

Guidelines for Open Data Specifications

Government Entities in the United Arab Emirates

Table of Contents

What is Open Data?	3
1.1 Key Characteristics of Open Data	3
1.2 Benefits of Open Data	4
General Guidelines for Open Data.....	5
Conclusion	6

What is Open Data?

Open data refers to data that can be freely used, reused, and shared by anyone without technical, financial, or legal restrictions. In most cases, only two conditions apply: attribution to the original source and maintaining the data's openness for sharing.

The term “open” means that any person can freely access, use, modify, and share the data for any purpose, provided that the original source is acknowledged and the data remains openly available.

1.1 Key Characteristics of Open Data

Open data is characterized by the following principles:

- Full Availability and Ease of Access

Data should be made available free of charge and in complete form whenever possible. It should be accessible online and available for download, while also being suitable for modification according to user needs.

- Reusability and Redistribution

Data should be provided under terms that allow reuse and redistribution, including integration with other datasets. It should also be suitable for technical use and available in machine-readable formats.

- Universal Participation

Everyone should be able to use and redistribute the data without discrimination or restrictions on fields of use, including commercial reuse and redistribution.

- Privacy and Confidentiality

The publication of open data should comply with applicable privacy, confidentiality, and information protection requirements. Sensitive and personal information must be protected before data is published.

- User Engagement and Feedback

Users should be provided with channels to submit feedback, request datasets, and share suggestions that contribute to improving data quality, accessibility, and usability.

- Open by Default

Government data should be considered open and publicly available by default unless there are legal, privacy, security, or confidentiality restrictions that prevent disclosure.

- **Open and Machine-Readable Formats**

Data should be provided in open, machine-readable, and interoperable formats such as CSV, JSON, XML, and APIs whenever possible, to facilitate automated processing, integration, and analysis.

- **Timeliness and Maintenance**

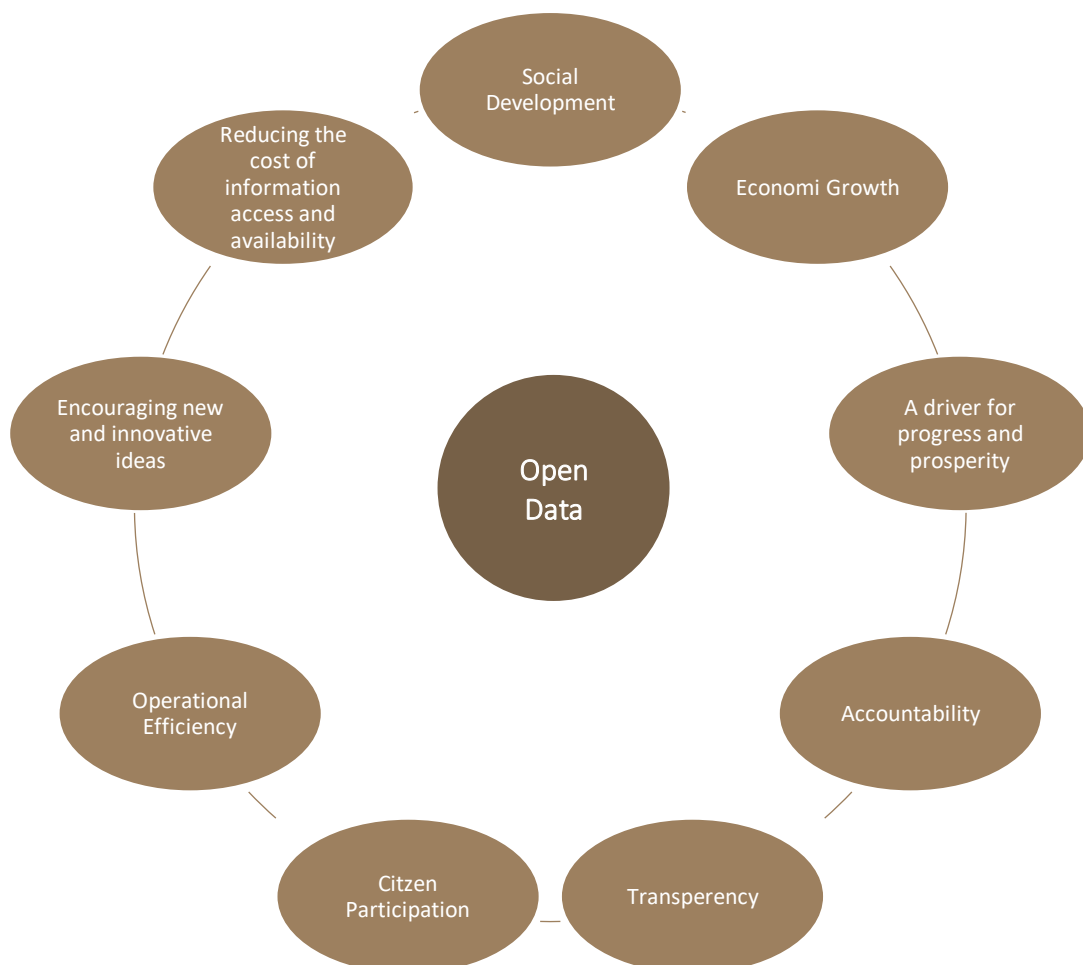
Datasets should be updated regularly and published in a timely manner to ensure accuracy, relevance, and reliability for users.

Based on this definition, open government data refers to data published by government entities for public use, enabling individuals and organizations to freely access, reuse, and share such data while respecting applicable legal licensing requirements, including attribution rights.

This may include various types of government statistics and datasets across sectors such as health, education, economy, environment, and other areas that provide value to society.

1.2 Benefits of Open Data

The following figure illustrates the key benefits associated with adopting open data practices across government entities.



General Guidelines for Open Data

When implementing open data policies on their digital platforms, government entities are expected, at a minimum, to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Published datasets should cover the services, activities, and areas of responsibility of the government entity, as well as information considered valuable and relevant to the public.
- Government entities should provide datasets covering multiple years whenever possible to support historical analysis, comparison, and long-term insights.
- Datasets should be published in their original and raw form to the greatest extent possible, while taking into consideration privacy, confidentiality, security, and other applicable restrictions.
- Users should be able to access datasets without unnecessary barriers or restrictions, such as mandatory registration requirements.
- Open data should be made available in a timely manner and provided in structured, machine-readable formats suitable for technical use and analysis, such as CSV, JSON, XML, and APIs whenever possible.
- Data should be published in editable and downloadable formats that support reuse, extraction, analysis, and integration with other datasets.
- Government entities should provide clear metadata for datasets, including dataset descriptions, publication dates, update frequency, ownership, licensing terms, and file formats.
- Users should be able to provide feedback, suggestions, and dataset requests through appropriate communication channels.
- Information about file type, size, and estimated download requirements should be clearly provided before downloading datasets.
- If a dataset requires specialized software or tools for use, users should be informed accordingly and provided with guidance whenever possible.
- Government entities are encouraged to provide channels and platforms that promote engagement and discussion around open data, including digital participation platforms, forums, blogs, social media channels, and other communication tools.
- Government entities should publish datasets under clear and transparent open licenses that define conditions for use, reuse, redistribution, and attribution in accordance with the entity's applicable copyright and data licensing policies.
- Each government entity should publish a clear and transparent open data policy that defines the terms of use, licensing conditions, reuse permissions, attribution requirements, and data-sharing principles.
- Open data initiatives should support transparency, innovation, digital transformation, and the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs) through increased accessibility and responsible data sharing.
- Government entities should periodically review and improve their open data practices to ensure data quality, accessibility, relevance, interoperability, and compliance with applicable standards and policies.

Government entities are encouraged to adopt internationally recognized open data principles and continuously improve data openness and interoperability in alignment with global best practices, including the [“Ten Principles for Opening Up Government”](#) Information and the [“Five-Star Open Data Model”](#).

Conclusion

The guidelines outlined in this document represent the minimum recommended practices for government entities seeking to adopt and implement open data policies with their stakeholders and the wider public.

Adherence to these guidelines reflects the commitment of government entities to promoting transparency, enhancing public trust, improving service delivery, and supporting continuous digital development.

The effective implementation of open data practices also contributes to fostering innovation, encouraging collaboration, enabling data-driven decision-making, and creating sustainable social and economic value for communities and institutions alike.