

Open Government Partnership New Zealand

National Action Plan 2018-2021

End of Term Report

Commitment 8: Review of government use of algorithms

Lead agency:

Government Chief Data Steward, Stats NZ
Working with Government Chief Digital Officer, Department of Internal Affairs

Objective:

To increase the transparency and accountability of how government uses algorithms.

Ambition:

- To ensure New Zealanders are informed and have confidence in how the government uses algorithms – automatic decision-making processes used by computer programmes – to identify patterns in data.

OGP values: Transparency and Accountability



What we achieved:


Since 2018 we have made considerable progress in the area of algorithmic transparency. The key achievements have been the development and publication of the Algorithm Assessment Report, and the launching of the Algorithm Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Charter, now in place for one year, has 27 signatories from across government, with more agencies expressing interest in signing up. Building on what we have achieved, we are turning our focus to supporting the implementation of the Charter.

While the development of the Charter is a significant milestone, we are aware that this is an evolving space, and that the launching of the Charter is not the end of the journey. Therefore, we continue to monitor developments to ensure the Charter is fit for purpose.

Summary

Milestones		Progress
1	Complete an initial review of existing operational algorithms and their use across a range of government agencies <i>Start/End dates: 1 June 2018 to 31 October 2018</i>	
2	Consider next steps for all-of-government assurance related to the use of algorithms in collaboration with Civil Society representatives <i>Start/End dates: 31 October 2018 to 28 February 2019</i>	

3	Update this commitment (and its milestones) to reflect progress made in previous milestones <i>Start/End dates: 1 March 2019 to 30 June 2021</i>	
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Progress key:



some delays



underway



completed

What we achieved

Milestone 1: Complete an initial review of existing operational algorithms and their use across a range of government agencies

This milestone has been achieved.

We reviewed the development and use of algorithms in 14 government agencies, with a particular focus on operational algorithms that result in, or inform, decisions that directly impact people or groups.

The review looked at how these agencies are using algorithms to support their work, how these have been developed, and the safeguards that are in place.

The Algorithm Assessment Report presenting the findings of the review was published in October 2018.

Milestone 2: Consider next steps for all-of-government assurance related to the use of algorithms in collaboration with Civil Society representatives

This milestone has been achieved.

Following the publication of the Algorithm Assessment Report we consulted across the public service on our response to the Report's recommendations. Working across the sector enabled the development of a response that could support the objectives of the wider Public Service as well as increase the transparency and accountability of government use of algorithms.

This resulted in the development of a draft Algorithm Charter that would enable government agencies to make a public commitment to the transparent and accountable use of algorithms and other advanced data analytics techniques. We consulted with New Zealanders and civil society on the draft Charter. The consultation period ran from 17 October to 31 December and was reported on by local and international media.

34 written submissions were received in relation to the charter and associated issues. This included submissions from individuals, civil society organisations, universities, businesses and NGOs.

Milestone 3: Update this commitment (and its milestones) to reflect progress made in previous milestones

This milestone has been achieved.

We have regularly reported on the activities undertaken to support milestones 1 and 2 and achieved the outcomes they sought to accomplish.

Having delivered on the core milestones (1 and 2), we are now thinking about how we can better provide support to help agencies implement the Algorithm Charter. We have also set up an independent review of the Charter's first year, which is due to be completed by the end of 2021. When completed, the review will provide us with useful information that will guide the support we provide. For more information on next steps, see 'Where to from here' below.

How we included diverse voices and engaged diverse communities

As discussed above, we ran a public consultation process on the draft Algorithm Charter. We also regularly engage with Transparency International as we progress work on the Charter, including the independent review.

Commitment links:

- [Algorithm Assessment Report](#)
- [Algorithm Assessment Report - Submissions](#)
- [Responding to the Algorithm Assessment Report – Improving Government Algorithm Transparency and Accountability](#)
- [Draft Algorithm Charter](#)
- [Consultation and submissions summary: draft algorithm charter](#)
- [Algorithm Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand](#)

Impacts:

An impact of the end-to-end process itself, that is assessing the algorithms used by government, Charter development and implementation by signatories, has been to raise awareness of algorithmic use across a wide group of government agencies. In effect, the process has prompted agencies to stop and think about the algorithms they use and the processes they have around them.

In terms of the Charter itself, there are currently 27 signatories from across government, encompassing more than half of New Zealand's government departments.

With the Charter in place for a year, signatories have been making steady progress in implementing the commitments, although this differs considerably between agencies depending on their data maturity and use of algorithms.

We expect that the review will provide more information on the extent to which the Charter has improved algorithmic transparency, as well as the successes and challenges agencies have faced in implementing the Charter.

What we learned:

Agencies have different levels of data maturity, meaning they all require different types and levels of support to implement the Charter. We are taking this into account as we develop a longer-term implementation plan for the Charter. The review will also provide useful information on the support agencies require and will inform our ongoing work on implementation support.

Where to from here:

We are now looking to build on what has been delivered, including:

- Conclusion of the independent review of the Charter, which is considering progress over the first year of implementation.
- Continue to work with government agencies on implementing the Algorithm Charter.

- Continue to share our experience with international networks, when requested.
- Continue work to enhance longer-term implementation support, including incorporation of findings from the review, when completed.
- Continue working with Transparency International, our key civil society partner in this piece of work, as we further our work on the Charter.

Open Government Partnership New Zealand

National Action Plan 2018-2020

Progress report to: 31 December 2019

Commitment 8: Review of government use of algorithms

Lead agency:

Government Chief Data Steward, Stats NZ
Working with Government Chief Digital Officer, Department of Internal Affairs

Objective:

To increase the transparency and accountability of how government uses algorithms.

Ambition:

- To ensure New Zealanders are informed and have confidence in how the government uses algorithms – automatic decision-making processes used by computer programmes – to identify patterns in data.

OGP values: *Transparency, Accountability*

Milestones		Progress
1	Complete an initial review of existing operational algorithms and their use across a range of government agencies <i>Start/End dates:</i> 1 June 2018 to 31 October 2018	
2	Consider next steps for all-of-government assurance related to the use of algorithms in collaboration with Civil Society representatives <i>Start/End dates:</i> 31 October 2018 to 28 February 2019	
3	Update this commitment (and its milestones) to reflect progress made in previous milestones <i>Start/End dates:</i> 1 March 2019 to 31 March 2019	

Progress key:



some delays



underway



completed

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

- We have begun work to ensure that data ethics are embedded at all levels of the government analytics workforce, through improvements in training and professional development for data analysts and decision makers.
- We have consulted with New Zealanders and civil society on a draft Algorithm Charter that enables government agencies to make a specific public commitment to the transparent and accountable use of algorithms and other advanced data analytics techniques. Information was made available via a media release from the Minister of Statistics and shared on data.govt.nz.

- Following these activities, we anticipate being able to update this commitment (and its milestones) to reflect progress made.

HOW WE ARE INCLUDING DIVERSE VOICES

- Refer above.

HOW WE ARE KEEPING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INFORMED

- Refer above.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- We will provide advice to Ministers about developing government's response to the algorithm assessment report.

LINKS – EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED

- [Algorithm Assessment Report](#)
- [Algorithm Assessment Report - Submissions](#)
- [Responding to the Algorithm Assessment Report – Improving Government Algorithm Transparency and Accountability](#)
- [Media release – Driving transparency, ethics and accountability in government use of algorithms](#)
- [Draft Algorithm Charter](#)

Open Government Partnership New Zealand

National Action Plan 2018-2020

Progress report for: June 2018 – December 2018



Commitment 8: Review of government use of algorithms

Lead agency: Stats NZ (working with Government Chief Digital Officer, Department of Internal Affairs)

Objective: To increase the transparency and accountability of how government uses algorithms.

Ambition: To ensure New Zealanders are informed and have confidence in how the government uses algorithms – automatic decision-making processes used by computer programmes – to identify patterns in data.

OGP values: Transparency, Accountability

Milestones		Progress
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Progress key:



some delays



underway



completed

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

- We reviewed the development and use of algorithms in 14 government agencies, focusing on operational algorithms – those that result in or materially inform decision which impact significantly on individuals or groups. We looked at how these agencies are using algorithms to support their work, how these have been developed, and the safeguards that are in place.
- A report presenting the initial findings of the review was published on 25 October 2018.
- We are working on how to progress a response to the recommendations made in the Algorithm Assessment Report.

HOW WE ARE INCLUDING DIVERSE VOICES

- How we progress a response to the recommendations and our next steps includes developing an engagement plan to seek input from diverse communities.

HOW WE ARE KEEPING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INFORMED

- This will be part of the engagement plan currently being developed.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Updating this commitment and its milestones, in March.
- Publishing and implementing our engagement plan.

LINKS – EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED

- [Algorithm assessment report](#)
- [Algorithm assessment – agency submissions](#)
- [Report provides valuable insights into algorithm use \(blogpost\)](#)

Open Government Partnership New Zealand

National Action Plan 2018-2020

Progress report: June – 30 September 2020

Commitment 8: Review of government use of algorithms

Lead agency:

Government Chief Data Steward, Stats NZ
Working with Government Chief Digital Officer, Department of Internal Affairs

Objective:



To increase the transparency and accountability of how government uses algorithms.

Ambition:

- To ensure New Zealanders are informed and have confidence in how the government uses algorithms – automatic decision-making processes used by computer programmes – to identify patterns in data.

OGP values:

Transparency, Accountability

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Progress key:



some delays



underway



completed

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

- We have begun work to ensure that data ethics are embedded at all levels of the government analytics workforce, through improvements in training and professional development for data analysts and decision makers.
- We have consulted with New Zealanders and civil society on a draft Algorithm Charter that enables government agencies to make a specific public commitment to the transparent and accountable use of algorithms and other

advanced data analytics techniques. Information was made available via a media release from the Minister of Statistics and shared on www.data.govt.nz.

- A summary of public submissions on a draft Algorithm Charter was published on www.data.govt.nz.
- In July 2020 we released the [Algorithm Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand](#), which is a commitment to ensuring New Zealanders have confidence in how government agencies use algorithms. Currently, there are 26 signatories across New Zealand government who have committed to applying the values of the Charter in their work. We anticipate being able to update this commitment (and its milestones) to reflect progress made.

HOW WE ARE INCLUDING DIVERSE VOICES

- Refer above

HOW WE ARE KEEPING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INFORMED

- Refer above

WHAT'S NEXT?

- We are working with government agencies on implementing the Algorithm Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand and sharing learnings with international networks on an ongoing basis.

LINKS – EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED

- [Algorithm Assessment Report](#)
- [Algorithm Assessment Report - Submissions](#)
- [Responding to the Algorithm Assessment Report – Improving Government Algorithm Transparency and Accountability](#)
- [Draft Algorithm Charter](#)
- [Algorithm Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand](#)

Open Government Partnership New Zealand

National Action Plan 2018-30 June 2021

Progress report to: 30 April 2021

Commitment 8: Review of government use of algorithms

Lead agency:

Government Chief Data Steward, Stats NZ
Working with Government Chief Digital Officer, Department of Internal Affairs

Objective:




To increase the transparency and accountability of how government uses algorithms.

Ambition:

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OGP values:

Transparency, Accountability

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3	Update this commitment (and its milestones) to reflect progress made in previous milestones <i>Start/End dates: 1 March 2019 to 30 June 2021</i>	

Progress key:



some delays



underway



completed

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

- The Algorithm Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand was launched in July 2020, as a result of completing milestones one and two. This was a world-first initiative that continues to generate international interest.
- Across the January-April 2021 period, we have continued to work with government agencies on implementing the Algorithm Charter and share our experiences with interested parties, as requested.

- This included a presentation at the New Zealand Government Lawyers' Network conference, hosting a dialogue with a delegation from Chile who are developing an algorithm transparency initiative, and continuing to participate in the OGP informal open algorithm network.

HOW WE ARE INCLUDING DIVERSE VOICES

- Refer below

HOW WE ARE KEEPING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INFORMED

- Refer below

WHAT'S NEXT?

- A review of the Algorithm Charter will be conducted after July 2021 to ensure it is achieving its intended purpose of improving government transparency and accountability without stifling innovation or causing undue compliance burden.
- The scope of the review and the Terms of Reference are currently being developed.
- Longer-term work on how to better support agencies implement the Algorithm Charter is being developed, and will take into account recommendations from the review. This will include thinking about how we can continue to keep diverse perspectives and communities involved.
- We are committed to continuing to contribute to the OGP, including the development of a new set of milestones related to the Algorithm Charter, should the Charter be included in the next Action Plan. These would likely align to the outcomes of the review.

LINKS – EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED

- [Algorithm Assessment Report](#)
- [Algorithm Assessment Report - Submissions](#)
- [Responding to the Algorithm Assessment Report – Improving Government Algorithm Transparency and Accountability](#)
- [Algorithm Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand](#)

Open Government Partnership New Zealand

National Action Plan 2018-2020

Progress report to: 30 June 2020

Commitment 8: Review of government use of algorithms

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Government Chief Data Steward, Stats NZ
Working with Government Chief Digital Officer, Department of Internal Affairs

Objective:




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OGP values:

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3	Update this commitment (and its milestones) to reflect progress made in previous milestones <i>Start/End dates:</i> 1 March 2019 to 31 March 2019	

Progress key:



some delays



underway



completed

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

- We have begun work to ensure that data ethics are embedded at all levels of the government analytics workforce, through improvements in training and professional development for data analysts and decision makers.
- We have consulted with New Zealanders and civil society on a draft Algorithm Charter that enables government agencies to make a specific public commitment to the transparent and accountable use of algorithms and other

advanced data analytics techniques. Information was made available via a media release from the Minister of Statistics and shared on www.data.govt.nz.

- A summary of public submissions on a draft Algorithm Charter was published on www.data.govt.nz.
- We are considering next steps and expect to announce a tool for all-of-government assurance related to the use of algorithms between July – August 2020. We anticipate being able to update this commitment (and its milestones) to reflect progress made.

HOW WE ARE INCLUDING DIVERSE VOICES

- Refer above

HOW WE ARE KEEPING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INFORMED

- Refer above

WHAT'S NEXT?

- We are providing advice to Ministers about developing government's response to the algorithm assessment report and working with government agencies on implementation.

LINKS – EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED

- [Algorithm Assessment Report](#)
- [Algorithm Assessment Report - Submissions](#)
- [Responding to the Algorithm Assessment Report – Improving Government Algorithm Transparency and Accountability](#)
- [Draft Algorithm Charter](#)

Open Government Partnership New Zealand

National Action Plan 2018-2020

Progress report to: 30 June 2019

Commitment 8: Review of government use of algorithms

Lead agency:

Stats NZ/Government Chief Data Steward
Working with Department of Internal Affairs/Government Chief Digital Officer,

Objective:





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OGP values:

Transparency, Accountability

Milestones		Progress
1	Complete an initial review of existing operational algorithms and their use across a range of government agencies <i>Start/End dates: 1 June 2018 to 31 October 2018</i>	
2	Consider next steps for all-of-government assurance related to the use of algorithms in collaboration with Civil Society representatives <i>Start/End dates: 31 October 2018 to 28 February 2019</i>	
3	Prepare advice for Ministers outlining options for a government response to the recommendation from the Algorithm Assessment report <i>Start/End dates: June – October 2019</i>	
4	Update this commitment (and its milestones) to reflect progress made in previous milestones <i>Start/End dates: October 2019</i>	

Progress key:



some delays



underway



completed

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

- We are currently working through a policy process to develop options to respond to the algorithm assessment.

- As part of this policy process we will seek views from New Zealanders more generally on the proposals, with work on the associated communications and engagement plan underway.
- Following these decisions, we anticipate being able to update this commitment (and its milestones) to reflect progress made.

HOW WE ARE INCLUDING DIVERSE VOICES

- Refer above.

HOW WE ARE KEEPING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INFORMED

- Refer above.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Through Q3 we will provide advice to Ministers about developing government's response to the algorithm assessment report. As part of this process we anticipate seeking views from New Zealanders generally on these issues, and subsequently we will provide further information on progress.

LINKS – EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED

- [Algorithm assessment report](#)
- [Algorithm assessment – agency submissions](#)

Open Government Partnership New Zealand

National Action Plan 2018-2020

Progress report to: 30 September 2019

Commitment 8: Review of government use of algorithms

Lead agency:

Stats NZ / Government Chief Data Steward
Working with Department of Internal Affairs / Government Chief Digital Office




Objective:

To increase the transparency and accountability of how government uses algorithms.

Ambition:

- To ensure New Zealanders are informed and have confidence in how the government uses algorithms (automatic decision-making processes used by computer programmes) to identify patterns in data.

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Milestones		Progress
1	Complete an initial review of existing operational algorithms and their use across a range of government agencies <i>Start/End dates:</i> 1 June 2018 to 31 October 2018	
2	Consider next steps for all-of-government assurance related to the use of algorithms in collaboration with Civil Society representatives <i>Start/End dates:</i> 31 October 2018 to 28 February 2019	
3	Update this commitment (and its milestones) to reflect progress made in previous milestones <i>Start/End dates:</i> October 2019	

Progress key:



some delays



underway



completed

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

- We are currently working through a policy process to develop options to respond to the algorithm assessment.
- As part of this policy process we will seek views from New Zealanders more generally on the proposals, with work on the associated communications and engagement plan underway.
- Following these decisions, we anticipate being able to update this commitment (and its milestones) to reflect progress made.

HOW WE ARE INCLUDING DIVERSE VOICES

- Refer above.

HOW WE ARE KEEPING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INFORMED

- Refer above.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Through Q4 we will provide advice to Ministers about developing government's response to the algorithm assessment report. As part of this process we anticipate seeking views from New Zealanders generally on these issues, and subsequently we will provide further information on progress.

LINKS – EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED

- [Algorithm assessment report](#)
- [Algorithm assessment – agency submissions](#)