Engagement Summary – Open Data Program 2017

Encouraging open data use and storytelling in New Zealand

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Contents

Introduction

This document is a summary of engagement undertaken between June and July 2017
to uncover case studies and explore potential uses of open data with stakeholders across
New Zealand.

It summarises the engagement approach taken and input received during the process.
The input received is broken down into key points, both online and offline, during the two stages
of engagement. Some high-level outcomes of the engagement are documented along with some
recommendations about ongoing engagement.

Image 1: Photograph of participants listening to Cam Findlay from DIA at the workshop in Wellington.
Photo Anne Nelson CC BY 4

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Approach to engagement

Engagement ran throughout June and July 2017. This process built on previous engagement was designed to re-engage current users and raise awareness about open data with potential users of open data who had not been engaged to date.

engage2 teamed up with Dan Randow to deliver this engagement. Dan designed and delivered the workshops and conducted interviews with Open Data Champions. engage2 supported Dan with this engagement, managed online engagement and worked closely with Stats NZ to promote all online and offline engagement activities.

The objectives of the engagement were to:

- Identify current and potential users to develop a comprehensive database of users for ongoing engagement

- Raise awareness about open data and investigate the interests of potential users

- Profile types of users and potential uses

- Collect case studies from current users and publish them to communicate use cases

- Develop protocols for engaging users on an ongoing basis

An analysis was carried out to identify stakeholders, understand their interests, and the best channels to use to engage with them so an engagement strategy could be developed. This analysis was conducted online and involved interviews with stakeholders.

Engagement was then used to gather open data stories and explore potential uses of open data. This engagement was actively promoted to stakeholders though email updates, blog posts and social media to encourage participation online, via phone interviews and offline through workshops.

Stages of engagement

Engagement ran across three stages:

1. 24th May to 2nd June: Research / prepare for engagement – identify stakeholders, scope their interests, prepare for engagement, set up channels for engagement, draft content.

2. 2nd June to 20th July: Engagement - Online and face-to-face.

3. 20th July to 12th August: Wrap up engagement / handover - share case studies and other engagement outputs, make recommendations for ongoing engagement.
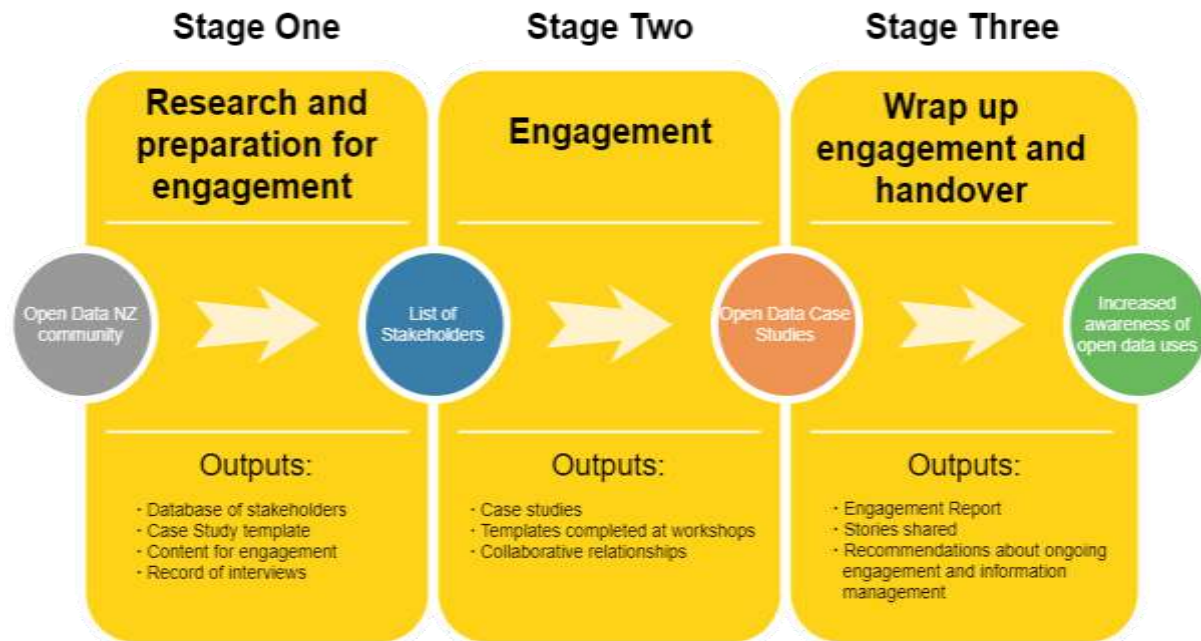
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Figure 1: Stages of engagement

A variety of channels were used to encourage participation in the engagement process. These channels include the Data.govt.nz blog, Web Toolkit blog, Typeform survey, Open Government Ninjas' wiki and Social media - @OpenDataNZ on Twitter, @data_govt_nz on Twitter, @Stats NZ on Twitter and Facebook, LinkedIn – using #opendatanz as the hashtag.

Engagement offline consisted of workshops designed to exchange open data stories and encourage the use of open data and raise awareness about potential uses.

Case studies collected during engagement will now published as stories on the Open Data NZ page and a summary of input received during each stage is collated below.

Stakeholders engaged

Engagement for Open Data has been ongoing for several years in NZ and the Open Data program team now have a comprehensive list of people who have engaged with them to date or registered their interest in open data through their online channels. This list was used to engage with existing users.

An additional database of stakeholders was developed through an analysis of potential open data users in New Zealand. Types of potential uses were identified by team members experienced in engaging about open data and open government, and input from the client. Types of stakeholders included people who might use data for:

- Data journalism

- Data analysis and data visualization

- Associations for environmental, planning and information management professionals

- Social and environmental initiatives –NGO's and community groups delivering services and programs

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- Assessments of supply and demand, infrastructure development, use of resources etc – data teams in engineering, management consulting, economic, financial and insurance firms

- Research papers, consulting and advisory services about social, economic, environmental, cultural needs, impacts, use of resources etc – think tanks, academics, economists, social scientists, demographers, environmental consultants

A desktop analysis was conducted using a variety of search and data analytics tools, these types of stakeholders and related keywords to identify 165 additional stakeholders and potential users.

How engagement was promoted

The opendata.govt.nz website / open data portal was updated with pages that promoted engagement activities including blog posts, emails and social media were used to promote engagement online through the website and offline at events.

The website

During Stage 1 and 2 of engagement – 1 June – 21 July the website had the following relevant page views:
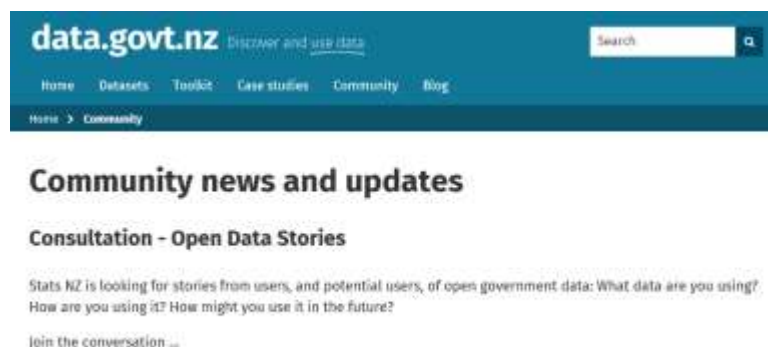

Figure 2: Relevant pages on the data.govt.nz website

- 405 people viewed the community landing page

- 258 people viewed the open data stories page

- 186 people viewed the workshop page

Blogs

Two blog posts were published on the Data.govt.nz blog during the process. Two more blog posts are currently being developed and will be published at the end of this process, including sharing this report through a blog on the data.govt.nz and another on the NZ Government Web Toolkit.

Emails

- 523 stakeholders were invited to participate in the engagement process through direct emails sent via an e-marketing tool.

- Three email updates were sent. 43.4% opened these emails and 22.56% clicked on the links

- Three emails were sent from the event registration tool, one pre-event to invite stakeholders, a second with final details to those who registered for the workshop encouraging participation and one post-event to encourage ongoing input online.

- 12 stakeholders were invited to participate in interviews by email – three current users, seven potential users, three data champions.

- Four emails were sent to the 'Open Government Ninjas' wiki group to promote engagement.

How stakeholders engaged

Participants:

- 81 people participated in the engagement.

- Five people responded to the online survey

- Seven people contributed via interviews, 3 face-to-face and 4 by phone

- 68 registered for two workshops in Wellington and Auckland, 45 attended.

Workshops

- 50 people registered for the Wellington workshop on the 13th of July 2017 and 35 attended. Participants were predominantly from government with two from private sector and one NGO.

- 18 registered for the Auckland workshop on the 14th of July 2017 and 10 attended. Participants included private sector, NZ and local government.

- The number of attendees who attended workshops versus the number who registered differed because there were bad storms across NZ the week of the events.

Interviews

- Seven interviews were conducted - engage2 interviewed 4 people by phone and Dan Randow met with three Open Data Champions.

Online survey

- Six people shared comments and four shared open data case studies through the online survey.

- Nine people provided feedback about the workshops in the post-event survey.

Ninja google group forum

- One post about the purpose of engagement and the format of workshops sparked a discussion among 7 people in the ninja group.

Social Media

- The #opendatastories and #opendatanz hashtag was used 33 times between 1st of June and 20th of July 2017, only 15 of these uses were from the Open Data NZ team.

Input gathered throughout engagement

All input gathered through the engagement is being released through this report. Open data stories will be published on the NZ government's Open Data portal. Reflections will be shared through two blogs that will be posted on the Data.govt.nz blog and the Web Toolkit blog.

During the engagement process, input collected offline and through interviews were shared with the project team inside Stats NZ and those involved in the engagement. Where time would allow, input was also shared openly with stakeholders during the process to encourage ongoing participation, including at workshops and beyond this process.

Online survey

Four people provided five responses to the survey created to capture Open Data case studies online. Three case studies / stories were shared and responses to the questions unveiled the following:

- Suggestions to increase awareness of open data and it's potential:
  - Educate employees within institutions with data
  - Make terms of use more permissive
  - Encourage institutions such as DOC, Landcare Research and NIWA to share data
  - Encourage submissions to government web properties such as MCH to be licensed per NZ GOAL e.g. CC-BY or CC0
  - Educational apps, hackathons, research etc.

- Challenges faced when working with Open Data:
  - Quality of data made available e.g. images with low resolution can hinder performance
  - Understanding the particular APIs
  - Unclear or mixed copyrights on data
  - Data is too diverse and unstructured

- Case studies underway:
  - Uploading images into Naturewatch NZ to assist citizen scientists to locate New Zealand's endemic species without having to worry about obtaining licensed images (http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/resources/collections/image-collections)
  - Crowd sourcing name transcriptions for memorials (https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/the-memorials-register)
  - Affordability in NZ web application (http://affordability.org.nz) which uses open data to build an educational web application that helps people gauge which areas of Auckland, Wellington, and Canterbury are affordable to live and commute from
  - A proof of concept for trying to use mobile technology to inform citizens of water quality, especially algal blooms, etc.

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Interviews

Seven people were interviewed using a standard template of questions for potential users, current users and data champions. This template is attached as Appendix A. The names of interviewees will remain confidential but a summary of outputs from these interviews is provided below:

Existing users shared the following reasons for supporting Open Data:

- Transparency and Fairness: Open Government and Open Data promote trust between government and community

- Value and benefits of Open Data to various industries and professions such as healthcare, housing and immigration

- Faster and evidence based decision making

Potential users suggested that:

- All citizens should be involved including technical experts, NGO's, youth and all types of employees

- GovHack is a very good example of solving problems together as a community

Current users told us they had been using Open Data:

- Three interviewees had used and continue to work with open data in at least some way at work, developing projects, via GovHack

- One interviewee currently uses lots of Open Data to solve problems relating to affordable housing, immigration and income. They did not use government websites to access data, instead got access to data via academics overseas who provided contacts and data

When asked about encouraging other users to share case studies current users suggested:

- Make it easier to submit case studies with minimal fuss, i.e. not having time restraints, not requiring mandatory personal details, provide multiple channels such as email and links to surveys

- Reaching people at GovHack, where the people attending are interested in Open Data.

When both potential and current users were asked about obstacles and challenges of using open data they said:

- They didn't think government was aware of the value of knowledge sharing through Open Data

- Not enough data is available for achieving their purposes or that relevant data was available in adequate quantity but not necessarily up to date (2008)

Interviewees shared the following concerns about open data:

- Whether platforms like data.govt.nz would be protected

- That not all data should be open. That it should be opened responsibly considering privacy

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Workshops

Workshops were held in two locations – Auckland and Wellington. These workshops were designed and facilitated by Dan Randow (Auckland) and Cameron Findlay (Wellington). This is the template that was used to collect ideas and stories during the workshops. The process was varied across the two locations because of the different facilitators.

Image 2: Attendees at the Wellington workshop. Photo Anne Nelson CC BY 4.0

During the workshops, Stats NZ worked with participants to uncover current and potential uses through stories telling. Stats NZ plans to contact participants with the suggested ideas to encourage use and shape up stories that can be shared on the Open Data portal. Below is a summary of uses and ideas for potential uses:

Current Open Data uses:

- O-Tu_Kapau – Children and parents use an app with art installations to get real time air quality and weather data in their local area

- Bank Branch safety – using police and education stats

- Dog control planning – predicting demand for animal control services

- ANZ 'truckometer' – businesses use data to help understand positions in New Zealand's economic cycle as part of their decision-making processes

- 'GrantMe'- making it easier to see what government grants are available

Potential uses:

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- Predator free 2015 – identify where efforts are best allocated and help stakeholders take a coordinated approach to eradicate pests

- Cell tower data – decide where to open a business, branch, billboard, public transport planning, emergency management and trip planning

- Real time journeys – making travel journeys more enjoyable using data to predict congestion, fuel efficiency, tracking charges, best routes, autonomous vehicle navigation / planning

- Singe road network map- more standards for road network maps

- Teacher practices – online mentoring program, sharing resources, find best teacher match for your child who needs specialist skills

- Government facilities – show amenities, find spaces quickly, compare options

- Food safety – use the Food Act register to map source and supply, useful for business

Other items discussed at the workshops are summarised below, participants:

- Appreciated the opportunity to meet and emphasised the importance of feedback loops between users and agencies

- Encouraged Stats NZ to continue driving cross-sector collaboration and data sharing by tapping into networks that already exist in the community

- Felt there was a need to raise data literacy and that working with business leaders, universities, research companies, media and organisations would be beneficial

- Saw value in sharing case studies, particularly for data champions who need to demonstrate the value (and potential value) of open data when making the case for resourcing for open data initiatives

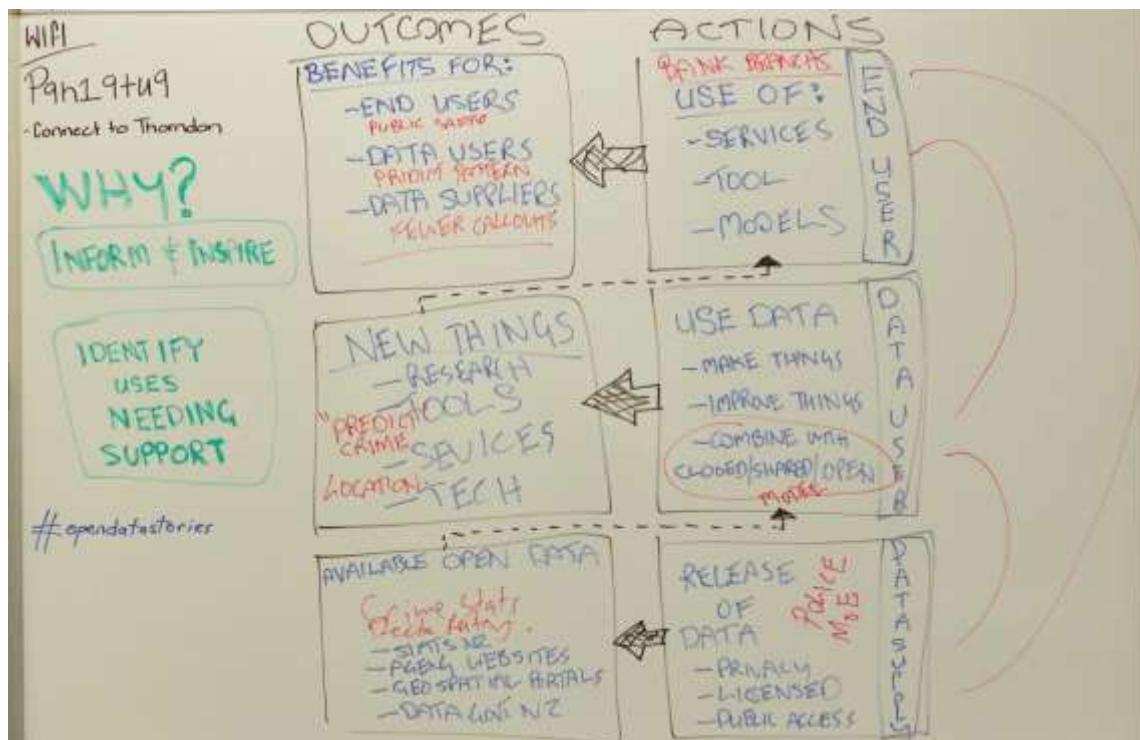- Warned about the release of small units of data and generalising when using data units to generalise

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Image 3: Notes taken on the whiteboard at the Wellington workshop. Photo Anne Nelson CC BY 4.0

Feedback about the workshops

Nine people responded to the post-event survey about the workshops providing the following feedback:

- 44.4% rated their enjoyment at the workshops as 3 out of 3-stars. The remaining gave the workshop a 2-star rating

- 3 participants at the Wellington workshop said that the workshop was an enjoyable and informative experience and that they would attend a similar event again in the future, with a couple saying it would be good to repeat this type of workshop in 6-12 months' time

- One of the participants at the Wellington workshop said they:

  "liked the way participants were separated into the three groups and acted through the various perspectives"

- One participant felt the understanding of Open Data was mixed and expected to hear more stories at the Wellington workshop as opposed to discussions about analytics

- Some participants found it difficult to attend the workshops during the week and would prefer evenings or something with a cross over with during the day and afternoon

This tweet was the top tweet shared during the workshops with 8 retweets and 14 likes. It was shared by the OpenDataNZ account.

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Figure 3: Top tweet during the workshop

Outcomes of engagement

In addition to input summarised above, this engagement generated the following outcomes:

- Stakeholders who did engage were excited to continue engaging with each other

- A small number of current Open Data uses / stories that will be followed up by Stats NZ to be drafted and published on the Open Data portal

- A range of ideas for potential use of Open Data

- A small number of potential users who were not otherwise aware of open data in NZ became engaged

- Engaging with potential users helped all stakeholders engaged understand additional potential uses of Open Data and how they might participate in raising awareness between engagements

- The Stats NZ Open Data team now has relationships with key stakeholders and will continue engaging with them pro-actively to capture stories, address challenges and encourage use

Engagement lessons

Throughout this engagement process we learned that:

- The community, people and organisations in NZ, are interested to understand open data and build their capability

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- The business sector is starting to see the value of open data and are becoming engaged

- Each time the government runs an engagement awareness about open data increases and additional stakeholders becoming interested in using open data and participating in the open data program

- There are a number of great channels that already engage existing users around open data – the open data ninjas wiki group is very useful and events like GovHack are a great way to engage both existing users and potential ones with a strong interest in building their capabilities. Using these channels for engagement is important to demonstrate awareness of how the community are engaging about open data and recognizing the investment stakeholders are making into building capability and openly sharing initiatives

- Interviewing, and directly contacting stakeholders, and interviewing them, shows you value and appreciate their investment into open government and open data and demonstrates your openness and willingness to engage personally

- Procuring software, and using software available across government, for engagement is really challenging and time consuming. This affects the time and tools available for engagement and eats into your budget

engage2 is working with Dan Randow to draft two blogs about these lessons and the way Open Data story has evolved in NZ.

Recommendations

- Continue collecting stories online – encourage the sharing on the data.govt.nz portal by presenting them in creative formats that recognise the people and organisations involved and highlight value / benefits, then sharing through social media to encourage more participation. The collection of these stories should happen on the same webpage as they are displayed. The more engaging this page the more likely it is that people will come back to share their stores when they use open data.

- Continue engaging stakeholders directly – both current users and potential ones. Understanding what open data is, and why it matters or may have value to people and organisations will take time, but New Zealand is small and word of mouth is highly affective. Every phone call and every interview will help to build understanding, relationships and advocacy. There will be a ripple effect.

  Throughout this process we found that phone engagement worked very well to build relationships, raise awareness and encourage use. The new stakeholder list includes a range of people and organisations that did not engage in this process but are most likely using or could use open data to help deliver social, economic and environmental outcomes for NZ. We highly recommend contacting these organisations directly by phone to build relationships and interview them to better understand how they are using data and encourage the use of open data.

- Recognise the time and energy invested by so many of the ninjas to advance open data in NZ. Many are volunteering considerable time and services to organise events like GovHack that help increase awareness of open data. Dan Randow and Amelia Loye will try to do this in their blog, however we also encourage Stats NZ to look at ways to support their initiatives like GovHack and profile the value that the people

coordinating these kind of events and initiatives to build capability and raise awareness, and continue their ongoing involvement. One way to do this would be to profile these people through stories on your website, to do a story about the open data community in NZ on your blog, and to give these stakeholders an opportunity to speak about the way they help support others at events.

- Given this program now has an ongoing mandate and resources, we highly recommend setting up a system to engage stakeholders through the portal, track communications and manage stakeholder relationships (contact details, contacts made, information shared) so knowledge of these relationships, issues and how they are addressed are transferred to all team members present and future. This will make yours and the stakeholders investment into engagement much more worthwhile and ensure conversations continue and issues are understood and addressed.

- If engagement is now ongoing we highly recommend setting up a standard ongoing agreement with at least one technology provider or agency who can offer tools for ongoing online engagement, so set up and management of online engagement is easier for the project team, stakeholders and does not affect budgets and timelines when commissioning consultants to support engagement. These tools would allow ongoing engagement to collect stories, undertake polls and surveys, encourage discussion, publish data uses / use cases on maps, profile and connect stakeholders and encourage ongoing two and three-way engagement online. This ideally would be hosted through the opendata.govt.nz platform so people can engage where the data itself is hosted to encourage potential users to engage with existing users and Stats NZ.