews.

### 1.5.3. Establishing priorities

72. Open government is a wide field that touches upon the very functioning of every government institution. Achieving a change towards an open government culture takes time and requires sustained long-term effort and commitment. Not all objectives can be pursued and not all initiatives can be implemented at once, as government resources and capacities are limited. It is therefore of key importance to be selective and set clear priorities from the very beginning (which means making compromises). For example, reforms in certain key open government areas (e.g. access to public information) may require the adaptation of new laws and regulations or the creation of new institutions which can be a time-consuming process.

73. Whenever possible, clear priorities should be established jointly with all relevant stakeholders (both from within government and from civil society). The established priorities and compromises should then be communicated to the wider public to manage expectations.

#### **1.5.4. Defining objectives**

74. The strategy's objectives translate the vision into targets. In any country, past experiences and context-specific priorities will be an important factor to consider when defining objectives for the Open Government Strategy. While the overall goal of any open government agenda is to foster and enhance government-citizens relations through transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholders' participation, countries should also define specific objectives which should be:

- Measurable, achievable and relevant;
- Evidence-based in order to facilitate monitoring;
- Ambitious without over-committing the government or creating unrealistic expectations;
- Budget responsible.

75. Whole-of-government objectives (i.e. those that aim at changing the culture of government in general) can be mixed with more specific objectives (e.g. those that aim to foster change in a specific sector / policy area). In the process of defining strategic objectives, stakeholder participation is fundamental to help the government prioritize and make choices. Objectives included in the OGS should contribute to and be clearly linked with broader government objectives and priorities. Box 3 provides examples of objectives/priorities included in relevant policy documents in OECD member and partner countries.

#### **Box 3. Examples of objectives included in relevant strategies in OECD member and partner countries**

##### **Open Government Directive of the Government of Canada**

"The objective of the directive is to maximize the release of government information and data of business value to support transparency, accountability, citizen engagement, and socio-economic benefits through reuse, subject to applicable restrictions associated with privacy, confidentiality, and security."

##### **United Kingdom Anti-Corruption Strategy (2017-2022)**

1. Reduce the insider threat in high risk domestic sectors
2. Strengthen the integrity of the UK as an international financial centre
3. Promote integrity across the public and private sectors
4. Reduce corruption in public procurement and grants
5. Improve the business environment globally
6. Work with other countries to combat corruption

##### **National Strategy of Open Government Data of Peru 2017-2021**

1. Promote the openness and reuse of open data of public information that complies with the rules on transparency and access to public information and complementary rules guaranteeing the rights of citizens.
2. Strengthen governance and trust in public administration entities through open data to improve decision-making and the provision of public services.
3. Promote citizen participation in the cycle of public policies and citizen collaboration for the co-creation of public value.

4. Promote innovation and use of information and communication technologies with open data to contribute to social and economic development, the information industry and competitiveness.
5. Promote public-private partnership through the opening and reuse of open data with economic and / or social impact.
6. Encourage the development of the ecosystem of open data that guarantees its sustainability.

Sources: Government of Peru (2017), *Estrategia Nacional de Datos Abiertos Gubernamentales del Perú 2017-2021*, [www.peru.gob.pe/estrategia.pdf](http://www.peru.gob.pe/estrategia.pdf); Government of the United Kingdom (2017), *UK anti-corruption strategy 2017 to 2022*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-anti-corruption-strategy-2017-to-2022>; Government of Canada (2014), *Directive on Open Government*, [www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=28108](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=28108) (accessed 10 October 2018).

### **1.5.5. Including key definitions**

76. As discussed in section 1.2, different people have different understandings of what constitutes open government. In order to clarify expectations and foster coherent implementation, the OGS therefore needs to include definitions of key concepts, such as open government and open state, as well as of key principles, including transparency, accountability, integrity, and stakeholders' participation. The consistent use of definitions and concepts by all actors involved in the open government agenda enhances the quality of the process (OECD, 2016e). Clearly outlined definitions, concepts and principles can:

- Provide guidance to policy-makers and ensure that all government institutions share a similar understanding.
- Inform stakeholders about the essential elements of open government, including the extent and limitations of key concepts.
- Facilitate a robust analysis of the impact of open government initiatives across different institutions and levels of government (Ibid.).

77. Definitions can be co-created with stakeholders or be taken from internal government sources or from external sources (such as academia, international organisations, etc.).

### **1.5.6. Defining a narrative**

78. Most policy documents include a narrative in their first sections. The narrative links the document with the country's broader policy agenda and government priorities. This fundamental part of a public policy should be written in easily understandable language as it sets the tone and provides public institutions and external stakeholders with a common understanding of why this strategy has been developed.

79. The narrative should be based on the review that is suggested above and should include qualitative and quantitative data that clearly outlines the necessity of the proposed whole-of-government Open Government Strategy. In some cases, the narrative takes the form of a foreword signed by the President / Prime Minister / a key Minister.

### **1.5.7. Clustering initiatives**

80. Initiatives are the concrete means to reach objectives. An OGS can comprise both first generation initiatives (e.g. better implementation of the access to information legislation; facilitation of an open data ecosystem) and second generation initiatives (e.g. creating a specific online platform for LGBT communities to include them in health policy).

81. Before designing initiatives, it can be useful to define clusters / activity streams which initiatives will contribute to. Clustering can be done in different ways, including through a principle-based, sectorial, open state or target-audience approach. It should be noted that these approaches are not exclusive and can be matched (e.g. a principle-based approach can be coupled with a target-audience approach). Clustering should always reflect specific priorities and take into account budgetary and human resource limitations.

82. When clustering initiatives and actions, approaches from other policy areas can also be used as an inspiration. For example, when designing the SDGs, the United Nations took a quite complex and broad policy and converted it into 16 policy streams, with defined outcomes, goals and indicators.

#### Box 4. Examples of stream of activities in relevant policy documents

##### **Open Government Strategy of the Province of Alberta (Canada)**

1. Open Data: releasing the raw data the government has in order to increase transparency and encourage innovative uses of data.
2. Open Information: a focus on making information routinely available and easy to find in order to encourage informed discussion.
3. Open Engagement: the process of bringing more, and better informed voices into the discussions necessary to improve outcomes for Albertans.

Source: Government of the Province of Alberta in Canada (n.d.), Open Government Strategy, <https://open.alberta.ca/documentation/strategic-plan>.

#### *Taking a principle-based approach*

83. It is commonly accepted that open government includes initiatives that aim to foster openness through the promotion of the principles of transparency (including access to information and open data), accountability, integrity (including anti-corruption) and citizen and stakeholder participation. Some countries across the OECD have taken the four principles of open government as a basis to structure and cluster their policy documents in the area. Along similar lines, the OGP's Point of Contact Manual mentions four core open government values to which each action plan commitment shall contribute (OGP, 2017). Accordingly, some countries have chosen to structure their OGP National Action Plans around these values. It should be noted that the values are closely linked to the four open government principles, as identified by the OECD. While keeping a similar basic clustering methodology, some countries have added different / additional dimensions to their definitions of open government. For example, the United States' Open Government Directive from 2009 was structured around the three axes of transparency, participation and collaboration. Along similar lines, Spain's 2017-2019 OGP Action Plan has the five following axes: collaboration, participation, transparency, accountability and training.

Figure 8. Example of a principle-based approach



Source: Author's own elaboration.

84. When taking a principle-based approach the main challenge stems from the fact that the four principles of open government are, in practice, intrinsically related and that the distinctions between the principles are not always clear. Indeed, the most successful initiatives take a holistic open government approach, i.e. they incorporate elements of and contribute to each of the principles (e.g. an open data portal can contribute to making the government more transparent while also increasing citizen participation through the use of data. The increased use of data may in turn foster accountability and integrity.).

#### Box 5. OGP open government values

The OGP suggests that participating countries ensure that each commitment included in the action plan is clearly advancing one or more of the open government values:

- **Transparency:** This includes publication of all government-held information (as opposed to only information on government activities); proactive or reactive releases of information; mechanisms to strengthen the right to information; and open access to government information.
- **Accountability:** There are rules, regulations, and mechanisms in place that call upon government actors to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of them, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments. Commitments on accountability should typically include an answerability element (i.e., that they are not purely internal systems of accountability but involve the public).
- **Public Participation:** Governments seek to mobilize citizens to engage in a dialogue on government policies or programs, provide input or feedback, and make contributions that lead to more responsive, innovative, and effective governance.
- **Technology and Innovation:** Governments embrace the importance of providing citizens with open access to technology, the role of new technologies in driving innovation, and the importance

of increasing the capacity of citizens to use technology. Technology and innovation cannot be a stand-alone principle but must support/advance the previous three principles.

Source: OGP (2017), Government point of contact manual, [https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/OGP\\_POC-Manual\\_2017\\_EN.pdf](https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/OGP_POC-Manual_2017_EN.pdf)

### *Taking a sectorial approach*

85. In order to make the shift from open government 1.0 to open government 2.0, countries can also take a sectorial approach to the clustering of initiatives in their Open Government Strategies, or they can enrich a principle-based / functional approach with a sectorial approach. The review (see section 1.5.2) may for example identify important opportunities for open government approaches in policy-making and service-delivery in the health or education sectors, etc. In that case, it can be useful to include concrete sectorial open government measures into the strategy (e.g. design the new health strategy through a participatory approach; create an open data portal for the education sector; etc.). For example, the Huss and Keudel (2020) study about *Open government in education: Clarifying concepts and mapping initiatives* found an important number of benefits that an open government approach to education policy can have, finding that “all three principles of open government – transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement – are pivotal to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4” (Box 6).

86. Taking a sectorial perspective has important advantages (Boehm, 2014; Campos and Pradhan, 2007; OECD, 2015c):

- Broad approaches do not always take into account the specificities of open government in all sectors. A thorough understanding of how a given sector works, its processes and actors, may however be required to design effective initiatives.
- Promoting open government in sectors can translate into more concrete goals and results that directly affect people’s well-being. Fostering openness in a sector can create positive spill-overs to other sectors, as citizens and stakeholders start recovering trust in their government and ask for more reforms.
- There may be windows of political opportunity making reforms at sector level more feasible (Matsheza, 2012).
- A sectorial approach can be a tool to ensure full buy-in from concerned sectors from the outset.

Figure 9. Example of a sectorial approach



Source: Author's own elaboration.

87. While a sectorial approach bears great transformative potential, initiatives should always be bound together by a common narrative and shared objectives (e.g. all sector-specific open data initiatives should contribute to the OGS' overall open data objectives). For a sectorial approach to work in practice, it is of key importance that all actors share a common understanding of open government and of its benefits. In addition, a sectorial approach should be complemented with elements of a principal-based or target-audience approach, as some open government initiatives necessarily concern more than one sector or even the whole-of-government (see for example the commitments to “enhance the transparency of political donations and funding” and “improve the sharing, use and reuse of public sector data”, as included in Australia’s 2018-2020 OGP Action Plan).

#### Box 6. The potential of a sectorial open government approach

Open government aims to permeate every policy sector and ultimately affects every government agency in its every day work. The education sector illustrates the potential of sectorial open government approaches. A report commissioned by UNESCO identified 34 cases of open government initiatives in 26 countries across 6 regions that target education policy. The report finds that initiatives often combine at least two open government principles, showing the interconnectedness of these principles, and indeed perform best if all three components work in concert (Ibid.).

As accountability is paired most frequently, this may indicate that the main focus of open government initiatives in education lies on providing citizens the opportunity to provide feedback and hold politicians to account. In respect to the stages of the policy cycle, it is therefore of little surprise that initiatives are most frequent found in the final stages of implementation and monitoring, and evaluation. The report shows that while central / federal governments induce most open government initiatives in the education sector, they are also becoming increasingly popular at sub-national level.

Source: Huss, O. and O. Keudel (2020), Open government in education: Clarifying concepts and mapping initiatives, UNESCO, International Institute for Educational Planning.

### *Taking a tool-based approach*

88. Some countries have structured their open government agendas by organising initiatives around specific tools that can foster openness such as open data, public sector innovation, or access to information frameworks. This kind of approach can be used to empower communities that contribute to the broader open government agenda (e.g. the open data movement, access to information movement, etc.).

89. In principle, an open government approach can (and should) be taken for each government function. However, in order to ensure coherence, it will be important to ensure that there is a strong common narrative and that all initiatives contribute to shared objectives.

**Table 2. Examples of open government tools**

Open government principles	Tools
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to information portals</li> <li>• Physical tools (service windows)</li> <li>• National open data portals and sectoral open data portals (contracting, budget, procurement, etc.)</li> <li>• Websites and mobile applications</li> <li>• Open source software</li> <li>• Algorithmic transparency</li> </ul>
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen audit applications (fix my street, follow the money, etc.)</li> <li>• Citizen feedback mechanisms (surveys, apps, letter boxes, etc.)</li> <li>• Public hearings (townhall meetings, virtual/physical hearings, etc.)</li> </ul>
Stakeholders' participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online tools (consultation platforms, e-vote, e-petitions, etc.)</li> <li>• Hackathons</li> <li>• Physical meetings</li> <li>• Local councils</li> </ul>

*Note:* It is recognised that open government tools usually contribute to more than one of the open government principles.

*Source:* Author's own elaboration.

Figure 10. Taking a tool-based approach



Source: Author's own elaboration.

*Taking a target audience approach*

90. In some cases it may be advisable to design clusters of initiatives according to their target audience. In particular, governments may wish to include streams of activities targeting specific groups of stakeholders (e.g. CSOs, women, LGBT, minorities, etc.). For example, a government may aim to strengthen interactions with youth organisations through their inclusion in the agenda-setting and elaboration of major government policies (e.g. education, environment, health, etc.).

Figure 11. Example of a target-audience approach

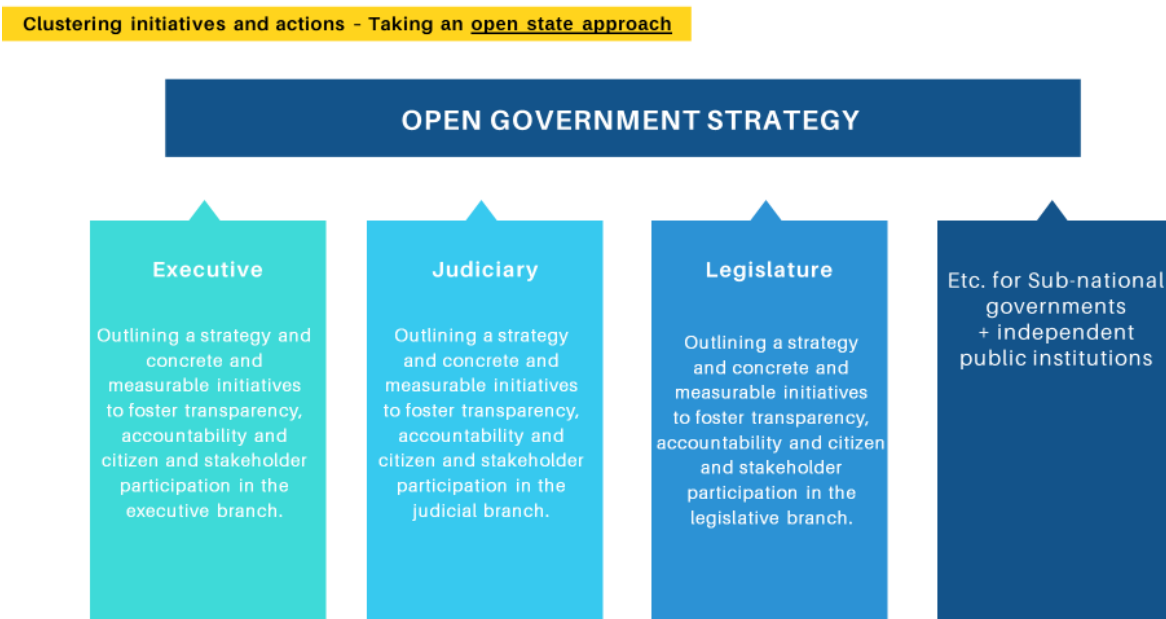


Source: Author's own elaboration.

*Taking an open state approach*

91. An OGS can even include an open state perspective. Depending on country specific legal context, the strategy may, for instance, include clusters of initiatives to be implemented by each of the branches of power and of independent public institutions and / or a cluster of initiatives targeting the subnational level(s) of government.

Figure 12. Example of a target-audience approach



Source: Author's own elaboration.

### 1.5.8. Designing successful open government initiatives

92. No matter which clustering approach a country ultimately selects (if any), in order to make the link to day-to-day policy-making, a whole-of-government Open Government Strategy needs to define practical ways to achieve its stated vision and the shared objectives. Initiatives / actions outline steps on how the government and key stakeholders aim to implement the OGS.

93. As discussed above, open government initiatives are those initiatives and actions executed by public institutions by which they 1) make public information and data available to citizens (fostering transparency); 2) give citizens and stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to the workings and the decision making process (fostering participation); and / or 3) assess results and assume responsibility for their decisions and actions, and provide clear answers to citizens' and stakeholders' demands and concerns (fostering accountability). Box 7 details the characteristics of successful open government initiatives while Figure 6 above shows the key role of initiatives in building the bridge between the initial assessment and the country's vision and objectives.

94. Depending on the approach chosen by a government (see below), initiatives can either be "general" or "detailed and concrete". While general initiatives (e.g. develop standards, tools and resources to support a new spirit of participation across government) have to be complemented with actions plans that outline concrete steps to implement them, detailed and concrete initiatives which often follow a sectorial approach (e.g. involve citizens in the design of a new youth strategy through the use of a targeted mobile application) do not necessary need to rely on additional action plans to be implemented as they are usually already coupled with clear milestones and timelines.

### Box 7. Characteristics of successful open government initiatives / actions

When developing new open government initiatives or incorporating existing initiatives into the whole-of-government Open Government Strategy, certain key features of successful open government initiatives should be considered. In an ideal case, initiatives should be:

#### **Aligned to the overall vision and the objectives of the strategy**

The purpose of the open government initiatives is to give substance to the Open Government Strategy. The initiatives, therefore, have to be coherent with the strategy's intended vision and its objectives/priorities.

#### **Built on pre-existing work**

Open government initiatives to be included in the whole-of-government Open Government Strategy do not have to be new. Initiatives that are already in place can also be assimilated to the new Strategy, which in turn legitimizes, rationalizes and strengthens them by providing them with a powerful narrative and a broader framework. A Whole-of-government Open Government Strategy can make those initiatives that are already in place more coherent and stronger by working together under the same coherent narrative and methodological setting.

#### **Linked to other national strategies**

Linking open government initiatives to other national strategies can make them more feasible and successful. For example, an open data/transparency initiative can be part of the OGS as well as the national anti-corruption strategy. Along similar lines, an indigenous consultation initiative can be in the OGS and in the local development strategy.

#### **Linked to resources**

Developing and implementing an Open Government Strategy may involve reforming laws and institutions, developing new skills, new technologies and platforms etc., all of which requires human and financial resources. Adequate funding is therefore vital for an efficient and sustainable implementation of open government reforms. The Whole-of-government Strategy should ensure that funding is as transparent and as consistent as possible. Costs should be assessed realistically and wherever possible integrated into the national budget.

#### **Anchored by the open government approach**

Initiatives should, whenever possible, be designed in collaboration with different stakeholders and foster collaboration between civil society and public bodies.

#### **Communicated both internally and externally**

Communicating about open government initiatives can help expand their impact. Internally, this helps build coalitions and strengthen commitment for this cause across the public sector, including among senior-level executives. Externally, citizens and CSOs who are more aware of such initiatives, and who understand them better are more likely to participate in such efforts.

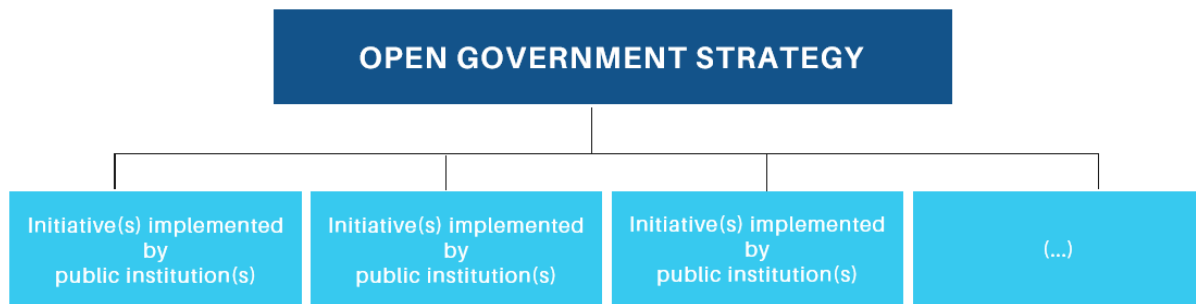
*Source: Author's own elaboration.*

95. There are different ways to integrate initiatives into an Open Government Strategy. The eventual selection of one approach depends on contextual and administrative factors of a country.

*Model 1: All initiatives are included in the Open Government Strategy*

96. In this approach, the whole-of-government Open Government Strategy defines the overall vision, sets objectives and specifies all initiatives that are going to be implemented by public institutions over the implementation period. This model is closest to the one proposed by the OGP Action Plan. The model has the disadvantage that it can never cover the entire open government agenda of a country and many ongoing initiatives will be excluded. It may therefore be most suited to countries that are not members of the OGP and that aim to initiate an open government agenda.

**Figure 13. Including all initiatives in the Open Government Strategy**



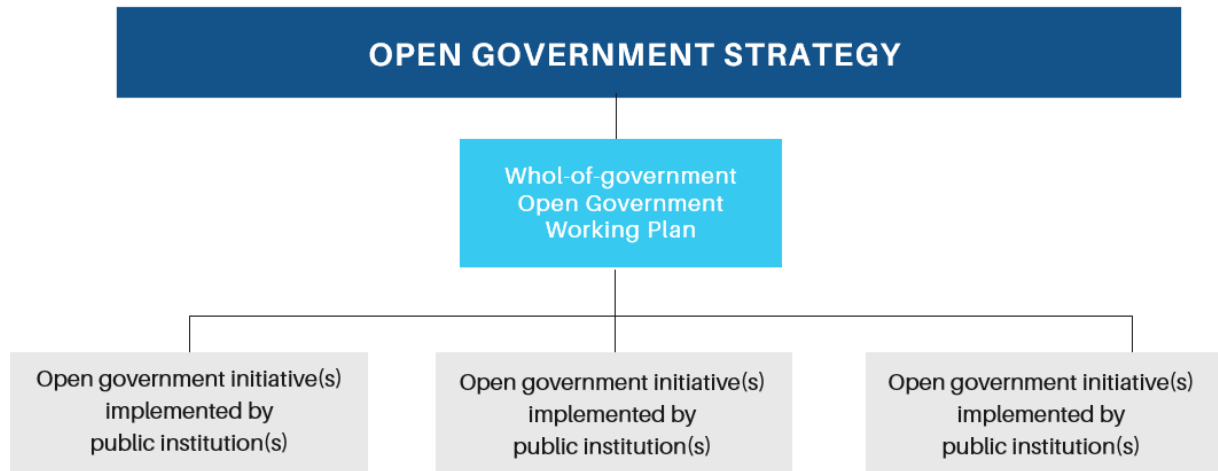
Source: Author's own elaboration.

*Model 2: A working group periodically defines a whole-of-government working/action plan to implement the strategy*

97. In this approach, the strategy provides the narrative, sets the vision and details the objectives while initiatives are designed periodically (in most cases annually or biannually) along the implementation process by means of a whole-of-government open government working plan. The definition of initiatives is centralized by a single institution or by a Steering Committee which involves all key stakeholders. In some cases, the whole-of-government working plan may be adopted by decree or another legal document.

98. Countries that participate in the OGP can use their OGP Action Plan to implement specific targeted commitments (which should of course also be aligned with the strategy's objectives) while the whole-of-government open government working plan defines additional initiatives and priorities that affect the whole-of-government. Initiatives that conform the working plans should be broad enough to be implemented by a variety of institutions. In this model, the strategy usually takes a medium to long-term perspective.

Figure 14. Defining a whole-of-government open government working/action plan

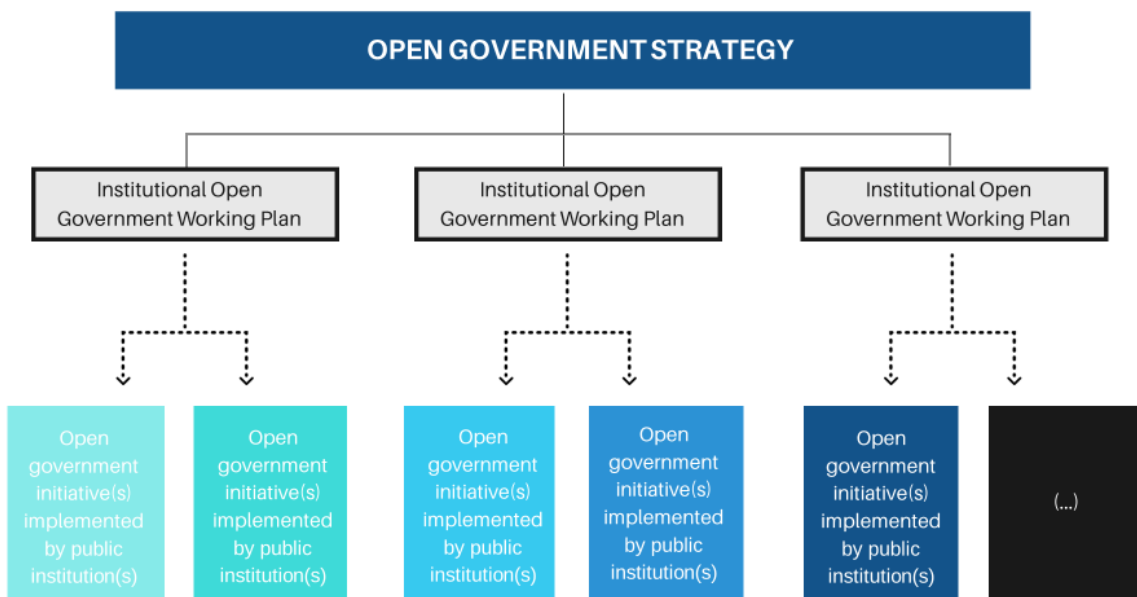


Source: Author’s own elaboration.

*Model 3: Each institution defines its own open government working plan*

99. In this approach, the Open Government Strategy foresees that all public institutions elaborate their own open government working/action plans in order to achieve the commonly agreed vision and objectives. The resulting institutional open government working plan is an official document. Institutions have autonomy to decide initiatives that they are going to implement initiatives that contribute to the vision and objectives of the overall Whole-of-government Strategy. OGP participants can use their NAPs for targeted key initiatives that they wish to give national and international visibility to.

Figure 15. Defining independent open government working plans for each institution



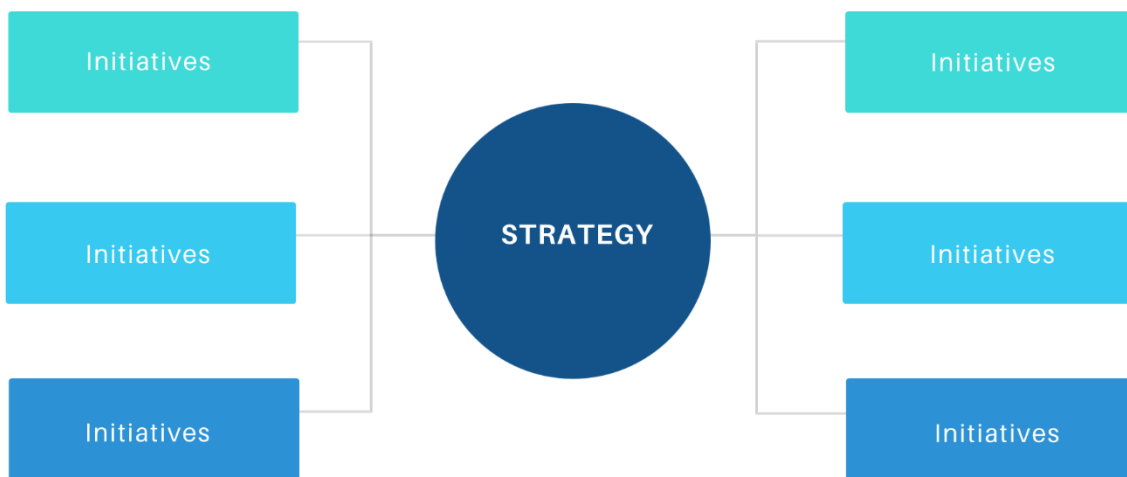
Source: Author's own elaboration.

*Model 4: Institutions define initiatives that contribute to the achievement of the strategy's objectives at their own pace*

100. In this scenario, the whole-of-government Open Government Strategy's vision and its objectives function as a general guideline that public institutions follow at their own pace. Each individual institution designs and implements its own open government initiatives without developing an institutional action/working plan.

101. This model grants a high level of autonomy to public institutions and is best applied in those countries that have a mature open government agenda. The main role of the co-ordinating institution is to raise awareness, support institutions in the elaboration of their own open government initiatives and monitor the achievement of the objectives of the overall policy.

**Figure 16. Defining initiatives at different paces**



Source: Author's own elaboration.

### **1.6. Framework conditions for the design and implementation of an Open Government Strategy**

102. In order for the OGS not to remain on paper, countries need to respect certain framework conditions and establish mechanisms to ensure effective implementation. The proposed OECD Handbook will provide a more detailed overview of necessary arrangements and will elaborate on their use.

**1.6.1. Upgrading governance arrangements**

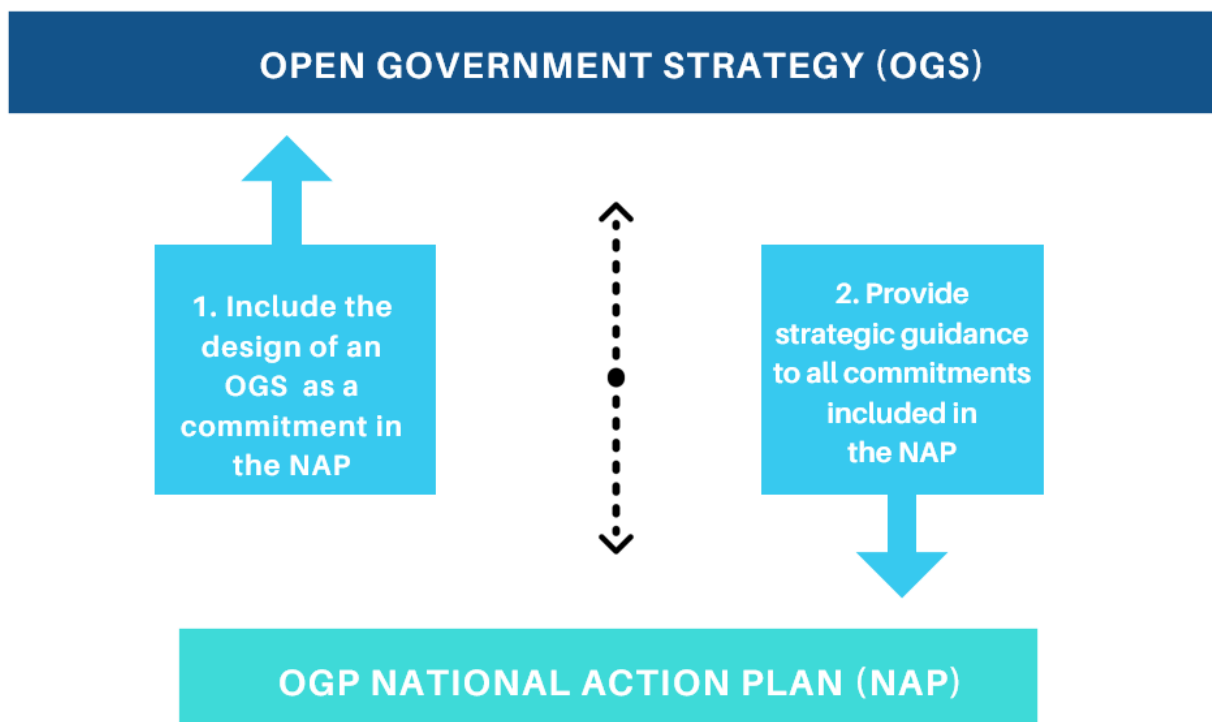
103. The design of an OGS puts a country’s open government agenda on a whole new level, *de facto* making the promotion of transparency, citizen and stakeholder participation and accountability the leading operating principles of the government and putting citizens (and their needs) at the heart of all government activities. This change has profound implications for the way the state operates: As a consequence of the design of an OGS, countries need to determine whether their existing governance arrangements for the open government agenda can adequately support the process of implementation or need to be adjusted. Appropriate governance mechanisms may include the creation of new monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and additional co-ordination mechanisms.

**1.6.1. Linking the OGS to the wider strategic policy framework**

104. Given its holistic approach and the whole-of-government impact it aims to achieve, a whole-of-government Open Government Strategy cannot emerge in isolation – it must communicate with other government policies and priorities. A conducive way to ground an OGS in whole-of-government activities is therefore to ensure full links with existing national high-level strategic documents (e.g. the implementation at the national level of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals).

105. In addition, countries that participate in the OGP should take advantage of the OGP process and capitalise on the international visibility and peer pressure that the OGP process provides them with by ensuring full complementarity between NAP and OGS. In the first place, as for example done by Finland, the design of an OGS can be included in a country’s NAP as a commitment. In turn, the initiatives included in OGP action plan as well-established building blocks of many countries’ open government agendas, can for example be used strategically to highlight selected key initiatives of the OGS.

Figure 17. Complementarity between an Open Government Strategy and an OGP Action Plan



Source: Author’s own elaboration.

### **1.6.2. Engaging all relevant stakeholders**

106. In order for the OGS to become a whole-of-government guiding document, the process to design and implement it should be as inclusive as possible and involve all key institutions from within and outside of the government. For the time being, the participation in countries' open government agendas is often led by a small number of influential CSOs (often based in the capital) that focus on key pillars of open government and/or specific policy areas (e.g. transparency, open data, etc.) while CSOs from the subnational level and CSOs with specific focus areas (e.g. women's rights, environmental issues, etc.) are mostly absent.

107. The involvement of all relevant stakeholders (including also parliamentarians, political parties and younger generations of decision-makers, etc.) should be one of the key priorities as it can create ownership. The process to design an OGS may present a momentum to create an "open government community" in and out of government and build up long-term expertise. In order to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are accounted for, it may therefore be advisable to conduct a mapping of stakeholders (possibly as part of the situational open government assessment) to determine "who" key stakeholders are and "how" interested and influential they are. This will allow the government to develop a solid understanding of stakeholders' roles, responsibilities and limitations to contribute to the design and implementation of OGS. A systematic stakeholder analysis usually consists in three stages: 1) Identifying groups of stakeholders; 2) Analysing and sorting stakeholders and 3) Foreseeing specific measures to ensure an inclusive process. The OECD Handbook that is proposed below will elaborate on these elements and will include further discussions on ways to identify key actors and the criteria of representativeness.

#### **1.6.1. Ensuring political commitment**

108. Political commitment from the highest level is a prerequisite for policy- and institutional changes. In addition to the support that is needed to initiate the design process of an Open Government Strategy, there needs to be long-term commitment in order to sustain the momentum for reform during the implementation phase. Ensuring this kind of long-term commitment requires buy-in and the identification of political champions. In order to contribute to a shift towards an open government culture, the most senior government leaders need to be personally invested in the process to design and implement the OGS.

#### **1.6.2. Communicating the strategy**

109. Public communication is a key pillar of the OECD Recommendation on Open Government. Provision 6 indeed mentions the need to "actively communicate on open government strategies and initiatives, as well as on their outputs, outcomes and impacts, in order to ensure that they are well-known within and outside government, to favour their uptake, as well as to stimulate stakeholder buy-in" (OECD, 2017).

110. In order for the OGS to become a whole-of-government tool, it is essential to communicate it across the administration. Ensuring that the strategy is communicated to relevant stakeholders is essential, as per the [Communicating Open Government: a How-to Guide](#) (OECD, 2018b) developed jointly by the OECD and OGP. The new strategic narrative has to become relevant to the day-to-day activities of each individual public servant. The coordinating entity should therefore make dedicated efforts to ensure that all public institutions are fully aware of its existence and that high-ranking officials hold their institutions accountable for implementation. This may involve the organisation of high visibility events and the establishment of a dedicated communication strategy. Internal communication around an open government strategy can also help create synergies by bringing policy makers and public communicators more closely together. As per the OECD-OGP guide "There is much to learn from the communication community that could be useful for policymakers in charge of open government reforms, such as increasing knowledge about the beneficiaries of reforms to better inform open government initiatives and improving

the ability to reach them through audience insight for example. Vice-versa, by strengthening communicators' understanding of open government initiatives, they can expand their role as agents of change for open government within their ministries, thereby ensuring that the whole of government acts for transparency, integrity, accountability and participation, and not just a single ministry."

111. Communicating the strategy externally is equally important. It helps ensure citizens understand why the strategy was developed, what it will deliver, and how it will impact their daily lives. It can also encourage a cultural and behaviour change in favour of open government principles. Finally, it helps raise awareness amongst citizens of the role that they can play in supporting these principles and the opportunities available to engage in public life for example.

### ***1.6.1. Linking the strategy to the budget and foreseeing adequate human resources***

112. Developing and implementing an Open Government Strategy may involve reforming laws and institutions, developing new skills, new technologies and platforms etc., all of which requires human and financial resources. Adequate funding is therefore vital for an efficient and sustainable implementation of open government reforms.

113. The Whole-of-government Strategy should ensure that resources are allocated in a transparent and consistent manner. As part of the design process, costs should be assessed realistically and wherever possible integrated into the national budget.

### ***1.6.2. Including monitoring and evaluation mechanisms***

114. For the time being, one of the great challenges for OECD countries in the area of open government is to move the focus from processes to outcomes and impact (OECD, 2019a). Given their multidimensional and cross-cutting nature, open government initiatives are difficult to monitor and evaluate. Implementing open government strategies usually involves initiatives in a variety of areas and requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Solid M&E mechanisms can help to ensure that policies are achieving the intended goals, contribute to the identification of policy design and implementation barriers, and orient policy choices by building on past experiences (Ibid.). M&E is instrumental to initiating changes and communicating policy results in a timely and accessible manner.

115. Countries need to make efforts to include solid monitoring and evaluation systems in their OGS. At a minimum, strategy implementation can be monitored through the collection of data on processes (e.g. how many participatory processes were implemented). Whenever possible, the M&E system should also include a focus on outcomes and impacts. For example, the United Nations SDGs created individual sets of indicators for each Goal, allowing civil society to measure the implementation of the SDGs in a data and fact based manner. The OECD Handbook that is suggested below will elaborate on these elements and it will include a specific section on the development of indicators to monitor and evaluate the implementation of OGS.

## **1.7. Conclusion: The way towards an OECD Handbook on Developing and Implementing an Open Government Strategy**

116. Given the increasing complexity and interconnectedness of social, political and economic issues, the policy implementation landscape in the future will probably be increasingly characterised by whole-of-government frameworks (OECD, 2019c). Evidence shows that ministries, departments and agencies cannot solve complex challenges in isolation from one another. It will, hence, become even more necessary to co-ordinate and integrate responses in order to optimise the impact of policies (Ibid.).

117. This paper shows that countries have come a long way in establishing and implementing ambitious frameworks to ensure that citizens can see and understand the workings and decisions of government; can participate in and influence the workings and decisions of the government; and that government listens to citizens, learns, adapts and answers.

118. While all OECD Countries now have open government agendas in place, for the time being, experience with truly holistic approaches to the open government principles remains limited. This paper recommends that countries develop and implement an Open Government Strategy as a way to foster openness across the whole-of-government and, thereby, achieve a wide range of other policy objectives. However, elaborating an OGS can be time-consuming and resource-intensive and the process needs to take into considerations the specific nature of open government.

119. In order to provide countries with practical, step-by-step guidance the OECD proposes to elaborate an *OECD Handbook on Designing and Implementing an Open Government Strategy* that allows countries that participate in the OGP to build on and strengthen their national action plans and provides guidance to countries that do not participate in the OGP on how to launch an ambitious and successful open government agenda. The Handbook will build on the OECD's long-standing experience in the area of open government, complementing the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government. It will elaborate on key sections of this working paper, including the design of indicators to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the strategy, and additional governance considerations. Concrete recommendations will be coupled with evidence of relevant country experience from related policy areas. While the primary focus will be on providing advice to central / federal governments, most elements will also be of use for subnational governments and the other branches of power.

120. The OECD proposes to present a draft of the full Handbook at the first meeting of the OECD Working Party on Open Government of 2021.

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# Annexe A. Model Open Government Strategy (abbreviated version / executive summary)

\*This template is a living document which the OECD Secretariat would like to jointly refine with Delegates of the Working Party on Open Government.

## 1.1 Ministerial / Presidential foreword

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Include a high-level statement by a senior member of government (President, Prime Minister, key Minister, etc.) to outline the narrative and show the political commitment to the strategy. In the case of an Open State Strategy, this foreword could either be signed by the Presidents of all branches of power or there could be different statements.

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## 1.2 Open government review

### 1.2.1 *The status quo*

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Discuss the status quo of open government in your country, based on the review. Questions to be answered may include: What are key challenges we are facing? How can open government help address these challenges? What opportunities does open government yield?

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### 1.2.2 *Recent reform progress*

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Outline reforms made to date, including in the framework of the OGP Action Plans (where they exist) and other relevant national and international initiatives.

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### 1.3 Legal framework

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Discuss the legal framework in which the strategy operates. Make reference to relevant constitutional, legal and regulatory provisions that provide a mandate for the government to elaborate and implement open government initiatives (e.g. access to information law).

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### 1.4 Definitions

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Include key definitions that will be used in the strategy. At a minimum, definitions should be included for the following terms: Open Government; Open State; Open government data; transparency; accountability; integrity; stakeholder participation; etc.

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### 1.5 Vision / mission statement

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Outline the government's vision for openness and discuss which strategic high-level objectives the implementation of this strategy shall achieve (at the highest level) (see section 1.5.3)

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### 1.6 Objectives

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Detail the selected key objectives of the strategy. Highlight which broader policy objectives openness is supposed to contribute to (e.g. fostering citizens' trust in public institutions, strengthen democracy, public services of higher quality, etc.) .

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## 1.7 Guiding principles

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Outline principles that will guide the implementation of this strategy (e.g. citizen-centred, flexibility, innovation, use of ICTs etc.)

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## 1.8 Governance mechanisms to deliver the vision and achieve the objectives

### 1.8.1 Institutional responsibilities

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Clearly identify the main government institution in charge of the implementation of the strategy and outline responsibilities. Mention any other government institutions that have important responsibilities to facilitate strategy-implementation. Discuss the strategic steering of this strategy (e.g. through a National Open Government Commission)

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### 1.8.2 Work with international partners and adopt and promote international collaboration and standards

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Mention international partners that shall contribute to the implementation of the strategy. Outline international initiatives and standards your country wishes to adhere to as part of the implementation of the strategy (e.g. EITI, etc.).

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### 1.8.3 Stakeholder engagement

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Discuss how stakeholders were engaged in the design of the strategy and how they will participate in its implementation.

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## 1.9 Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

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Present the monitoring system (monitoring web platform or other mechanisms, periodicity, etc.)

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Present mechanisms for evaluating execution and impact, intended and unintended effects, etc.  
 Outline key target indicators.

## 1.10 Giving structure to the Strategy - Clustering initiatives

### 1.10.1. Example of a principle-based approach

Outline the whole-of-government strategy to foster each of the open government principles: transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholders’ participation. A principle-based approach usually outlines strategic approaches for each of the principles that together constitute the whole-of-government open government approach.

While the focus should be on the most strategic whole-of-government dimensions of each open government principle, a principle-based approach can also include sector- or institution-specific initiatives. In practice, a principle-based approach is often coupled with specific institutional or sectorial action plans that include concrete and measurable initiatives and give life to the OGS (see Model 2 and Model 3 in section 1.5.8).

Examples of initiatives / actions	Details	Timeframe	Responsible agency/agencies
<b>Stream of activities 1: Increasing government transparency</b>			
<b>Example of a general / whole-of-government initiative:</b> Systematically collect and publish information and data on government spending and the performance of public services.			
<b>Example of a specific initiative:</b> Publish educational data in an open data format.			
Etc.			
<b>Stream of activities 3: Fostering citizen participation and inclusiveness - Opening up to new ideas and demands</b>			
<b>Example of a general / whole-of-government initiative:</b> Develop standards, tools and resources to support a new spirit of participation and collaboration with citizens.			

<b>Example of a specific initiative:</b> Use mobile applications to involve young people in the elaboration of the new climate change strategy.			
Etc.			
<b>Stream of activities 4: Increasing accountability</b>			
<b>Example of a general / whole-of-government initiative:</b> Ensure that all public institutions have complaint and feedback mechanisms in place.			
<b>Example of a specific initiative:</b>			
Etc.			
<b>Stream of activities 5: Fostering integrity and fighting corruption</b>			
<b>Example of a general / whole-of-government initiative:</b> Create an open contracting portal for the whole-of-government and include procurement data and information from all public entities in it.			
<b>Example of a specific initiative:</b> Make information regarding the activities and effectiveness of the anticorruption prevention and enforcement bodies, as well as the procedures for recourse to such bodies, available to the public.			
<b>Stream of activities 5: Building an openness culture across government</b>			
<b>Example of a general / whole-of-government initiative:</b> Establish open government units in all public institutions			All public institutions
<b>Example of a specific initiative:</b> Strengthen the capacity of the Open Government Office to supervise the implementation of the OGS			Open Government Office
Etc.			

### 1.10.2. Example of a sectorial approach

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A sectorial approach requires the involvement of all government sectors in the design and implementation of the Open Government Strategy. In order to be coherent, sectorial initiatives need a common narrative that weaves them together. A sectorial approach therefore usually complements a principle-based or functional approach which focuses on whole-of-

government elements of an open government agenda (e.g. the creation of portals, trainings for civil servants from different sectors, etc.).

Examples of initiatives / actions	Details	Timeframe	Responsible agency/agencies
<b>Stream of activities 1: Taking an open government approach in the education sector</b>			
Publish an increasing number of educational data sets in the whole-of-government open data portal			
Create permanent mechanisms for student- and parent-involvement in educational policy			
Publish and widely disseminate performance reports.			
Etc.			
<b>Stream of activities 2: Taking an open government approach in the health sector</b>			
Etc.			
<b>Stream of activities 3: Taking an open government approach in the defence sector</b>			
Etc.			
<b>Etc. for all other government sectors</b>			

**1.10.3. Example of a tool-based approach**

A tool-based approach usually complements a principle-based approach, focusing on the whole-of-government application of specific open government tools (e.g. open data, consultations).

Examples of initiatives / actions	Details	Timeframe	Responsible agency/agencies
<b>Stream of activities 1: Open Data</b>			
<i>Outlining a strategy to use the tools across the whole-of-government.</i>			
<b>Stream of activities 2: Consultations</b>			

<i>Outlining a strategy to use the tools across the whole-of-government.</i>			
<b>Stream of activities 3: Citizen audits</b>			
<i>Outlining a strategy to use the tools across the whole-of-government.</i>			
<b>Stream of activities 4: Citizen Assemblies</b>			
<i>Outlining a strategy to use the tools across the whole-of-government.</i>			
<b>Etc. for other open government tools</b>			

**1.10.4. Example of an open state approach**

Taking an open state approach can be a powerful way to create a shared commitment to the principles of open government across the entire public sector. In order for the commitment not to remain on paper, each branch and the different levels of government should include concrete and measurable initiatives that can be structured taking any of the above approaches. However, an open state approach is ambitious and should therefore mostly be applied by countries with mature open government agendas and well-established connections between branches of power and levels of government.

<b>Examples of initiatives / actions</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsible agency/agencies</b>
<b>Stream of activities 1: Open Government</b>			
<i>Outlining the Open Government Strategy of the Executive Branch of the State.</i>			
<b>Stream of activities 2: Open Parliament</b>			
<i>Outlining the Open Government Strategy of the Legislative Branch of the State.</i>			
<b>Stream of activities 3: Open Justice</b>			

<i>Outlining the Open Government Strategy of the Judicial Branch of the State.</i>			
<b>Stream of activities 4: Open Local Governments</b>			
<i>Outlining an Open Government Strategy for local level governments.</i>			
<b>Stream of activities 5: Taking an integrated open state approach</b>			
<i>Outlining how branches of powers and levels of government will collaborate to foster the principles of open government.</i>			

**1.10.5. Example of a target-audience approach**

Usually, a target-audience complements principle-based and / or sectorial approaches. Target-audience approaches are useful to give visibility to the government’s efforts to foster openness in its interactions with specific groups of citizens and stakeholders.

<b>Examples of initiatives / actions</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsible agency/agencies</b>
<b>Stream of activities 1: Taking an open government approach to enhance government interactions with indigenous communities</b>			
Make specific efforts to ensure that indigenous communities have access to relevant government information.			
Involve indigenous communities in the elaboration of policies that matter most to them.			
Ensure that all government institutions have the capacity to answer specific requests of indigenous communities.			
Etc.			
<b>Stream of activities 2: Taking an open government approach to enhance government interactions with minorities</b>			
Etc.			
Etc.			

**Stream of activities 3: etc. for other target audiences**