

## Reference Document

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## Access to Information and Open Government (ATI-OG) Working Group Meeting Minutes for February 16, 2017

### Summary

The inaugural meeting of the working group was chaired by Mélanie Robert and included four agenda items:

1. **Overview** – Mélanie Robert (TBS)
2. **Priorities for open government and ATI** – Mélanie Robert et Ruth Naylor (TBS)
3. **Discussion of committee mandate** – All
4. **Work plan** – All

There were 20 participants, 14 in-person and 6 on the phone, who represented 16 departments (i.e., TBS, INAC, CRA, GAC, NRCan, DFO, IRCC, PSPC, TC, FIN, VAC, CSC, PS, LAC, PCO, and ESDC).

### Meeting Minutes

#### 1. Overview

- The Chair provided background on the origins of the ATI-OG Working Group; linkages between open government and ATI were discussed at the December 2016 ADM ATIP Committee meeting and members determined that these linkages should be explored further.
- The expected focus of the ATI-OG Working Group is to share information on work around ATI and open government; learn about the challenges and opportunities facing ATI teams in terms of open government; and share best practices.

#### 2. Priorities for Open Government and ATI

- The Chair made a short presentation which described open government as a key Government priority, defined open government, highlighted two federal initiatives (i.e., Directive on Open Government and the Open Government Portal), and discussed Canada's Third Biennial Plan which includes 22 commitments of which three relate to ATI.
- Ruth Naylor (TBS) underscored priorities from the Third Biennial Plan to the Open Government Partnership that relate to access to information and privacy, such as the revitalization of the *Access to Information Act*, the 30 day response and written explanation policy for personal information requests, and highlighted that ATIP offices play an important role in proactive disclosure such as travel and hospitality expenses.
- The Chair outlined four possible areas of focus for the working group:
  - o Embedding open government principles in ATI work and raising awareness of the importance of ATI for delivering on openness and transparency priorities;
  - o Developing tools to facilitate open by design such as jointly working on briefing notes templates to facilitate and expedite the release of materials;
  - o Reducing the long-term burden on ATI through open government; and



- Leveraging ATI to help prioritize open data release (e.g., through statistics on information being sought).

### **3. Discussions of the Committee Mandate**

- Considerations that were raised with regards to the committee mandate:
  - Integrating open government into ATI requires culture change. Clear communication can help move the change forward.
  - Two main ATI challenges for releasing information holdings to the public are accessibility and official languages.
  - Participants noted that there is an opportunity to integrate information about open government into ATI training programs .
    - The Chair offered to provide open government material (e.g., decks) and welcomed feedback to help refine open government skills material.
  - The initial impact of open government has been an increased workload. There is concern that releasing some kinds of open data (e.g., data inventories) could lead to ATI requests for the data sets listed in the inventories.
- Examples of practices that the committee could study:
  - One organization undertook research, a literature review and conducted data analysis on ATIP trends, which may be shared at a future ATI-OG meeting.
  - One organization created its own procedure for proactive disclosure.
  - One organization set up a working group with key internal stakeholders (i.e., legal, IM, ATI, privacy) to ensure everyone is informed and advancing a common approach.
- Consensus emerged around priorities for the committee's mandate:
  - The Chair concluded that members were receptive to a mandate that focuses on sharing information and best practices, and discussing challenges and opportunities.
  - Feedback provided by the ATI-OG can help prioritize open government activities.

### **4. Work plan**

- Members agreed to the following next steps:
  - Prepare Terms of Reference;
  - Identify an online space/platform where members can contribute to; and
  - Develop a list of best practices and challenges.