



Kāwanatanga Tuwhera | Open Government

We foster a culture of open government.



What is open government?

Open government is about strengthening democracy in New Zealand by ensuring its people can understand and actively contribute to what government does and how it does it.

At its core, it is about improving transparency of the workings of government, citizen participation and accountability of the government to its people. Open government has a strong reciprocal relationship with trust and confidence in the Public Service.

We must also balance transparency with legitimate needs for keeping some information confidential. Disclosure of government information still needs to occur within our agency's information management policies, procedures and the law.

Why is open government important?

Open government is the foundation upon which:

- a. **We raise public understanding of how government works.** By being transparent about the work that we do, the public will learn more about how government works and how it is relevant to them. In turn, we build public trust.
- b. **We promote participation.** By supporting engagement with government, the public will have a deeper understanding of relevant issues and can provide richer contribution to discussion. We will be more responsive and able to develop innovative solutions.
- c. **We demonstrate our accountability to the public.** Where possible, we do this by proactively being open with the public about the decisions that we make. By doing so, they can be assured that public authority and funds are being used appropriately.

What are our roles?

Our leaders have a responsibility to ensure their agencies uphold the principle of open government. We need to support them in performing that duty, but as individuals, we can also foster a culture of open government by identifying and discussing opportunities to be open. A culture of open government is one that looks for opportunities to be open whether it is within an agency or working across agencies. We should enable transparency, participation and accountability within the discretion we have.



There are a number of rules and frameworks that support open government such as access to information, consultation frameworks, co-designing services and how we provide advice. Our role is to work through these relevant frameworks where they apply to our work. Open government is an evolving space. As improvements are embedded into the system, we seek out further opportunities to enhance our practices.



Practical guidance

Access to information

Where possible, we support our agency to release information to the public through internal policies and applicable legislation. This includes proactive release of information and publishing of official information statistics. Confidentiality and privacy obligations are also important and are consistent with open government. Our default position should be open, unless by law there is good reason to withhold it. For more information see: [Agency guidance: OIA guidance for agencies](#) and [Guidance: Maintaining confidentiality of Government information](#).

Participation

Where possible we seek participation from the people we serve in the way we design services, inform policies and develop partnerships that benefit our communities. We consider ways of providing services to minimise barriers around accessibility and understanding. Where practicable, we seek input and feedback from a range of different public perspectives to inform our work. For more information see: [Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet - Community engagement toolbox](#).

Providing advice

When providing advice to Ministers and others, we encourage decision-makers to facilitate open government and public participation (where possible). We do this in a way that respects the relevant cabinet conventions and protections under the Official Information Act for free and frank advice.

Links to additional guidance

This guidance complements and should be read alongside:

- [Guidance: OIA Statistics](#)
- [Guidance: Proactive release](#)
- [Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet - Cabinet Manual](#)

