



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

February 2019

WORKSHOP CAPTURE

Commonwealth Information Frameworks: Policy Jam

Facilitated by the Service Design Canberra: Innovation, User Experience and Design Branch, Department of Human Services on 30-31 August 2017.

Views expressed in this document are those of workshop participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government.

SESSION OVERVIEW

On 30-31 August 2017, the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) Project Team responsible for the delivery of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Commitment 3.1 (<https://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/Australias-open-government-partnership/Pages/Commitment-3-1-Information-management-and-access-laws-for-the-21st-century.aspx>), held an Information Frameworks 'Policy Jam' workshop (Policy Jam) to bring together key stakeholders and design options for reform in the Freedom of Information (FOI) and Archives space. The Policy Jam was facilitated by the Canberra Service Design team at the Department of Human Services (DHS).

Scope

How might we create a simpler and more coherent framework for managing and accessing government information that better reflects the digital era?

Objectives

- Showcase and share learnings from discovery process
- Ideate, prototype and refine solutions
- Test and modify prototypes

Outcomes

Content to inform government recommendations in submission at the end of 2017 and provide guidance towards the next steps.

MOONSHOOT THINKING

To kick off the workshop participants were introduced to the concept of Moonshot thinking.

Moonshot thinking is about not limiting your ideas to the present day and what is known, but instead aiming for the unknown and working your way there. It is about innovation rather than incremental improvements.

Participants were shown the video '*What is moonshot thinking?*' (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uaquGZKx_0).

Afterwards, participants developed their own ideas on how Commonwealth information might be managed and accessed in an ideal future state.

Key Themes

The teams then discussed the key themes that evolved from that activity, which they identified as:

- Australian Public Service culture
- Ownership of information
- Citizen-centric approaches
- Setup (in terms of the relationship between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories, and the different approaches to information management in different jurisdictions)
- Trust.

WELCOME & OPENING WORDS

Welcome to the Hub

The Design Director of the DHS Design Hub provided an introduction to the space. He highlighted that the design hub is very different to a traditional meeting space; it is meant to be a flexible working space to help prompt thinking.

Introduction

A senior executive service (SES) officer from AGD welcomed participants to the Policy Jam, and highlighted that the co-design and collaborative approach this project has taken is a very different way to the traditional methods used to develop policy.

She thanked DHS for hosting the Policy Jam; and thanked participants for taking time out of their day to contribute. She highlighted that participants had come from a variety of organisations and represent a range of views (government, non-government, community groups and civil society).

She provided some context around the creation and evolution of the OGP, specifically Commitment 3.1. She also discussed the increasing demand to provide transparency and availability of government information and the explosion in data creation caused by the digital era.

Finally, the group was advised that the project team had not developed any issues papers, or put forward any options for review; their focus was to develop ideas with participants.

Why are we here?

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PROJECT TEAM DISCOVERY FINDINGS

Overview of the Project

The project's team leader provided an overview of the key themes found through the team's discovery process.

Q&A

After the presentation, the group discussed the scope of the workshop. After a robust discussion, the Sponsor team elected to continue the two days with a broader scope than just focusing on the FOI and Archives Acts.

They hoped that by utilising the double diamond model they would allow participants to 'leave the shackles off' and think about what the focus areas of this problem could be.

HOW MIGHT WE?

The group developed 'How might we statements' to help them frame a problem to solve for the rest of the Policy Jam.

They then grouped the statements into similar themes, voted on the top six, and signed up to work on them for the rest of the Policy Jam.

The group felt that all the themes were linked and that the bigger issues around culture and attitude needed to be dealt with before issues around governance and process.

TOP HOW MIGHT WE PICKS

Black team

How might we ensure that government and citizens have a shared understanding of information ownership and how might that create a culture of proactive information disclosure?

Blue team

How can government start treating information as government information rather than in silos?

Green team

How might we make access simple, intuitive and smart so that users don't have to understand the system?

Orange team

How might we make government information more discoverable so that users find everything that is available?

Purple team

How might we achieve a culture where all governments facilitate pro-active information access?

Yellow team

How might we make recording and storage of information consistent across government so that government has confidence that information is managed efficiently and cost effectively?

CONCEPT PITCHES

A large section of the Policy Jam provided unstructured working time where teams could focus on developing an understanding of their focus problem, develop some draft ideas, get feedback and iterate their concept.

The Policy Jam was finalised with a concept pitch to the Dragons; a series of judges from across the Australian Public Service (APS) and civil society who would provide final commentary or feedback on team ideas. Executives from the core departments impacted by the project attended the Policy Jam to act as panel judges on the ideas generated. Civil society was also represented on the panel.

Team Purple: an independent advocate, advisory board & schools programme

'Cultural change is still needed, we still don't have a system that assumes that information is held in trust by the government for the community.'

How might we achieve a culture where all governments facilitate pro-active information access?'

Our focus user: They are an expert information finder and a concerned member of the community. They work for a human rights organisation and are an expert in accessing information. The user is looking for information they see as being useful for public interest and have found it difficult to find this information. Under the current regime they find information access frustrating and difficult.

Our solution: Our concept is based on the presumption that government has a true pro-disclosure approach. One single data set and access point for all information and a constitution that protects the right to access this information.

To deal with government resistance, an individual advocate would be set up to raise and fix systemic problems regarding Commonwealth information access. There would also be an independent advisory board who will check expectations for information release are being met and will hold the government accountable.

This body will also be responsible for:

- advice and monitoring on cultural changes
- law reform (possibly constitutional) and clearly communicating information access rights to the general population
- schools campaign to teach kids about rights and entitlements and how to access government information to improve information access literacy.

Team Green: the Independent Information Access Agency

'Government information should be accessible by default, all information that can be accessed should be readily available. All citizens, public servants, academics and potential graduates will benefit from having better access to information.'

How might we make access simple, intuitive and smart so that users don't have to understand the system?'

The problem:

- It can be difficult to navigate the system and to access FOI and archives records.
- It costs money to access information, to manage information, put it together and make it available.
- There is a lack of assistance/places to help when seeking out information.
- There is inconsistency in how access to Commonwealth information is handled across government.

Our solution: Make information accessible by default and to use push rather than pull methods to deliver information. To achieve this we would create a super agency that will coordinate management and retention of information, and provide access to it. The Independent Information Access Agency will develop policy, engage and educate citizens, and monitor and manage a single access point for all Commonwealth information.

Next steps:

- Cost benefit analysis to demonstrate the agency will be efficient and cost effective
- Develop policy proposal
- Determine how agency will be established — will most likely be made up of various aspects of other government departments.

Team Blue: use and re-use of government held information

‘We’re not starting again, we’re building on what we have and radically re- thinking how we deliver one APS and public information across government.’

Our solution: Design a roadmap for effective re-use of information across government. Re-use is an important part of the information jigsaw puzzle that will build on the infrastructure that we already have and break down silos between agencies.

By maximising re-use of information, increasing digital capability, and building knowledge across user groups, there will be an expansion in quality creation of records. Re-use of information will start with the Commonwealth and may expand beyond.

We focused on three specific areas that need to be considered further:

1. Review the policy legislation frameworks, including restraints and opportunities (leveraging from existing reviews).
2. Undertake a review on our process and determine how we can better capture and manage information for re-use. This should consider information as a main product rather than a by-product of our work.
3. Look at tools used across government to identify (find) information. What could be applied across government domains?

These changes will be underpinned with a robust education process.

The fundamental take home message is that we need to build a system for the people. In order to do this, we need to understand the people so we understand how they use the system. If you build it, will they come? We think they will if you build the processes around the service, rather than the other way around.

Team Orange: notification and availability of information creation in real-time

*“We want to make information created **about** citizens, discoverable **by** citizens”.*

How might we make government information more discoverable so that users find everything that is available?

The problem: Finding information is difficult and citizens have invested interest in knowing what the government is doing. Information about ourselves should be discoverable and easy to access. Especially for people in vulnerable situations.

Our solution: Individual can always find out what government knows about them, in real time and in a way that suits them.

How it works:

- An event occurs and a public servant creates a record/report of that event information for a person (user). At this time they also create the information classification for release.
- The user receives an alert, with a link, to inform them that information has been created about them.
- When the user opens the link they are able to access relevant information and find out other information the government knows about them.
- The user can then opt in and out of alerts being sent when information about them is created. They can be redirected to speak with someone if they choose to seek additional information.

This idea could utilise existing government platforms which allow people to interact with a government in a way that suits them.

Team Yellow: a single information system across government

'This bridges the gap between the community's expectations (that government can share information) and the realities of what we can currently do.'

How might we make recording and storage of information consistent across government so that government has confidence that information is managed efficiently and cost effectively?

The user & the problem: David, an APS employee, knows there is some information out there that would give clarity to his department and government on a new budget measure. However, he cannot access this information because it is in many different places and in many different formats and it is completely inefficient for him to access and use this information even though he works internally in the government. This situation is mirrored in all areas in government.

Our solution: Single business information system that is used across government; to create consistency in the creation, storage and management process (including a decision about the life of information from the point of creation).

APS staff will be trained to think longer-term when distributing and accessing information to get pro-disclosure of information. With a consistent process across government there will be a platform that can link agencies and their information so they are better able to share information with commonalities.

This new process will bridge the gap between public expectations on how to access information through the creation of a portal with an advanced search tool so information can be searched and sorted easily.

The agency is a central body that ensures consistency in power and strength. It monitors the single business information system and will control information, ensure cyber protection and train all government staff. APS staff who do not pass the training will be unable to access government information.

Team Black: dynamic engagement with data use in the digital age

'It is about re-using data, empowering and building trust with the citizen.'

How might we ensure that government and citizens have a shared understanding of information ownership and how might that create a culture of proactive information disclosure?

The User: Troy heard about FOI and immigration issues and is shocked to find how much information the government holds about him. He is worried that other government agencies may have and be using his data. Where does his information go?

What happens with it? Who sees it? What do they use it for? What choices does he have with sharing information?

The problem: People do not understand how their data is used and don't have control over how it is used for secondary purposes.

Our solution: A dynamic and engaging platform where people can choose how their data is shared and can choose to opt in/out of how their information is used for secondary uses. You can continuously change the restrictions on how your data is used.

There would be various levels of granularity that users could 'opt-in' to providing; including:

- *Time:* How long the information is used for
- *Purpose:* How the information can be used
- *Third parties:* Who will access it
- *Data types:* Exempting certain types of information

Data should be used as a two-way street that can be beneficial for the community and the government.

COMMON THEMES

Common themes participants identified throughout the pitches

Culture

Cultural reform is needed to fix systematic problems around the creation, management and provision of access to government-held information. Commitment by government to cultural change is required.

A response may involve policy change, and the creation of a dedicated body responsible for driving change, managing information systems and keeping the government accountable.

Note: policy change alone may not create effective behavioural change (see Education).

Unified approach

A consistent approach to the management of government-held information is needed. Information should be viewed as a main product of the government's work and treated as an asset, not a by-product.

A single business information system used across government for all government-held information may improve the quality of record storage and improve accessibility for the citizens.

Ownership

Information should be viewed as individual-owned and held in trust by government.

A proactive consent process would allow citizens to choose how and when their information is shared. This gives them control around their data which builds trust with government.

Cost efficiencies

A solution must involve considering what is currently available and leveraging existing systems to ensure cost efficiencies.

Designing a consistent approach to the collection and management of government held information will also create cost efficiencies.

Education

Education is fundamental to reform. Educating citizens can improve their information access literacy, while educating public servants in the treatment of government-held information can also help build a professional and informed workforce that follows a consistent process to maintain the quality of records.

DEBRIEF ACROSS THE 2 DAYS

Day 1 Debrief: the group on.....

What we heard from the roving experts

- 'It was good to hear from those people at a higher level'
- 'We were told we were being subversive; this is a good thing for this part of the process, but we also need to be aware of the perceptions of those outside the process.'
- 'Discoverability and findability seem to be key issues; we don't think our issues are legislative based. They're primarily culturally, policy and procedurally based.'
- 'I thought the ideas we shared would be more controversial, but it wasn't really questioned (eg. ownership) – that wasn't the perception at all – maybe we're ready for change? Maybe we're making assumptions that we're not testing, or the challenge doesn't lie where we think it does. Sometimes we apply filter, we're self censoring. Whereas these conversations are already happening.'
- 'It's interesting and fabulous that there is a common understanding that we need to do better, but the actual mechanisms are complex and are entrenched paper based processes and procedures. We need to think about how those will evolve.'
- 'The groups were coming from different perspectives, but still had some great commonalities.'
- 'Everyone really understands the challenges, across agencies, government and individuals – but that shouldn't daunt anyone, move forward on the ideas!'

Day 2 Morning Debrief

- ‘It’s really hard to think big as a public servant, because my mind is restricted by limitations. Even talking about the concept that there are no limitations can be confronting!’
- ‘Sometimes it’s challenging to even just take time to think, because we’re so concerned with delivery.’
- ‘The fact that our ideas weren’t that controversial with the guests, and other groups had similar ideas say that maybe we’re on the right track.’
- ‘Are we looking at what the *user* wants or needs? Or are we looking at what *we* need?’
- ‘The perspective from staff (“of course you have to do X”), can actually send a user into complete chaos, it can impact people so greatly.’
- ‘The perspectives of staff and users can be quite diverse, where a customer may seem vexatious to a staff member; the staff member may seem difficult to the user.’
- ‘As a government staff member, sometimes it’s very frustrating for us to not be able to help people because we either can’t find or access the documents.’
- ‘Is there somewhat of an emotional attachment to information or the public service role? A protective relationship.’
- ‘A lot of what we’ve talked about comes down to culture, but also a lack of training and a lack of awareness about what people are actually allowed to do.’
- ‘We might need a different approach to creating more words or documentation in order to change culture. Think about the way your colleagues would talk about FOI and Archives; is the way the business practices setting up creating a culture of openness?’
- ‘There is a lot of research and other models we could draw on from other areas that are very similar, but for some reason we’re just not gaining traction.’
- ‘The public office is the public trust, you must put the interest of the public above your personal interest. This concept isn’t talked about, or taught anymore. This isn’t just an ethical principle, it’s the foundation of our common law. We need to keep this on the table as a primary principle.’
- ‘The problems we should tackle today are; who is the user you’re designing for? And, what is the problem you’re solving?’

CLOSING STATEMENTS

Where to Next

An SES officer from AGD provided the closing remarks to the Policy Jam.

She thanked all participants for their overwhelming enthusiasm throughout the two days, highlighting the rarity in getting a diverse mix of people together to test ideas.

She highlighted that the aim of the Policy Jam was to generate ideas on how to better create, manage and access information. The ideas generated throughout the Policy Jam focused on making information more discoverable, providing better access and managing information from the outset of its lifecycle. The group also spoke a lot about the concept of consent and people being able to opt in/out.

In terms of next steps, she said that the AGD project team would provide advice to Government. They would consider a range of matters, including the ideas generated from the Policy Jam. She said that the AGD project team may approach Policy Jam members individually for further discussions, and noted that the project would run until 2019 (so will be an iterative process that will progress over time).

She highlighted that she and the team were really impressed with participants' ability to work together and generate great outcomes.