Open Data Publication Plan

For the Auditor General for Scotland, the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland

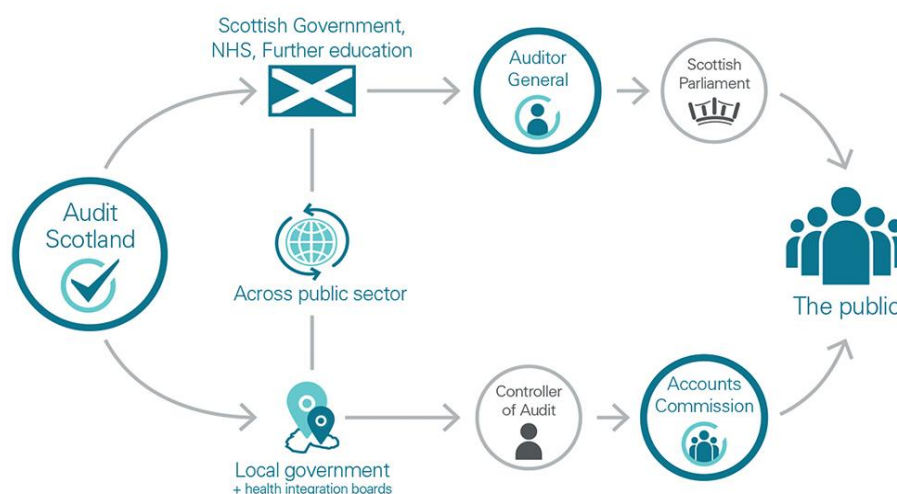AUDIT SCOTLAND

Contents

Open data publication plan

Introduction - Who we are

The Auditor General, the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland work together to deliver public audit in Scotland:

The Auditor General is an independent crown appointment, made on the recommendation of the Scottish Parliament, to audit the Scottish Government, NHS and other bodies and report to Parliament on their financial health and performance.

The Accounts Commission is an independent public body appointed by Scottish ministers to hold local government to account. The Controller of Audit is an independent post established by statute, with powers to report directly to the Commission on the audit of local government.

Audit Scotland provides services to the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission. It is an independent statutory body and is governed by a board, consisting of the Auditor General, the chair of the Accounts Commission, a non-executive board chair, and two non-executive members appointed by the Scottish Commission for Public Audit, a commission of the Scottish Parliament.

About Audit Scotland

Our vision is to be a world-class audit organisation that improves the use of public money.

Through our work for the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission, we provide independent assurance to the people of Scotland that public money is spent properly and provides value. We aim to achieve this by:

- carrying out relevant and timely audits of the way the public sector manages and spends money
- reporting our findings and conclusions in public
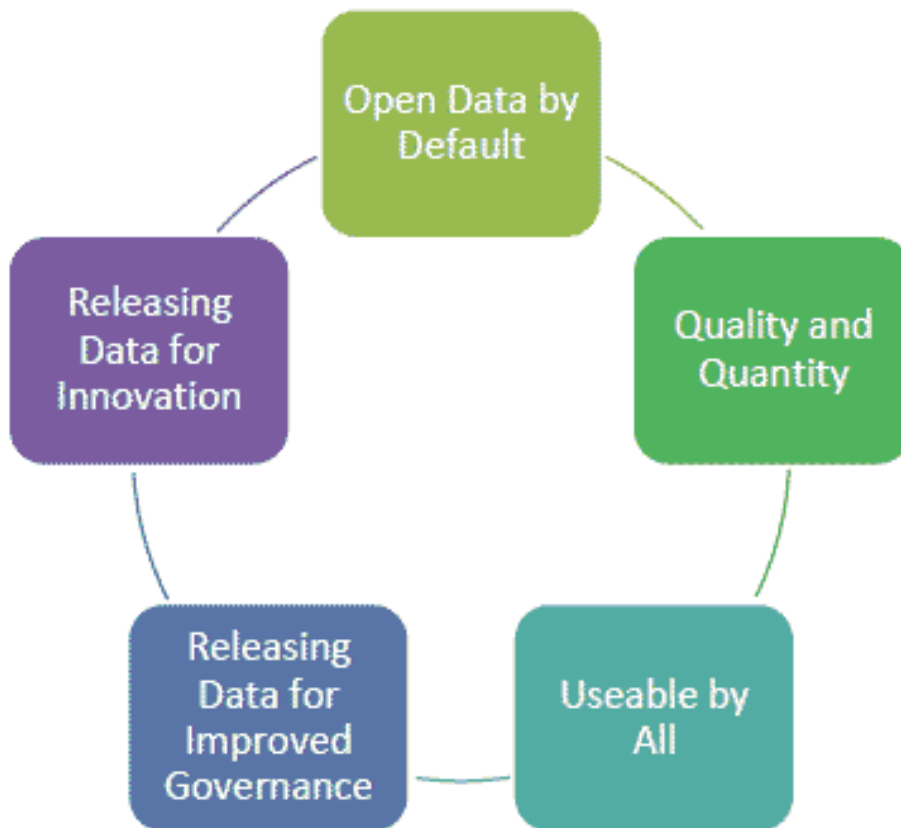- identifying risks, making clear and relevant recommendations.

Background

The Scottish Government launched its Open Data Strategy in February 2015, adopting the G8 Open Data Principles (Exhibit 1). The strategy seeks to create a Scotland where non-personal and non-commercially sensitive data is recognised as a valuable resource that is made available openly for use by all. Scottish public services are expected to release data in a way which aligns to the G8 Open Data Principles.

By 2017, all public authorities in Scotland should be publishing their data in a format of 3 stars or above. Three star data is data which is available online, with an open licence, in an open and machine-readable format.

Exhibit 1

G8 Open Data Principles

Open data by default - Those holding public data should make it open and available for others to re-use. Those collecting new data should make sure that releasing data for re-use is built into the process. Over time, releasing data openly should become the default business practice.

Quality and quantity - The amount of public data available is huge but the data quality varies. Published data must be supported by metadata. Metadata provides information about the data itself. Good metadata allows re-users to understand the data and its limitations.

Useable by all - Data should be published in a manner which supports both easy discovery and easy re-use of the data. This includes making sure it is in a format which supports re-use and it has an open licence. Data will be made available free, with defined exceptions.

Releasing data for improved governance – Public authorities will release data which supports delivery of better public services. They will use the data to improve the services and policies they deliver. Public authorities should aim to engage and inform the public through the release of open data.

Releasing data for innovation – Release of data will create wider economic and social benefits. Others will be encouraged to make use of the data and develop new products or services for non-commercial and commercial use.

What is open data?

Open data is the release of non-commercially sensitive and non-personal public sector information. The Scottish Government Open Data Strategy describes open data as information that is:

- non-personal and non-commercially sensitive

- easily discoverable, accessible to anyone

- freely used, re-used and redistributed by anyone.

Legislation

The Scottish Government Open Data Strategy is covered by the following legislation:

Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA)

- The right to ask for information held by a Scottish public authority

- Enforced by the Scottish Information Commissioner.

Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (EIR)

- Requests for environmental information may be verbal

- Enforced by the Scottish Information Commissioner.

Data Protection Act 1998

- Eight data protection principles for the protection of personal data.

INSPIRE (Scotland) Regulations 2009

- Standards for publishing spatial datasets within 34 data themes.

Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015

- Information made available for re-use under open licence at marginal or no cost.

Open Data Plan
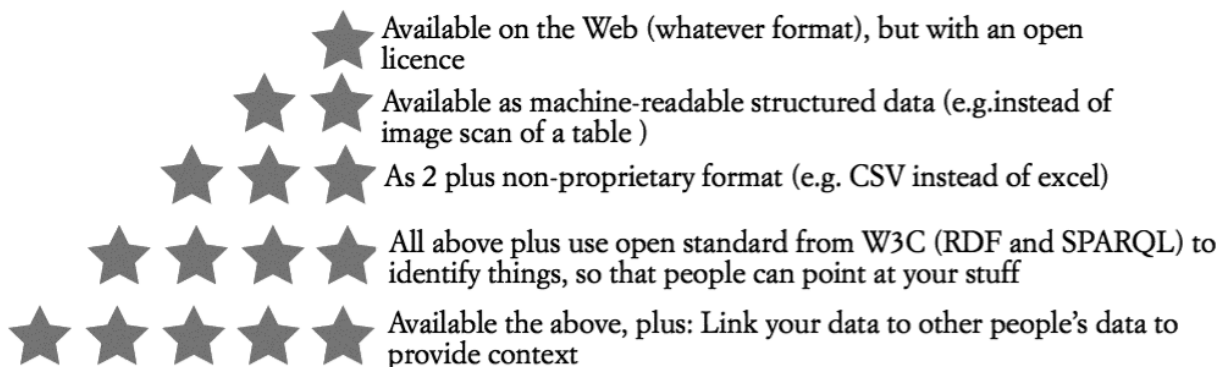
To contribute towards the Scottish Government Open Data Strategy we will:

- Publish non-personal and non-commercially sensitive data.
- Publish at Level 3 or above as per Sir Tim Berners-Lee's 5-star model (Exhibit 2).
- Data is available under the Open Government Licence for public sector information.
- We will publish our open data register on the Audit Scotland website.

Exhibit 2

Tim Berners-Lee's 5-star Open Data Model

Tim Berners-Lee, founder of the World Wide Web, suggested a 5-star Open Data Model which organisations can aspire to. Under the Scottish Government's strategy, all public authorities in Scotland should be aiming to release all data in a 3-star format or above by 2017.

Types of data

Our Open Data Register will include:

- data about the business of the Auditor General for Scotland, the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland
- data about our audit work (written reports and documents)
- structured data (eg, Tableau).

We will prioritise the release of data accordingly:

- statutory ahead of discretionary
- demand-driven release based on data of most interest to users
- opportunity – capability and capacity.

Information we do not intend to publish

- We will not publish personal data in the information that we make available.

- Until 2012/13, the Accounts Commission published information about the comparative performance of councils across Scotland. Information from 2001 to 2013 is available on our website in Microsoft excel format. This information is no longer maintained or updated and we have no plans to convert it to any other format.

- We do not currently collect spatial data (data covered by INSPIRE (Scotland) Regulations 2009).

Discoverable data

To make the information we publish easily discoverable, we will use relevant metadata, labels and descriptors that:

- describes the content, format, currency, limitations and frequency of updates

- provides the user context about the data

- uses common language keywords and minimises the use of jargon.

Roles and responsibilities

Governance responsibility for Audit Scotland's Open Data Plan falls within the remit of the Knowledge, Information and Technology Governance Group (KITGG) and within the framework of the Information policy, and Records Management policy.

Operational responsibility and responsibility for identifying and making data available belongs to each business group and it is the responsibility of each business group to maintain and update the Open Data Register.

Approval for publication is part of the normal publication release process. Exhibit 3 identifies some of the key issues to consider prior to publication.

Exhibit 3

Publication checks for open data

- Identify the relevant data owner
- Verify the source data is valid
- Decide on format(s) for publication
- Use appropriate metadata, labels and descriptors to make the data discoverable
- Document any advice or additional information to support the data.

- Check the data meets the minimum 3-star requirement
- Confirm responsibility for ongoing maintenance of the data.

- Pass data to communications team for publication on the Audit Scotland website
- Update the Open Data Register.

Open Data Register

The register will identify and provide links to the open data we hold. This is a live document and we will continue to add information to it. Our Open Data Register is available on the Audit Scotland website.

Review of the Open Data Plan

We will review this plan every three years.