

KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN  
Information & eGovernment  
Authority



مملكة البحرين  
هيئة المعلومات والحكومة الإلكترونية

# Open Government Data Policy

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## Abbreviations List

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| API   | Application Program Interface                                |
| GCC   | Gulf Cooperation Council                                     |
| ICT   | Information & Communication Technology                       |
| ICTGC | Information & Communication Technology Governance Council    |
| iGA   | Information & eGovernment Authority                          |
| ODBC  | Open Database Connectivity                                   |
| SCICT | Supreme Committee for Information & Communication Technology |
| XML   | Extensible Markup Language                                   |

## Introduction

Government of Bahrain considers sharing of data in the public domain as a major step towards the enhancement of transparency and accountability in governance. Towards this direction, Government is actively pursuing the publication of open data to encourage collaboration and engagement with its constituents ( citizens, business, residents and tourists) leading to innovative solutions addressing the nation's opportunities and challenges for a better quality of life.

This document highlights the commitment of Government of Bahrain towards the publication and usage of Government data to increase the accessibility and easier sharing of non-sensitive data for commercial as well as societal transformation.

This document consists of two sections which are segregated as

- Section A - Open Government Data Strategy *and*
- Section B - Open Government Data Policy.

## Section A – Open Government Data Strategy

### Purpose

The purposes of the Open Government Data strategy is to immediately undertake measures for encouraging the use of public data and to implement them broadly in order to raise the standard of living and stimulate business activities, contributing to the development of Bahrain society and economy as a whole.

### Prior Initiatives & Current Status

Government of Bahrain has launched its open data portal in 2013 with the intention of having it as a single portal for Statistics and open data content. The portal provides data pertaining to various sectors such as Agriculture, Industry, Health, Education, Labour Force, Population, Tourism, Social Security & Justice, Culture & Media, Electricity & Water, Environment, Finance & insurance, Marine resources, Meteorological conditions, Oil & Gas, Transportation, Public Services pertaining to life events.

As part of Government of Bahrain's ongoing effort to improve, its Open Data practices related to the open government global initiative were reviewed and a plan was initiated to enhance the Open Data effort, namely in the delivery part of the open data initiative. Government of Bahrain is revisiting its current strategy towards Open Government and plans a new version of its open data portal to be considered as a centralized source of government data, information, statistics along with Bahrain standing in international indicators.

Government plans to make more data available through the Open Data Portal ([www.data.gov.bh](http://www.data.gov.bh)) plans to focus on:

- Increasing the utilization of the Open Government Data by providing Application Program Interface (API) and web services to enable data mobilization.
- Providing metadata (data about the data) and Information on how to access the various datasets.
- Supporting Geo-spatial data and its analysis.
- Supporting Linked data, big data, and connected data.
- Supporting different data formats. For example: MS Excel, XML and Comma Separated Values, etc.

### Strategic Direction

Government is committed to openness and transparency and will continue opening its data to empower its constituents.

### Fundamental Principles

The fundamental principles concerning measures for promoting the use of public sector information in Kingdom of Bahrain are set forth as follows:

- Government bodies must actively release public data complying to the Protection of Information and State Documents", Law No. 16, 2014 and Law of Protection of Personal Data, No. 30, 2018 Such Public data shall be released in machine readable formats. Other laws that are associated with data must also be considered as listed in appendix A.
- The use of public information must be encouraged for commercial as well as non-commercial purposes.

Appropriate measures should be taken such as the prompt disclosure of public data that can be released, and results shall be steadily accumulated.

### Collaboration with Private Sectors, Non-Government Sectors and Municipal bodies

Government should collaborate fully with Private Sector, Non-Government sector and Municipal bodies in promoting and encouraging the contribution and use of data and take advantage of the creative innovations utilizing the open data. This collaboration will help on facilitating the execution of processes across all bodies such as the activation of national wide e-procurement.

### Specific measures for 2019-2023

- 1) Publish more open data datasets and ensure the quality, quantity as well as the range of open datasets available in the open data portal.
- 2) Develop an environment for the use of Open Data.
  - a. Creation of appropriate rules for the use of public data
  - b. Update data catalogues
  - c. Enhance the standardization of data formats and structures.
- 3) Promote the use of Open Data.
  - a. Continue engagement with stakeholders to encourage use of open data.

- b. Identification of stakeholder's needs from the public data
  - c. Analyze and take appropriate actions on issues related to current data provision methods.
  - d. Encourage private services development using open data.
- 4) Evaluate the impacts, benefits and risks of open data initiative.

## Section B - Open Government Data Policy

### Scope of this policy

The Open Government Data Policy, in accordance with the Protection of Information and State Documents", Law No. 16, 2014 and Law of Protection of Personal Data, No. 30, 2018 , or any relevant laws (Appendix A) will apply to data and information created, generated, collected, and archived by various Government Ministries / Authorities and Public Sector institutions of Government of Bahrain .

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to facilitate the access and usage of Government of Bahrain's data and information updated in a periodical manner and available in both human and machine readable forms through the national open data portal ([www.data.gov.bh](http://www.data.gov.bh)) within the existing framework of Government's Protection of Information and State Documents", Law No. 16, 2014 and Law of Protection of Personal Data, No. 30, 2018 and other various related policies, Acts and rules.

### Policy Requirements / Rules

As such, the following Policy Principles must always be observed:

#### **1. Availability of public data**

- (a) The Government / public sector entity is committed to make data open by default in conformance with Protection of Information and State Documents", Law No. 16, 2014 and Law of Protection of Personal Data, No. 30, 2018 to support innovation and productivity improvements across all major sectors in Bahrain.
- (b) Wherever possible, the Government / public sector must ensure free, easy to use, high quality and reliable data in various formats.
- (c) The Government / public sector must uphold the highest standards of security and privacy for the individual, commercial and national data.
- (d) The Government / public sector must build strategic partnerships with the public, private and research institutions and leverage public data for the social and economic benefit of the constituents of Bahrain.



**2. There shall be no restrictions on the use of the Data.**

- (a) The Data must be offered with no restrictions on use, re-use, dissemination, or publication thereof.
- (b) Data made available on the Portal must have no expiry or other conditions affecting its validity.

**3. Access to the Data must be simple and straight forward.**

- (a) The Portal must be easy to use and intuitively, in order to improve the user experience, shorten the time required to find Data, and lower the learning curve required to build analytics using the Portal.
- (b) The Portal must use open formats and be standards-based to enable wider compliance with prevalent practices, including those set by the W3C for readability and accessibility.
- (c) Access to the Portal must comply with all security controls and standards published by the responsible department for National Cyber Security in Bahrain.

**4. The Portal must be updated in a timely fashion.**

Data must be uploaded to the Portal as soon as it is received by the iGA. The iGA must put in place the necessary mechanisms to automate this process as much as possible to facilitate timely availability of Data to the public.

**5. The Data formats used must be open.**

All Data published on the Portal must be easily and readily usable using prevalent open formats, including without limitation, comma-separated values (CSV), tabulation, open database connectivity (ODBC), and other formats the iGA deems appropriate to facilitate easier use and manipulation by end users.

**6. There must be very little to no analysis made to the Data.**

The Data must be provided in a raw format with no analysis made. This must not prevent the iGA displaying such Data on the Portal using graphical means, but any analysis must be solely made by end-users.

**7. Use of the Data must adhere to the principles of scientific research.**

- (a) The Portal's Terms of Use must always be observed, and the conditions of citing Data sources must be upheld by all parties, including end-users.

- (b) The Data must belong, always, and without exception, to the Government of Bahrain, and be made available by the iGA in accordance with this Policy statement and the Portal's Terms of Use document.

## Guidelines & Procedures

These guidelines and procedures must be followed by the Government and public sector entities to ensure that the open data supports the growth of economy, improve service delivery and welfare of the society.

- (a) All public datasets must be considered open unless they contain information designated as sensitive, private, or confidential.
- (b) The entities should use the following guidelines to select and prioritize their datasets for publication. For purposes of prioritizing public datasets, entities should consider whether information embodied in the public dataset:
  - (i) Increases the Entities' accountability and responsiveness.
  - (ii) Improves public knowledge of the Entity and its operations.
  - (iii) Responds to a need or demand identified by the public.
  - (iv) Furthers the mission of the Entity.
  - (v) Creates economic opportunity.
- (c) Entities must ensure the nomination of appropriate officials who should be accountable to ensure the correctness and appropriateness of the open data before their release in the data platforms. While publishing data appropriate disclaimers must be included which should highlight exclusions of any express or implied warranties that shall relieve the entity's responsibility for consequential damages, and indemnity clauses.
- (d) The structure of published datasets must align to Protection of Information and State Documents", Law No. 16, 2014 and Law of Protection of Personal Data, No. 30, 2018 as well as entity specific data sharing specifications, where they exist. The entity may consult with the iGA regarding current specifications.
- (e) The entities retain ownership over the datasets that they submit. All Data and datasets remain the property of the originating Entity and public users acquire no ownership rights to entity data or datasets.

- (f) Datasets must be available with no restrictions on dissemination and are not subject to any copyright, patent or trademark regulations. Government entities must clearly label public information as a work of the government and available without restrictions on use ; if the Government agencies use Open Data licenses, they should clearly explain the conditions under which such data may be used and refer to the Terms of Use.
- (g) The public datasets published on the Portal become a public resource available to anyone with access to the Internet. The public use of the datasets may include development of applications. In this case, the developers retain all intellectual property ownership in their applications, excluding the entity data itself, whose ownership continues to reside with the entity.
- (h) The Entities must create, publish, and maintain on the Portal accurate metadata for each public dataset as set forth in the Metadata standards specified by the iGA.
- (i) The entities must ensure that each public dataset and associated metadata is kept current to the extent that the agency regularly maintains or operationally updates the public dataset.
- (j) All public datasets must be accessible to the public through the Portal and accessible to third-party (Internet-based) search engines. In any exceptional case in which for technical reasons it is not feasible to host a public dataset on the Portal itself, the Portal must provide a direct link to the public dataset that is hosted elsewhere. The entity may self-host the public dataset in a standard format ( shared by Information & eGovernment Authority), provided that the public dataset is accessible through the link on the Portal to the public and to third-party (Internet-based) search engines.
- (k) In any exceptional case in which transaction volumes, data structure, technical barriers, or resource limitations prevent hosting a public dataset on the Portal itself, the Portal must provide a direct link to the public dataset that is hosted elsewhere so that the dataset is accessible to the public through the Portal. In such an exceptional case, an entity may self-host the relevant public dataset, provided that the public dataset is accessible to the public through the link on the Portal according to following standards:

- (i) The entity must provide a single, unique, publicly accessible URL for each dataset along with the dataset-level metadata. This information will be made available in the Portal's catalog of datasets. It is strongly preferred that the URL be the location of the dataset, and not an intermediate web page.
  - (ii) The dataset must be machine-readable.
  - (iii) The dataset may be encapsulated in a single archive file (and optionally compressed) if it consists of multiple related files.
- (l) Entity datasets, including metadata, are not required to be published in additional languages beyond those used at their sources.
- (m) Delivery of data from back-end systems to the Portal will take place through an architecture which permits de-coupling and enables a layer of abstraction. This architecture leverages infrastructural investments and technical capabilities that either already exist within entities or would require minimal effort to implement.
- (n) The entity datasets may contain the following data types:
- (i) Numbers, Currency, and percentages.
  - (ii) Dates/times (ISO-8601 preferred).
  - (iii) Booleans(true/False).
  - (iv) E-mail addresses.
  - (v) URLs.
- (o) The entity data values must not contain elements or markup used for presentation, nor should they contain interpreted or raw application source code. For example, HTML formatting tags such as <script>, <table>, <tr>, <td>, or <br> are not permitted.
- (p) Datasets published on the Portal must be maintained for accuracy, timeliness, and accessibility, as set forth below:
- (i) entity representatives are responsible for identifying an update frequency for each public dataset as an element in its dataset metadata, and for ensuring that their dataset content updates are maintained and published

according to the dataset's identified schedule or to the extent that the agency regularly maintains or updates the public dataset.

- (ii) entity representatives must not modify existing data structure during normal updates to the dataset. The number of data elements per record, name, format, and order of the data elements must be consistent with the originally published version. The entity representatives should notify iGA prior to any structural changes to datasets.
- (iii) iGA will contact the entity representatives to obtain feedback or a direct answer to comments or inquiries from the public that relate to dataset contents or supporting documentation. The entity will provide iGA with an expected timeframe to resolve the support inquiry as soon as possible. The entity must then notify iGA when the updates or corrections are ready for publication.

## Roles & Responsibilities

This policy is approved by Cabinet Office and implemented by Information & eGovernment Authority (iGA) with the support of Government and public sector entities. Any modifications on this policy will be reviewed by ICTGC and approved by Supreme Committee for information & Communication Technology (SCICT). In addition, the following roles, and responsibilities for each stakeholder, involved with the policy implementation, have been listed below.

### **Cabinet Office**

- Set the strategic direction for 'Open Government Data' in the Kingdom.
- Oversee the effective and consistent usage of the Open Government Data policy.

### **Supreme Committee for Information & Communication Technology (SCICT)**

- Approval authority for major changes in policies or standards relating to open data.

### **Information & Communication Technology Governance Committee (ICTGC)**

- Oversee the effective and consistent publication and usage of the open data.
- Review and approve any deviations or exemptions requirements.

### **Information & eGovernment Authority (iGA)**

- Develop and upgrade Open data portal.
- Lead the working group and suggest recommendations for improving open data ecosystem in the Kingdom.
- Management, administration and maintenance of the open data policies and standards.
- Monitor the usage of open data.
- Communication, marketing, publication, and awareness creation on open data.
- Auditing and reporting.

### **Government & public sector Entity:**

- Compliance and adoption of Open Government Data Policy.
- Produce and publish data as per the established norms of the entity.
- Manage the quality and quantity of the open data.

## Change to this policy.

ICTGC may change this Policy statement from time-to-time. Such changes shall be notified through the Open Data Portal.

## Feedback & Suggestions

Feedback and suggestions on the Open Government Data Policy are welcome. Any suggestion/feedback will help in enhancing/refining the policy further thus making this document more comprehensive and relevant. Feedback, suggestions, clarifications and queries on this document may be sent to [standards@iga.gov.bh](mailto:standards@iga.gov.bh).

## Sources of information on policies

Following documents/links may be relevant to this policy.

- a) Protection of Information and State Documents", Law No. 16, 2014, Kingdom of Bahrain
- b) Law of Protection of Personal Data, No. 30, 2018, Kingdom of Bahrain
- c) UN Guidelines for Open Data (Guidelines for Open Data (<http://www.unpan.org>))
- d) OECD Open Government Data ([www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org))
- e) World Bank Guidelines for Open Data ([data.worldbank.org/ogd](http://data.worldbank.org/ogd))
- f) Open Knowledge Foundation (<https://okfn.org> )
- g) Sunlight Foundation (<http://sunlightfoundation.com>)

## Appendix A: Data Relevant Regulations

- The Commercial Agencies Law (1992);
- Tender Law and Implementing Regulation (2002);
- Telecommunications Law (2002);
- The Patents and Utility Models Law (2004);
- The Geographical Indicators Law (2004);
- The Integrated Circuits Design Law (2006);
- The Industrial Designs Law (2006);
- The Optical Disks Manufacturing Law (2006);
- Decree on Organizing the Education and Training Quality Authority;
- Trade Marks Law (2014);
- The Commercial Register Law (2015);
- The Private Health Institutions Law (2015);
- The Regulation of Practicing the Engineering Professions Law (2014);
- The Health Insurance Law (2015);
- The Personal Data Protection Law (2018);
- The Promotion and Protection of Competition Law (2018); and
- The Regulation of the Real Estate Sector Law (2017).
- Law No. 22 of 2006 on Copyright and Neighboring Rights Law or Law No. 30 of 2018 on the Protection of Personal Data.
- Legislation on intellectual property rights in public sector information: Law No. 22 of 2006 on Copyright and Neighboring Rights and Law No. 7 of 2003 on Trade Secrets (as amended).
- Liabilities of public data use & moral rights, warranties on quality of data: Law No. 16 of 2014 on the Protection of State's Data and Documents.
- Use of public data in the media: Law No. 16 of 2014 on the Protection of the State's Data and Documents.