

# Adoption and Implementation Roadmap

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This roadmap has been designed to support government officials who are helping their organisations to adopt and implement the principles of the [Open Data Charter](#). It's also relevant to non-governmental organisations and businesses interested in supporting the implementation of open data policies.

There are [a number of existing tools](#) that assess open data initiatives. But organisations often need guidance, in the form of a recommended action plan, that will help them begin the process of implementing the Charter principles.

This document provides a suggested roadmap. It is intended to act as a reference for governments officials to turn the Charter principles into a set of concrete actions that can help plan and improve open data practice. It should be read alongside the [Activities Table](#) setting out specific actions that governments should consider following.

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## Why adopt the Charter?

Open data is a tool to enable better government and inclusive development – it isn't an end in itself. Opening data so that anyone can access, use and share it has helped citizens to better understand how their government is buying services, running elections, and delivering on its commitments, to name just a few examples.

However, all too often open data implementation has happened in a vacuum and as a result is patchy, isn't always driven by user demand and often depends on the whims of individual political champions. These are the problems that the Charter seeks to tackle.

The Charter's goal is to embed the culture and practice of openness in governments in ways that are resilient to political change. Adopting the Charter brings the following benefits to governments:

1. **Provides a common framework.** The Charter principles are the international best practice for how to do open data well. They ensure consistency and ambition within and across different countries, as well as signalling that a government is committed to achieving the highest international standards.
2. **Supports government implementing open data projects.** Adopting the Charter is a statement that a government seeks to be open and responsive to its citizens. The Charter can connect officials to expertise and the tools they need to help implement open data projects.
3. **Connects with different sectors to turn high level open data principles into practical action.** To date, the Charter has worked with experts on anti-corruption, climate change and agriculture to develop guides for how to use open data to help solve the problems these sectors face.
4. **Champions high level commitments for open data in key international fora.** The Charter works with governments, and institutions such as the G20 and OECD, to build support and political cover for public officials and provide consistency around open data policies.

Adopting the Charter is a straightforward process, with governments making a high level political commitment to the principles and sharing how they intend to implement the Charter. See below for more specific details.

# Using the roadmap

The roadmap should be useful for any government that is adopting the Charter - including national, state, regional and city governments. It can be used by governments at the start of their open data journey or by ones that have already made progress.

To use this roadmap it is recommended that government officials:

1



**Review this document** to understand how the roadmap provides a framework for action and the variety of activities involved in a robust open data practice.

2



**Decide where an organisation fits within the [stages of maturity](#)** to help understand where a government may need to focus current and future plans.

3



**Plan first set of actions**, using the list suggested in this document and the accompanying [Activities Table](#).

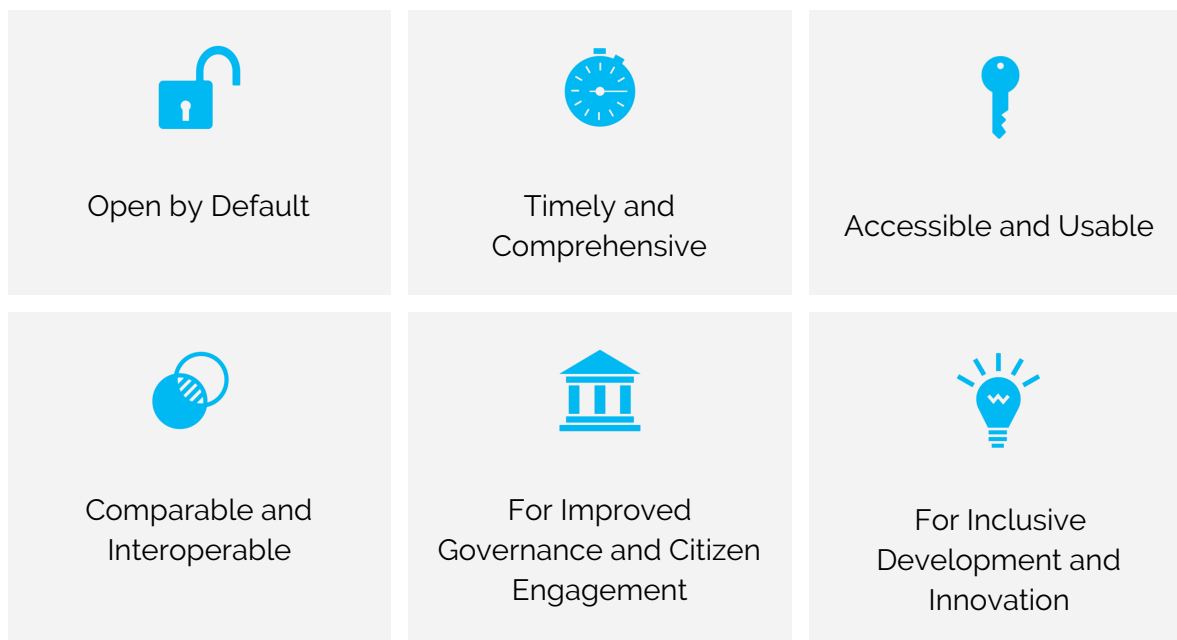
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**Continue to iterate and improve a government's approach**, reflecting on ongoing experiences and applying the tools provided in the [Charter Resource Centre](#).

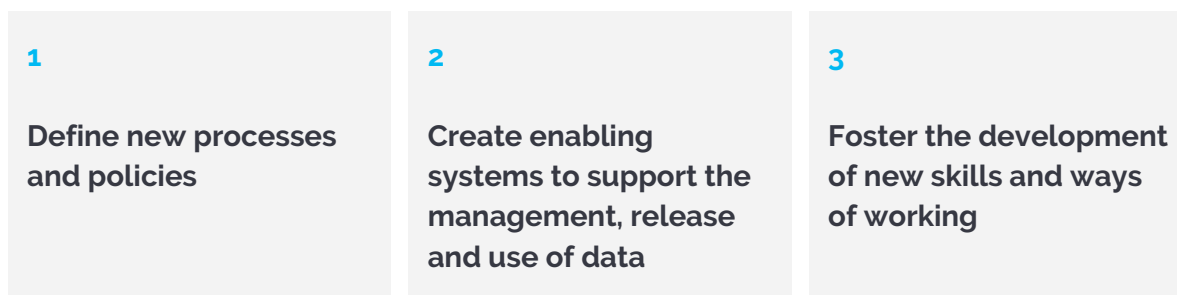
## Moving from principles to strategic actions

The Open Data Charter principles define the foundations for how a government's data should be accessed, used and shared. The Charter principles state that data should be:



Each principle is underlined by a number of specific actions that governments must take. For more detail, read the [full text of the Charter](#), plus the [definitions of key terms](#) and the [annotated version the principles](#).

Delivering on all of these agreed actions will require governments to:



This will involve a process of organisational change that will likely have an impact on many of the ways in which governments work with other organisations and society as a whole.

This roadmap is intended to highlight the foundational steps that can help drive this change, to help create momentum and ensure sustainable success.

## Using a framework for action

This roadmap provides a framework to help understand what a strong open data practice looks like. It is informed by the Open Data Institute [Open Data Maturity Model](#). The roadmap also identifies several stages of maturity that chart the journey from planning to adopting the Charter through to implementing its principles.

The roadmap highlights some of the foundational steps required for governments to make quick, early progress, whilst building the basis for later improvements.

In the early stages of maturity, the roadmap actions are intended to guide governments towards the creation of the key policies and processes that will lay the groundwork for further development. For example, by creating an open data strategy and defining an initial data release process, governments can more rapidly publish initial datasets. This creates an opportunity to learn from that experience of working through the release process and engaging with external data users.

## What are the stages of maturity?

To help plan the journey towards adoption of the Charter principles, we define several stages of maturity. The stages represent key milestones in a government's open data journey.

Each stage is associated with a recommended set of actions towards implementing the Charter principles.



### Planning

At this stage a government has made the decision to adopt the Charter but it has not yet made a public statement that it is adopting the Charter principles.

Prior to making that statement there may be some planning and preparation work required for a government to meet [the requirements for adopting the Charter](#). These include:

- Appointing the key ministry, department, agency responsible for overseeing implementing the Charter principles. Governments also have to nominate a specific individual to be the point of contact for the Charter.

- Deciding on the delivery mechanism(s) that will guide the implementation of the Charter principles.
- Identifying initial activities and defining specific, realistic deadlines by which progress will be made.
- Deciding how a government will transparently track its progress in implementing the Charter.

Once a government has made these key decisions and drafted the relevant plans and announcements, then according to [the Charter adoption process](#) it has to:

- Provide the above information to the Charter team as an adoption statement - info [a@] opendatacharter.net. See the Charter's [model adoption statement](#).
- Set up a call to speak to the Charter team to discuss adoption and how the Charter network can support the implementation of the principles.
- Draft and publish a public statement that articulates the adoption of the Charter and setting out a roadmap for implementation.



## Exploring

Having formally adopted the Open Data Charter, a government will now be taking its first steps towards implementing its principles. A government will be working to deliver on the initial milestones which formed part of its public statement and which will be used to measure its activity.

A government who is starting at this stage should focus on releasing its first open datasets and creating the enabling processes and environment to support their ongoing availability. Governments should engage with external stakeholders to help identify the most useful datasets to release first (see for example [governments who crowdsource](#) the development of laws and regulation).

A government will also be making its first steps towards changing its internal culture to encourage a more open approach, e.g. by working in collaboration with data reusers and external stakeholders towards publishing data in a way that's helpful to potentially users.



## Implementing

A government has progressed beyond the exploratory stages and will have now released a number of important open datasets. It will be working to build on what it has learnt from its early successes and will be using that experience to strengthen its engagement with both new and existing stakeholders, both within government and externally.

At this stage officials will have a clearer idea of the areas in their government that need further support and development, e.g. by identifying the need for new technology, skills and leadership.



## Refining

At this stage a government is scaling up its open data practice and working towards embedding an "open by default" approach as a core element of its culture. Achieving this involves broadening participation to a wider audience to encourage cultural changes. Ongoing changes may be focused on individual ministries or departments who have been slower to adopt open approaches. The identification and support provided by data champions will play a key role in this stage.

As part of the dynamic open data ecosystem, government departments will be routinely and proactively publishing open data, while also aiming to use data published by, and in collaboration with external stakeholders, in order to achieve a government's objectives.

At this stage there are many options open to a government to complete its implementation of the Charter. The way these are prioritised will be driven by a government's ongoing priorities, e.g. the need to deliver national or local action plans.

From this stage onwards, tracking more detailed progress towards "open by default" may best be assessed using more specific tools and benchmarks, e.g. as referenced in the [Charter Resource Centre](#).

## What activities are involved in a robust open data practice?

Publishing open data involves much more than technology. The practice of releasing and supporting the use of data will also involve elements of organisational strategy, vision and leadership, engagement with users and cultural change to develop and retain in-house skills and expertise.

To help highlight these different elements, this roadmap identifies a number of broad themes which each contain more specific activities. Each of the following sections identifies a theme and its related activities.

Implementing the Charter principles and creating a robust open data practice will involve making progress in all of these areas. However some actions should be considered as more foundational steps, for example defining an open data policy or identifying the licence under which data will be released.

## Data management processes

It's crucial to get right the more technical aspects of managing and publishing open data in order to lay a solid foundation for the use of data. Government officials should think about the basic processes and platforms necessary to support the release of data, including:

- A **data audit** to understand what data the government already creates, and how it is shared
- The **data release process** used to publish data online, e.g. to move it from an internal operational system to publication in a publicly available government portal
- **Standards adoption and development**, to ensure data is released in well-defined, open formats
- Aspects of **data governance** to encourage good data quality
- Approaches to **managing sensitive and private data** to ensure it is anonymised prior to release

## Community support & engagement

This area of activity covers the process of engaging with and supporting users of data from the early stages of strategy design. This includes:

- The **engagement process** (including communication and regular consultation) used to reach out to potential data users to understand their needs and priorities
- **Supporting users of data** to ensure that they can find help and provide feedback
- Creating good **open data documentation** to support people in using published data
- Encouraging the adoption of open data **community norms**, e.g. around attribution of data when applicable

## Knowledge & skills

Developing the necessary in-house skills to support the release and use of open data is another important consideration for many organisations. This will include:

- Finding and developing **open data expertise** and talent across the organisation
- Adopting a proactive approach to **knowledge management**, to ensure sharing of skills, knowledge and best practices across open data projects to avoid silos

## Strategy and change management

Like any multi-stakeholder project, an open data initiative needs to have a clear strategy. Strategic oversight and direction will ensure that there is:



- A public **open data strategy** which sets out the goals and commitments that will guide the process of releasing data
- A mapping of the data landscape in the form of an **asset catalogue** that captures the datasets created by government
- Clear **leadership** and accountability to oversee progress against commitments
- A clearly articulated vision for an “open by default” culture and a **change programme** to support it

## What are the first steps?

There are several important first steps that are relevant to all organisations signing up to the Open Data Charter, for example those described in the [adoption process](#). As an illustration here are a few suggested actions for the first two stages of maturity.

A more complete list of suggestions is provided in the [Activities Table](#).



### Planning

- Identify the person who will be responsible for leading implementation of the Charter within a government - they are likely to become the Charter's official point of contact.
- Bring together an operational team that will oversee delivery of the initial stages of implementing the Charter
- Secure the necessary support for the financial and resourcing commitments for the initiative
- Identify, reach out and engage with the internal and external stakeholders necessary to deliver on a government's initial commitments, in order to gain their support and backing
- Work with internal and external stakeholders to identify the key datasets that a government will be releasing in its first year of being a Charter adopter, and a realistic timetable for release
- Identify the early commitments that will form part of a government's initial open data strategy, e.g. changes to legislation, publication of the open data policy, etc
- Publish a public statement of adoption of the Charter principles



### Exploring

- Publish an initial open data strategy
- Engage with the leaders across governments who will be essential to early progress

- Engage with external organisations that may be able to provide support, e.g. through mentoring, training, or technical expertise
- Set up regular liaison with key stakeholders to help monitor progress, accept feedback and share knowledge
- Define a simple process that will help guide the release of a government's first datasets
- On the basis of a data audit create a register of key data assets, use this to track decisions on whether datasets can be released, have been released, etc
- Identify the standard licence to be used for releasing government data. Ideally, new licences should be compatible with an existing open data licence such as those from Creative Commons, and explicitly mention this compatibility
- Define a clear set of guidelines that describe how users can attribute use of government data
- Deploy an open data portal or other standard way for a government to publish data
- Engage with the communities of users who could benefit from initial data releases
- Create and publicise channels of communication to allow data requests from outside of government
- Ensure that there are clear contact points which early data users can access to obtain help and ask questions about data

## What are the next steps?

There are a number of additional activities that a government may undertake to help develop its open data initiative. This document is accompanied by an [Activities Table](#) that includes additional suggestions.

This roadmap does not attempt to provide detailed guidance or suggestions on implementing every Charter principle. Instead the emphasis has been on identifying the foundational activities that will help build a robust open data practice that will guide a government towards successful adoption and implementation. Governments are encouraged to share their experience of what's worked and what's not worked so that officials can learn from the experience of others.

It is recommended that officials consult the recommended actions in conjunction with the resources referenced from the [Charter Resource Centre](#). These resources will provide useful additional advice and guidance.

It's also worth considering how a government measures its progress. There are [four main tools](#) that measure open data publication and the Charter is working to streamline these, and ensure that they align with the Charter principles. You [can read more](#) about the work of the Charter's measurement working group.

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