Australian Government

Department of Finance and Deregulation
Australian Government Information Management Office

The AGIMO Government 2.0 Primer

Government 2.0 scenarios and tools for Australian Government agencies

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Contents

Introduction ... 4
- What is Government 2.0? ... 4
- What work is Finance doing in this area? ... 4

Government 2.0 Planning and Governance ... 6
- Developing internal social media policies ... 6
- Strategies and planning for Government 2.0 initiatives ... 7
- Moderation policies ... 7

Government 2.0 Scenarios ... 10
- Government 2.0: it’s not just about the technology ... 10
- Inter- and intra-agency collaboration and sharing ... 10
- Policy consultation ... 11
- Feedback on service delivery ... 11
- Engaging online and evaluating feedback ... 12
- Publishing government data: why, where and how ... 13
- Open licensing: allowing more permissive use of government material without abandoning ownership ... 15

Government 2.0 Tools ... 18
- Establishing Government 2.0 tools: legal and other best practice compliance issues ... 18
- Assessing the cost-effectiveness of Government 2.0 tools ... 19
- Blogs ... 19
- Microblogs ... 21
- Wikis ... 21
- Social networking sites ... 22
- Ideas Markets ... 23
- Internal agency communities ... 23
- Media distribution ... 23
- Social media monitoring ... 24
- Syndication ... 25
- Automated tools and techniques for evaluating online submissions ... 25
- data.gov.au ... 26

Conclusion and contacts ... 27

Introduction

This document is a primer for Australian Government agencies about scenarios and tools which apply to agency Government 2.0 activities, including engaging with the public and releasing government data online. It has been written based on experience gained and research commissioned by the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO), a business group within the Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance), in the course of its Government 2.0 work.

This document is not intended as a comprehensive guide to all of these scenarios and tools. Please direct any feedback or additional questions to gov2@finance.gov.au. AGIMO policy and guidance staff are also available for consultations, workshops and presentations to help agencies implement Government 2.0 initiatives and strategies.

What is Government 2.0?

Although there is no universally accepted definition, Government 2.0 is essentially about using technology to realise a more open, transparent and consultative form of government. The term derives from Web 2.0, which refers to technologies that encourage online discussion, sharing and collaboration.

From an operational point of view, Government 2.0 involves:

- Consulting and engaging with stakeholders online.
- Releasing data online under licences and in formats which enable reuse, subject to privacy, security and other relevant considerations.

For a more detailed discussion of Government 2.0 and Web 2.0 in an Australian Government context, refer to *Engage: Getting on with Government 2.0*, the report of the Government 2.0 Taskforce (the Taskforce).

The Government's response to the Taskforce's recommendations and its *Declaration of Open Government* also contains important information about future government plans in this area. The Government has also accepted the recommendation in *Ahead of the Game: Blueprint for Reform of Australian Government Administration* for an open government reform which is similar, in many respects, to the Taskforce's recommendations.

What work is Finance doing in this area?

In 2009, Finance provided the secretariat of the Taskforce, gaining experience in managing social media tools and an understanding of the drivers and issues involved in implementing Government 2.0 across the Australian Public Service (APS). In May 2010, the Government response to the Taskforce gave Finance responsibility for leading the Government 2.0 work program. Following that response, Finance established a Government 2.0 Strategy and Services team within AGIMO to carry this work program forward, including tasks such as:

- Developing Government 2.0 guidance for Australian Government agencies about engaging online.

- Establishing a Government 2.0 Steering Group composed of senior public servants from a range of Australian Government agencies to inform the Government 2.0 work plan and provide leadership in this area.
- Developing the data.gov.au website from the current beta version to serve as a repository and searching tool for government data.
- Providing the govspace service, a WordPress-based blogging platform which allows agencies from any level of government to establish a blog without having to invest in software and infrastructure.
- Operating the AGIMO Blog as a way to engage with stakeholders and share information about AGIMO's work, particularly in the area of Government 2.0.
- Launching a Government 2.0 online community (via Finance's govdex service) for public servants from all levels of government to discuss Government 2.0 issues and initiatives and become used to engaging online. Requests for membership can be sent to gov2@finance.gov.au.
- Working with several other Government agencies to create policy in areas such as Web 2.0 record-keeping and security, and data publication best practices.

Government 2.0 Planning and Governance

Engaging online, whether internally or publicly, will consume time, expend resources and potentially raise issues which are best answered by having clear internal social media guidelines and/or governance arrangements for online engagement initiatives.

Developing internal social media policies

It may be necessary to review and update existing internal policies, including computer-use policies, to include social media. Social media/online engagement policies play an important role in allowing and encouraging staff to engage online. They can empower staff to realise the benefits of online engagement, whether in existing online forums or as part of agency initiatives. They also set boundaries about basic expectations and what conduct is and is not acceptable for staff online: basic expectations such as participating in online discussions without discussing classified or otherwise sensitive information online, and not committing the agency or the Government to any action without prior permission.

The Australian Public Service Commission's *Circular 2009/6: Protocols for online media participation* contains useful advice that agencies can use to formulate a social media policy. It is also important to note that the *APS Code of Conduct* sets out the responsibilities and behaviours expected of public servants. It is unlikely that any abuse of social media by a public servant would result in situations not covered by existing guidelines.

Developing an internal social media policy may raise a range of issues involving many different parts of an organisation, including human resources, legal, and/or ICT security areas. Common concerns in opening up access to social media sites within agencies include potential employee misconduct such as inappropriately disclosing classified or otherwise sensitive information, misrepresenting an agency, misusing agency resources or otherwise bringing an agency or the Government into disrepute. It is important to note that none of those issues are exclusive to social media or online engagement, and they are (along with many other potential cases of misconduct via social media) covered by existing APS guidelines.

Case Study - Social Media 101: A Beginner's Guide for Finance Employees

Until March 2010, like many agencies, Finance blocked staff access to social networking sites. But in light of the work of the Taskforce, the decision was made to open up access to a range of social networking sites to all employees.

As well as providing access, Finance also put in place a set of guidelines for staff called *Social Media 101: A Beginner's Guide for Finance Employees* about appropriate use of social media, including a "how-to" guide about using Twitter and Facebook.

Social Media 101 was designed to take a positive point of view towards staff use of social media, outlining important issues and expected standards of behaviour. It refers to existing guidelines such as the *APS Code of Conduct* and *Circular 2009/6: Protocols for online media participation*.

Finance's guidelines treat employees' personal use of social media at work in a manner consistent with other internet access, which is covered by existing departmental ICT usage policies and broader APS guidelines such as those mentioned above. The guidelines also recognise the difference between personal and work-related use of social media by distinguishing between three different kinds of social media accounts Finance employees may have:

- ***Official accounts***, used when employees are commenting in their capacity as a Finance official.
- ***Professional accounts***, for when employees comment in a personal capacity but also in light of their expertise in a given field – the guidelines give the example of an accountant working at Finance who comments on an accounting blog.
- ***Personal accounts***, for non-work-related use which does not fall under either of the above two categories.

Social Media 101: A Beginner's Guide for Finance Employees is available on the AGIMO Blog, and will be reviewed and updated over time.

Strategies and planning for Government 2.0 initiatives

In addition to forming internal social media policies, it is important for agencies to plan their Government 2.0 initiatives by forming a clear, well-articulated strategy and project plan (if applicable). Such planning documents should be the underpinning for all agency efforts with Web 2.0 tools, whether those efforts are internal or external. The following basic questions can be used to formulate a strategy:

- **Who** - Who will be involved? Which staff will be committed to the project? Who is the target audience? Who will benefit? Who needs to be convinced? Who needs to be kept informed? Who do we need to report to?
- **What** - What is the intent of the work? On what platform? With what time and what budget? What business, program, policy or strategic benefits will be realised? What are the metrics to be used? What does success look like?
- **When** - Is this a once-off initiative, or part of an ongoing program of work? When will staff have time to be involved? Is the project to be limited to normal working hours or is there an out of hours component? When will success be measured? When is the report on this project due?
- **Where** - Will this project be delivered from an existing agency web site? From a new agency website? On a third-party site? Will the project have presences across several online spaces? Will there be an offline component?
- **Why** – Why is this happening? Why is it important?
- **How** - How will success be measured?

Responses to these questions will impact on the resources required to run an online engagement initiative, and determine its overall direction and priorities.

Moderation policies

Moving on to the more practical aspects of planning an online engagement initiative, a moderation policy is a necessary component of any online agency activity which includes user-submitted content (for example, comments on a blog or Facebook page). Moderation policies set ground rules for public participation in online engagement initiatives. They should be framed in such a way that they discourage anti-social, irrelevant, offensive, spam and/or inappropriate commercial submissions, among other things.

Moderation policies assist in setting user expectations about the ground rules for what should or should not be submitted to agency Government 2.0 initiatives, and also specify when agencies will remove or modify user-submitted content. Moderation policies should be designed to operate in conjunction with the other legal statements which are part of almost any agency online initiative, such as privacy, copyright and other terms of use statements (for more information on legal statements for websites, please refer to Finance's Web Guide).

The moderation policies and processes which agencies adopt play an important role in the operation of and public participation in engagement initiatives. An overly restrictive moderation policy may create perceptions of government censorship, while too lenient a policy could result in initiatives receiving potentially large volumes of inappropriate or otherwise non-constructive user-submitted content. In some cases this may have the effect of discouraging participation by creating an online community that is inhospitable or unwelcoming to the broader community.

It may be best to craft a simple yet flexible moderation policy, as a long list of requirements for users to follow may discourage users from participating. A well-crafted moderation policy will give an agency the justification it needs to remove or prevent inappropriate material from being published online, while also being simple enough that it does not inhibit participation in its initiative.

In some cases it will be possible to review and approve all user-submitted content before it appears online – this approach is called pre-moderation. However, agencies may find that while pre-moderation minimises the risk of publishing inappropriate material, it can be intensive in terms of staff time and it may also have a negative effect on user participation. Pre-moderation can prevent conversations from forming between agencies and/or between users as comments are held waiting to be cleared, and thus lower the effectiveness of the engagement. It can also heighten perceptions of censorship as users will know that all their submissions are being vetted by the agency before publication.

On the other hand, post-moderation allows all user-submitted content to appear online automatically, where it will then be reviewed and removed or edited if necessary. Depending on the tool being used, post-moderation may also involve automated filters using a blacklist of offensive words or words highly likely to constitute spam. This is the moderation style employed on the AGIMO Blog, the moderation policy of which specifically says that conversations are encouraged and comments will be published automatically wherever possible.

Finance includes a template moderation policy along these lines with all blogs established on its govspace blog-hosting service for agencies to adopt or modify as they wish. Other examples of agency moderation policies include that of the Australian War Memorial blog and the Department of Health and Ageing's yourHealth website.

Experience from running the AGIMO Blog suggests that allowing users to see their comments appear online automatically helps to assure users that their comments are valued and also encourages more fluid conversation than would be possible if all comments were reviewed in advance. It is also important to note that the most common moderation activity involved in the AGIMO Blog is removing spam comments – editing or removing comments for other reasons happens very rarely. AGIMO experience suggests that the risks involved in adopting a less restrictive form of moderation can generally be accepted as one of the costs of maximising user participation. However, pre-moderation may still be a more appropriate option for agencies expecting their online engagement initiatives to receive a large volume of inappropriate, offensive or other content which is not suitable for publication on agency-branded websites.

Agencies will find that some of the available moderation options depend on the online engagement tool being used. Agencies will generally have a wider range of administrative options over a blog they host themselves than they would over, for example, a Facebook page. But regardless of what moderation policy an agency uses, they should communicate it clearly to users and follow it fairly and consistently.

It may also be beneficial to ensure that the staff moderating online engagement initiatives have a clear understanding of the policy and receive any necessary training to assist them in their role. If an agency plans to provide contributors whose submissions are edited or removed with an explanation of moderation decisions, it could be beneficial to staff to create templates containing pre-prepared responses addressing these situations. For example, a standard email to someone whose comment has been edited or removed could contain wording such as:

> *Your contribution to [initiative name] has been [edited/removed] because it breached our moderation policy (link) by [insert reason – eg. containing offensive/abusive language, inappropriately promoting commercial products, etc]. We invite you to edit your comment to comply with the moderation policy and then resubmit it.*

Creating standard responses of this kind helps to familiarise staff with an initiative's moderation policy and to give them confidence in applying the policy. It also benefits contributors by helping staff to make moderation decisions and responses more quickly.

Government 2.0 Scenarios

There are a range of different scenarios where agencies could apply Government 2.0 approaches to their work. The scenarios discussed in this document include engaging with the public online, releasing government data online, and embracing open licensing as a way of encouraging online reuse of agency material.

Considering and planning these approaches, and determining how they can add value to existing business processes, may not initially be easy. Agencies' early Government 2.0 efforts will constitute new work and consume resources as agencies and staff learn how to use and manage new tools and approaches to their activities. After that, the process of realising the ways Government 2.0 can benefit an agency and add value to their activities can be a part of their normal work.

A range of business scenarios to demonstrate where agencies can use Government 2.0 approaches and tools to deliver benefits are described below. Many of these are based on activities that are taking place in agencies today.

Government 2.0: it's not just about the technology

Before describing some common Government 2.0 scenarios, it is important to note that Government 2.0 is not just about technology. It is easy to discuss Government 2.0 only in technical terms – using social media tools, talking with the public on the web, establishing agency presences on sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Sometimes it is easier to demonstrate the use and benefit of a particular technology or business improvement rather than a broad concept such as Government 2.0.

However, Government 2.0 is about more than just technology and tools. It is more accurate to say that Government 2.0 is about the use of tools to achieve a more open, transparent and consultative form of government. An agency's focus in its Government 2.0 initiatives should not be on the specific tools being used but instead on the process of engaging with the public and making use of or otherwise addressing their feedback.

Inter- and intra-agency collaboration and sharing

Using online collaboration tools to facilitate communication between public servants can build internal capability within and between agencies. Examples of public sector collaborations using online tools may include:

- A govdex community used to share documents and project reports between agencies working on a project. Run by Finance, govdex is the official Australian Government collaborative online workspace. As an example of its use, in enhancing australia.gov.au, Finance has used govdex extensively to share documents between stakeholders in different agencies.
- A staff consultation blog or forum allowing staff to raise staffing matters and discuss them (rather than emailing all staff). Finance has used this approach with a staff consultative committee blog.
- A wiki for inter- or intra-agency collaborations on policy and program reform and legislative drafting. Wiki functionality is available through govdex.
- A library of official video and photos for use by staff in their work and shared between agencies.

- Instant messaging or micro-blogging (or both) for quick question and answer discussions between staff. For example, Finance and the Treasury are trialling instant messaging between the two agencies.

Internal use of these tools is a major opportunity for agencies. It reduces the risk of adopting Web 2.0 tools by allowing staff to learn the structures and behaviours built into tools, as well as the cultural change and norms associated with using them, in an internal agency environment. However, it is important to note that deploying collaboration tools for internal projects does not reduce the need for an internal social media policy.

Policy consultation

In the past, public policy consultations were often the domain of mailed submissions and limited physical forums. Web 2.0 tools have opened up the potential for low cost and wide-scale online consultation. Web 2.0 as a channel for government to consult on policy development presents a new opportunity where consultations can be supplemented (although not replaced) by online engagement and participation.

There is an increasing use of blogs and other social media tools for public consultation in Australia. The Taskforce's work from June to December 2009 (particularly its blog) presented a viable model for active consultation enhanced by an open, consultative engagement with the public using Government 2.0 approaches and Web 2.0 tools. Features of the Taskforce's work included:

- All messages from the consultation were posted outwards on a blog with open commenting models; participants were encouraged to contribute to the blog and input from across all views was encouraged.
- External submissions to the consultation were published publicly and comment on these contributions encouraged; this made for robust debate and ensured that submissions were not fixed in time (as a paper submission would have been) but able to be changed and updated as debate and discussion moved opinion and thinking.
- Draft reports were published early and updated with public comment encouraged on a paragraph by paragraph basis using Web 2.0 tools. This allowed the final reports to be the work not only of the authors, but also of the active community of contributors.
- Third party providers were used to disseminate materials such as video from events or used as input streams in the case of Twitter comments and events such as Taskforce road shows.

The chair of the Government 2.0 Taskforce, Dr Nicholas Gruen, characterised this model of consultation using the term "Inquiries 2.0", and made several blog posts on the topic. Dr Gruen's suggested model elicited many comments and much online discussion. The overall message was that Inquiries 2.0 is a valid approach to policy consultation and modelling Government 2.0 behaviour. Since the Taskforce disbanded, similar approaches have been used in several other Australian Government consultations, such as the Australian Law Reform Commission's Family Violence Inquiry.

Feedback on service delivery

Feedback from the public on agency services is one potential opportunity for Government 2.0 initiatives. There is the potential for agencies to be more responsive and open to public feedback about their services beyond contact centres, feedback forms and other traditional feedback mechanisms.

There may be scenarios where, with appropriate executive and/or ministerial approval, agencies could allow online feedback on their services to be exposed to the public. This could function in a similar fashion to commercial websites which allow users to contribute feedback and review the feedback of others. Such feedback mechanisms would allow people to see and learn from the experiences of other service users and could encourage agencies to address service delivery feedback.

This type of service delivery feedback should be done only after careful consideration, with prior approval at an appropriate level and when the strategies involved mesh tightly with existing client service and communications activities. This will, at least initially, require additional effort to ensure appropriate levels of responsiveness – without which this type of approach would be ill-advised. Another critical component of this approach will be allowing relevant staff and subject matter experts to engage and resolve issues directly for those they deal with; otherwise these channels simply become another part of the regular feedback process.

While client feedback online has been a part of Australian Government websites for some time, it is often closed or not exposed to the public. As such, there are few examples of open feedback arrangements in an Australian Government context. An example from overseas is the US Transport Safety Administration's TSA Blog, which is used not only to communicate the work and business of TSA, but to receive and deal with criticism from people who wish to discuss their experience with TSA staff.

Service delivery feedback and two-way communications with clients on service delivery matters is likely to mean a multi-faceted approach, involving aspects in several online and offline channels including blogs, online communities such as Facebook and Twitter and industry or subject matter forums. One example is that Finance has received feedback about australia.gov.au via comment to senior managers' Twitter accounts on issues that would normally be sent to regular feedback channels. These comments were responded to on Twitter and were well-received by the people who raised the issue.

Engaging online and evaluating feedback

Regardless of which of the above scenarios an agency's Government 2.0 activities fall under, some Government online engagement initiatives will reach a large audience. A prime example is the Department of Health and Ageing's *Don't Turn A Night Out Into A Nightmare* campaign, which has over 160,000 fans on Facebook. But many agencies may find that their own Government 2.0 activities are reaching an audience which is small but passionately interested in a given topic. This may prove challenging if existing measurements for success are based on quantitative rather than qualitative metrics.

As a qualitative measure, agencies may well find that they receive valuable input from a small group of contributors. This was seen during the life of the Taskforce blog, which between July and September 2009 attracted 821 comments from 240 individuals. Half of those comments came from just 20 people, and a quarter from just 5 people. Rather than being a shortcoming, however, the Taskforce's experience proved that the quality of online participation is at least as important as the quantitative aspect.

The Taskforce managed to get useful input from this small but dedicated audience by opening up draft documents for public comment, which was then used to refine the final version. This approach resulted in around 100 comments each for the drafts of the Taskforce's issues paper and final report. Since then, Finance has duplicated this approach on the AGIMO Blog by releasing a number of draft procurement documents, resulting in a relatively small but useful range of comments which have been used to finalise the documents and inform improvements to existing business processes. From this it appears that it is possible to get useful input from engaging with your audience and valuing their contribution, even if that audience is small.

As with any project, it is important to have appropriate metrics to evaluate outcomes. As per the above discussion, the metrics agencies use when evaluating their Government 2.0 efforts may not always be hard, quantitative indicators.

Publishing government data: why, where and how

The release of government data, also known as public sector information (PSI), is a fundamental part of Government 2.0, as it allows government data to be reused in economically and socially valuable ways. The Government 2.0 Taskforce stated that PSI:

> ...exists as a national asset. Internationally and nationally, there is a growing recognition of the extent to which PSI is a resource that should be managed like any other valuable resource — that is to optimise its economic and social value.

The Government accepted in principle recommendation 6 of the Government 2.0 Taskforce, which called for PSI to be made open, accessible and reusable. The Government's commitment to these principles was reiterated in its *Declaration of Open Government*, which sets a clear direction for agencies to facilitate the wider release of PSI online.

As discussed in chapter 5 of the Taskforce report, open access to PSI involves ensuring that government data becomes part of the broader range of information available online which can be taken, reused and combined with other data in new and potentially valuable ways. Briefly, to paraphrase the Taskforce report and David Eaves' "Three Laws of Open Government Data", this means ensuring that government data is:

- Available and findable online.
- Structured in such a way that it can be taken and combined with other data.
- Available under licensing conditions which allow it to be reused and republished.

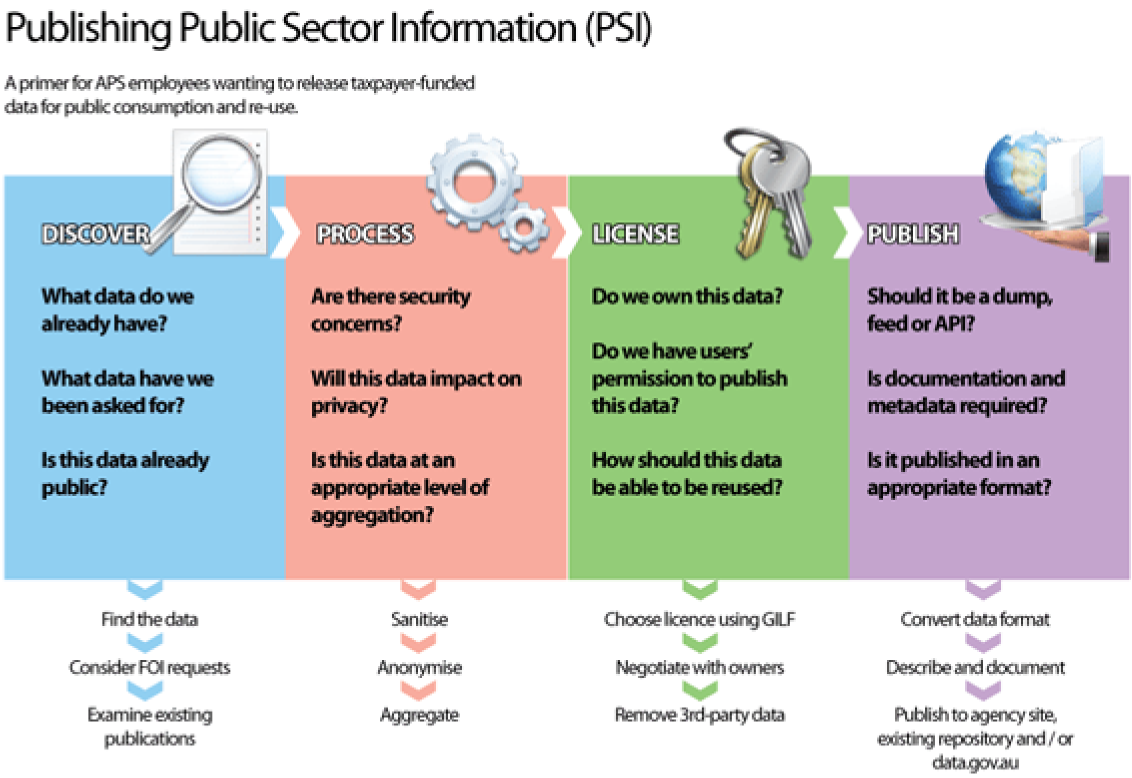
While this process could have tangible benefits for the public, PSI should also be useful. Assessing the usefulness of data is a complicated and potentially costly issue. Many government datasets are clearly valuable, but the value of others may be difficult to determine. Indeed, the usefulness of some government data may not emerge until it has been released so that it can be examined and combined with other data.

The usefulness of a given dataset may depend on the way in which it is structured. The optimum format and distribution methods for a given dataset will vary according to the type of data, its size, how often it is updated, and how it is likely to be reused. Some specific points for agencies to consider could be to avoid the use of data formats that are dependent on proprietary software to open and interpret their datasets, and to use open, platform-independent, machine-consumable standards wherever possible. It is also important to note that human-readable documents (Word, RTF and PDF files) are unlikely to constitute a downloadable dataset.

Another important concern involves privacy, security, commercial-in-confidence and other issues which may arise through the release of government data. The Taskforce recommendations acknowledged that agencies will need to take these issues into account when releasing data, whether by modifying it to resolve the issue or withholding the data from public release.

The Tools section of this document also discusses the data.gov.au website as a way for agencies to ensure that the data they release is discoverable to the public.

Publishing PSI: a primer for APS employees wanting to release taxpayer-funded data for public consumption and use



Source: Department of Finance and Deregulation

This section describes some of the questions agencies may need to consider as part of the process of publishing PSI. While detailed discussion of some of the technical issues raised here is beyond the scope of this document, please forward any queries to gov2@finance.gov.au.

Discover:
Ask:

- What data do we already have?
- What data have we been asked for?
- Is this data already public?

Then:

- Find the data.
- Consider Freedom of Information requests.
- Examine existing publications.

Process:

Ask:

- Are there security concerns?
- Will this data impact on privacy?
- Is this data at an appropriate level of aggregation?

Then:

- Sanitise.
- Anonymise.
- Aggregate.

License:

Ask:

- Do we own this data?
- Do we have users' permission to publish this data?
- How should this data be able to be reused?

Then:

- Choose a licence using GILF.
- Negotiate with owners.
- Remove 3rd-party data.

Publish:

Ask:

- Should it be a dump, feed or API?
- Is documentation and metadata required?
- Is it published in an appropriate format?

Then:

- Convert data format.
- Describe and document.
- Publish to agency site, existing repository and/or data.gov.au.

Open licensing: allowing more permissive use of government material without abandoning ownership

Creative Commons, one of the most well-known forms of open licences, was created in 2002 as a way of licensing material in a permissive, pre-approved manner, and includes a range of Australian-specific licences. The Government 2.0 Taskforce recommended that the Australian version of the

Creative Commons BY or Attribution licence (the most permissive of the Creative Commons suite of licences) be adopted as the default standard for government data.

In response to this recommendation, in October 2010 the Attorney-General's Department released an amended *Statement of Intellectual Property Principles for Australian Government Agencies*. The amended statement says that by default agencies should release PSI – defined in the *Statement* as "all materials which agencies are generally obliged to publish or otherwise allow free public access to" – under Creative Commons Attribution licences, and only consider more restrictive licensing options after going through a due diligence process on a case-by-case basis.

Using an open licence, such as a Creative Commons licence, does not mean abandoning ownership of content; nor does it require allowing content to be reused for any purpose. When an Australian Government agency uses a Creative Commons licence, for example, the Commonwealth still owns copyright in the material. The role of an open licence is to allow members of the public to take and reuse the content in new and useful ways without having to ask permission (which is often granted upon request under the existing crown copyright system).

In this way open licensing can allow the public to add value to government-funded data, for example by combining it with other data to create a mashup (see the Government 2.0 Taskforce's MashupAustralia contest site for examples of this in action).

Finance has published a number of documents and websites under Creative Commons BY licences, which are discussed in the case study below. Creative Commons licences have also been used by several other agencies. Possibly the most notable example is the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which has been releasing data under Creative Commons for some years. Other agency uses of Creative Commons include DBCDE's wiki from its *Realising Our Broadband Future* forum, its 2009-10 annual report and the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research's Innovation Blog. In terms of smaller agencies, the Australian Institute of Marine Science has released its website under Creative Commons, and also published an explanation of why it adopted open licensing.

It is important to note that an open licence is by no means an unconditional licence. For example, there are Creative Commons licences available which ban commercial use of material or any derivative works which are made by modifying the material. Creative Commons licences can also be applied to only part of a work: for example, Finance's material released under Creative Commons includes specific disclaimers stating that the Commonwealth Coat of Arms and certain other material does not fall under the same open licence as the rest of the material. This may be of use when agencies are releasing material to which they do not entirely own the copyright, or when a more permissive licence is not appropriate.

Case study – Finance's use of Creative Commons licences

Following the work of the Taskforce, Finance prepared internal departmental advice discussing the benefits and steps involved in releasing material under Creative Commons. Finance views Creative Commons as a useful way to allow reuse of departmental publications and other material without losing the Department's right to be attributed as the author of that material.

The Taskforce report was the first document published on the Finance website under Creative Commons. Since then, Finance has applied Creative Commons licences to other Government 2.0-

related publications, including the Government's response to the Taskforce report and the Government's *Declaration of Open Government*.

Other Finance publications released under Creative Commons include the *Web Accessibility National Transition Strategy*, the 2009 *Interacting with Government: Australians' use and satisfaction with e-government services survey* and *Parliamentarians' Expenditure on Entitlements Paid By the Department of Finance and Deregulation July to December 2009*. Finance also released the AGIMO Blog under Creative Commons, and changed the copyright statements of several existing Finance websites, most notably australia.gov.au and the Web Publishing Guide.

Finance played an important role in the release of the 2010-11 Budget Papers under Creative Commons. Other important Government financial documents released under Creative Commons include the joint Finance/Treasury document *Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2010* and the 2010 Election Commitments Costings website.

Each blog created on Finance's govspace blog-hosting service includes a template copyright statement using Creative Commons, which agencies can adopt or modify as they wish. Finance has also encouraged agencies to use Creative Commons for data released on the data.australia.gov.au beta website, and will continue to do so while further developing the site.

Government 2.0 Tools

Agencies should consider why they are engaging online, which audience they are targeting and what they want to achieve. The answers to these questions should then inform which online tools and approaches are chosen to engage internally within an organisation or externally with the public. Each of the sections below introduces classes of tools and provides examples of how they have been used in a government context.

It is often the case with Web 2.0 tools that one type of tool will exhibit aspects of other types. For example, both a blog and Facebook can be used for a conversation, but both are also different in many other aspects of their use. This is not necessarily a matter of great concern, since each of the tools discussed below can be useful in their own right. When a tool has additional functions or integrates usefully with another tool, there may be additional benefits.

It is also the case that not all of the tools discussed below will work well in every situation. The successful use of a particular tool or approach by one agency or program does not mean that replicating it will guarantee success.

It can be useful to learn from the lessons of other agencies about their Government 2.0 initiatives. The Government 2.0 Taskforce discussed their online engagement experiences in their final report. For an overseas example, see the National Library of New Zealand's discussion of lessons learned from their first year of blogging. AGIMO has created a Government 2.0 govdex community open to Australian public servants from all levels of government to discuss and share knowledge about Government 2.0. Requests for membership can be sent to gov2@finance.gov.au.

Establishing Government 2.0 tools: legal and other best practice compliance issues

Agencies adopting new Web 2.0 tools need to comply with their legal and policy obligations in areas such as security, privacy, accessibility and branding, among others. These obligations are important as they involve making agency online engagement initiatives as safe, reliable, easily-understood and open to as many people as possible.

When establishing presences on Web 2.0 sites or services, whether they are hosted internally or externally, agencies should endeavour to follow best practice guidelines for web publishing as they would for any other agency website. Agencies should refer to AGIMO's Web Guide for advice on how to manage their websites, identify their relevant legal and policy obligations and ensure that they comply with these obligations.

This can be particularly challenging when using third-party Web 2.0 services which may not comply with agency obligations – for example, by not providing the necessary level of security and privacy controls required under Australian law. It may also be the case that some Web 2.0 tools will not be accessible to people relying on assistive technologies to navigate online, meaning that agencies will need to consider providing other methods of participation. There may also be issues in terms of applying the required Australian Government branding to agency presences on third-party services.

Before establishing a presence on third-party Web 2.0 services, agencies should also carefully assess the service's terms and conditions in regard to operational, probity and legal considerations. From an operational point of view, agencies should be aware of any potential issues such as planned service outages or modifications and embedded advertising. In terms of probity, agencies must still follow relevant procurement guidelines even when making use of free online services. Finally, it is important to assess the legal ramifications of a third party service's terms and conditions, particularly where they require an agency to indemnify the service provider against any loss or damage arising from the agency's use of the service. If these legal ramifications are insurmountable, it may be necessary to negotiate with the service provider to establish altered terms and conditions, or else find an alternative option to hold the initiative.

Assessing the cost-effectiveness of Government 2.0 tools

Using Web 2.0 tools can provide cost benefits compared to traditional communications channels in terms of reaching a broad range of stakeholders and creating new methods for people to participate in agency initiatives and consultation activities. There are also a broad range of cost considerations to be made in terms of selecting which tools are appropriate for an agency's goals.

As mentioned above, agencies will need to go through the appropriate probity processes even when procuring free online tools. As also mentioned previously, it is important to note that even the use of free online tools will expend time and agency resources, and will need to be integrated with other agency communications channels and activities.

There are many other cost-effectiveness considerations to make when procuring online tools for official agency use. For example, as discussed in the social networking sites section below, agencies may wish to engage with stakeholders in established online communities – in this case developing an agency-hosted platform may not be an efficient use of resources. Agencies should also assess whether Finance's whole-of-government services such as the govspace blogging platform or the govdex online collaboration workspace will be suitable for their needs. Finally, using a paid service (including a premium version of a free service) may be more appropriate than using a free service, if the former option includes additional functionality or features which will assist in fulfilling an agency's business needs and obligations. Examples could include paid services which, compared to free services, offer more options to manage or export content, or to host data on agency infrastructure rather than externally.

Blogs

Blogs can be used to tell the public or stakeholder groups about agency activities and gives readers the opportunity to provide comments. As well as allowing blog posts and comments from the public on those posts, blogs are able to deliver a wide range of benefits for agencies because they can have additional functions. For example, Finance's govspace platform (discussed in more detail below) will eventually support additional features such as paragraph by paragraph commenting on blog posts (which is useful for getting feedback on documents) and rating systems for posts and comments.

The take up of blogs by the public sector in Australia is increasing following the Government 2.0 Taskforce and other successful examples of government blogging. Several public sector organisations are publishers of active blogs that see significant traffic and engagement from their audiences including AusTrade, the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research and the ABS.

As well as engaging with the public, blogs are also useful for internal purposes. With a blogging platform in place, business units and projects within an agency can readily publish reports and progress about their work that is immediately available to an entire agency. There are a number of potential benefits to this, such as increased staff awareness of agency activities/business requirements and the potential to reduce duplication of work. Blogs (along with other tools such as wikis) can be used to supplement corporate intranets.

Blogs can be hosted within an agency or by one of the many providers available. These providers include government-run options such as the govspace service operated by the Finance as well as commercial blog providers. In many cases basic blog services are free, but agencies need to note that increased functionality generally comes at a cost.

Case study - the AGIMO Blog

In May 2010, following the work of the Taskforce, AGIMO launched its own blog, which has been used to host ministerial announcements, provide updates on projects, share departmental documents and consult with the public on AGIMO's work in areas such as web accessibility and ICT procurement. Many of the staff involved in launching and running the AGIMO Blog also provided technical and secretariat support on the previous Taskforce blog.

During the planning stages of the AGIMO Blog, there was awareness that a range of different areas within AGIMO were interested in using blogging as a way to engage with the public. As such, the decision was made to establish one central blog for the organisation rather than a number of separate, possibly time-limited project-specific blogs. Accordingly, when the AGIMO Blog launched, AGIMO's previous Web Guide blog was shut down, and its posts and comments transferred as a category on the new blog.

As discussed above, AGIMO has gained a range of useful feedback from comments on blog posts, and has benefitted from the experience of running the blog as an online engagement tool. One of the key lessons learned so far is the need to ensure posts are added regularly to the blog, and that responses to comments are provided as quickly as possible when needed.

Another important lesson learned from the AGIMO Blog is about the moderation of blog comments, which is discussed in more detail elsewhere in this document. One particular moderation issue involved how to appropriately manage blog comments during the caretaker period after an election has been called. During the caretaker period agencies follow the *Guidance on Caretaker Conventions*, which is prepared by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC). Under this guidance, public service resources cannot be used to communicate any material which benefits any party in an election, meaning that the need for vigilant moderation of agency-run social media tools increases. In conjunction with DPMC, AGIMO was involved in creating advice for agencies on how to comply with the caretaker conventions when managing social media, and applied this advice when moderating the AGIMO Blog during the 2010 caretaker period.

govspace

Finance operates the govspace blogging and website hosting platform as a way to allow agencies to establish their own blogs and websites without needing to focus on technical and procurement issues involved; meaning they can, instead, concentrate on content and community engagement. govspace uses WordPress software, maintained by Finance, to allow agencies from all levels of government to manage their own "space", which may be a blog, a website or a combination of both.

Finance has tailored the govspace service to cater for a range of agency needs and technical capabilities. For example, if agencies wish they can customise the look and feel of their space and establish it under their own domain name. At the opposite end of the spectrum, a space can be created using one of the default appearance templates provided by Finance under a govspace.gov.au domain, with very little additional technical work needed to launch the site.

Examples of govspace blogs and websites include the AGIMO Blog, the Innovation Blog and the Election Commitment Costings website.

Microblogs

Microblogs use short message technology that allows distribution of messages across the Internet. Microblogging tools, such as Twitter, can be used in a number of scenarios, including:

- active customer contact and service
- public alerts and messaging
- announcements – including promoting content hosted elsewhere

In all likelihood, microblogging will supplement other Government 2.0 activities. While microblogging can be useful in and of itself, it is often better used as a quick message or response service backed up by other online assets. For example, the Taskforce used its Twitter account to promote new blog posts and Taskforce activities.

Twitter

Twitter is the most successful microblogging service in the world, with millions of users worldwide. A number of Australian Government agencies are using Twitter to engage with the public, including the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (DBCDE), the Australian Taxation Office, the Australian Communications and Media Authority and the Australian Law Reform Commission.

Agencies' approaches to Twitter have differed. For example, the ABS runs separate accounts for different projects, such as their Betaworks and NatStats 2010 accounts. Another option is for departmental staff to tweet on behalf of their organisation. Department of Human Services general manager of communication Hank Jongen has a Twitter account which he uses to engage with the public about the work of his department. Similarly, while AGIMO does not operate a dedicated Twitter account, several AGIMO staff are active on Twitter in a professional sense, such as John Sheridan, First Assistant Secretary of Agency Services Division, which is responsible for AGIMO's Government 2.0 work.

Wikis

Wikis are online tools which can be edited by their users, the idea being that the end result will benefit from a collaborative authoring process. Many users reading material on a wiki may never access the editing features built into the tool. Perhaps the best-known wiki is Wikipedia.

In a government context, wikis have many potential uses, including:

- Public or internal-facing creation and editing of policy, program, legislative or other documents.
- Providing a knowledge base for answers to common questions.

- Internally, as repositories for staff information.

Some wikis include editing tools similar to common word processing software, while others rely on a form of mark-up language which can be difficult to learn. As such, training may be required to familiarise staff with wikis, and agency-run wikis should ideally include documentation to assist users in mastering the tool. DBCDE recently ran a wiki to elicit public comment on the *National Broadband Network Implementation Plan* – an example of using Web 2.0 technology to supplement traditional policy consultation approaches.

govdex

govdex, the official Australian Government collaborative online workspace, includes a wiki functionality. govdex provides communities built for any agency for internal or inter-agency use. Developed and run by Finance, govdex communities are free for agencies including regular training and user support.

govdex can be used for agencies to share and collaborate on documents, track issues and operate online forums within a community. govdex is security classified to the IN-CONFIDENCE level – which allows agencies to share and collaborate on classified documents. As at the time of writing, govdex has over 900 communities and 20,000 registered users.

Social networking sites

For government, the temptation can be strong to attempt to conduct online engagement activities from their own websites, including their own blogs. While this is a legitimate and reasonable approach, it may also be beneficial to engage with communities in the online spaces they already gather in, such as social networking sites. Agencies can engage with these communities as a Government 2.0 exercise in its own right or to complement existing initiatives such as agency blogs or forums.

Social networking sites come in many different forms, but basically allow their users to share content and build relationships with one another. A social media strategy should include aspects of both building and generating spaces and engagement with the users of social networking sites where relevant. For example, the Taskforce operated its own self-hosted blog in conjunction with its Twitter account and other social media presences, using different channels to compliment and promote the others.

This strategy should include aspects of drawing people to agency spaces through third-party networks as well as direct engagement in the third-party networks themselves. An example of this strategy is the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs' (FaHCSIA) *The Line*, a campaign website which is tightly integrated with several other social media platforms including Facebook.

Facebook

While not the only social networking site in existence, Facebook is by far the most popular and well known Web 2.0 tool in Australia. A Government 2.0 strategy should consider whether engagement by an agency, or one of its programs, is appropriate for Facebook. Several Australian government agencies have deployed successful activities on Facebook, including the Department of Health and Ageing and FaHCSIA.

Other agencies have had less success using Facebook. While the Taskforce blog was regarded as very successful, its Facebook presence was far less successful and basically only consisted of reposted Taskforce blog posts with no additional engagement.

A strategy should not just focus on an agency presence on Facebook; as discussed below, it should also include the monitoring of Facebook and other tools with respect to your agency, its programs, services and staff.

Ideas Markets

Idea-gathering tools allow users to submit and rate/vote on ideas. Ideas markets can be used in a wide range of ways during consultation processes where input from a potentially wide range of stakeholders is needed to canvas new ideas or to provide feedback on a piece of work. Agencies can use these tools to expose ideas to a broad range of stakeholders and allow their input to be a valid aspect of the considerations.

These tools are particularly useful for allowing a community of stakeholders to select one or a few ideas from many. The Taskforce used the third-party tool IdeaScale to gather and receive feedback on ideas from its community. Finance is also currently investigating options to provide similar functionality through its govspace service.

Internal agency communities

As a method to experiment and build capability with Web 2.0 tools in a low-risk environment, the implementation of small test communities within an agency can be a worthwhile strategy. Successes can be built upon, eventually extending to the entire organisation and beyond to external stakeholders.

This approach may involve internal blogs, wikis, instant messaging services or other tools, or the use of closed services such as govdex.

Media distribution

Public sector agencies produce a vast range of media in the process of their work – video, audio and still photography are a valuable resource that can be shared and reused for many reasons. Media of different types can be used for:

- Distributing agency policy information, as the Department of Immigration and Citizenship does via its No to People Smuggling channel on YouTube.
- Opening up existing agency media assets, such as collections of images, for public access and reuse.
- Providing information on organisation activities and benefits as is done with AusTrade podcasts.
- Learning and development, both internal and external, for example instructional videos.

YouTube

Video, of any length, can be a useful tool in spreading a policy or program message, sharing information about the work of an agency or providing a widely distributed platform for educational videos, among other examples.

YouTube is the dominant video sharing site on the Internet. There are several agencies already using YouTube to share video content, including:

- AusAID for communicating program activity.
- Defence Jobs for recruiting and publicity.
- The Department of Health and Ageing to inform young Australians of the dangers of binge drinking.

Flickr

Flickr is the largest image-specific photo sharing site in the world, and offers a range of licensing options, from restrictive to very open, and provides features to assist in retaining the appropriate metadata with all images.

Some government agencies already use Flickr, including for basic distribution of images taken at events linked to the agency. Several Australian cultural institutions including the Powerhouse Museum (which has documented their image sharing strategy), the Australian War Memorial, the Australian Maritime Museum, the State Library of NSW, the State Library of Queensland all share part or all of their collections through Flickr Commons, which is designed to permit easy access to visual archives under open licences.

Social media monitoring

While not strictly a Government 2.0 activity, monitoring subjects related to the work of an agency is an important part of engaging online. In many cases, social media monitoring is an extension of traditional media monitoring, which many agencies already do. As discussed below, social media monitoring can also be undertaken by individual public servants using a range of online tools. Compared to traditional media monitoring, social media monitoring has the advantage that it can give more direct access to community sentiment and the opportunity to respond in real time.

Even before beginning to use Web 2.0 tools, monitoring the online world for discussion and content related to an agency, program or area of interest can be beneficial. It may even prove that social media monitoring can provide the impetus for building a more comprehensive organisational Government 2.0 strategy. For example, if an agency can see that a wide ranging conversation is happening on Twitter regarding its work or area of interest, it may assist in motivating the agency to become involved in that conversation.

There is a broad range of tools available for monitoring online traffic about an organisation. In many cases these tools will be able to supplement traditional media monitoring, particularly when they pick up on online versions of articles in mainstream media. When beginning to monitor activities, it is not necessary to spend large amounts of money. A basic social media monitoring toolkit could consist entirely of free tools.

Social media monitoring will quite possibly discover activity and comment with respect to an agency, its Minister, staff and executive in many places. Once such activity has been discovered, questions arise about how to respond, including:

- How to decide to respond to any activity, whether negative, neutral or positive.
- Who is responsible for responding officially, as opposed to more general responses by staff which may also be permitted in some cases.

- The nature of any response.
- The platform on which any response should occur, for example, if and how to respond directly to a negative Facebook comment or group, versus responding from the agency site and linking to the Facebook page.

A useful example of this kind of strategy was released in the form of a simple chart by the United States Air Force. This strategy needs to be integrated with an agency's social media policy.

Syndication

Syndication is about getting information out. It involves replicating content from one site to another (or many). The use of syndication to distribute news and information from an agency places the ability to read and consume that information in the hands of clients and other interested parties where they want to, when they want to, using their own tools and devices. This increases the likelihood that appropriate information will get to users, an approach which supports and enhances the notions of openness inherent in Government 2.0 activities.

The Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research has successfully operated its business.gov.au website for several years and has stated that nearly double the number of people access its information and services through syndication rather than through the website.

The value in syndication of information is its ability to disseminate widely and rapidly. Few people have time to trawl the vast range of online resources for the information they need each day. Syndication removes that need, allowing them to gather the information they need in a single place and keep up to date far more easily.

RSS for announcements and news

Most Web 2.0 tools include syndication capability via RSS (a term which refers most commonly to the Really Simple Syndication web feed format). RSS is built in to most platforms including blogs, wikis, photo sharing and others. The australia.gov.au website provides a listing of government RSS feeds currently in operation.

RSS may have benefits from an internal agency perspective. Agency staff may be able to read syndicated information from various sources as well as other government and non-government sources via RSS in a range of tools including their email client, a web browser or a specialised tool.

Automated tools and techniques for evaluating online submissions

Some Government online consultations and other engagement initiatives may receive a large volume of submissions. For example, the 2009 National Human Rights Consultation, which included an online element, received over 35,000 submissions (including both online and offline sources). In cases such as these, analysing a large number of submissions could be extremely intensive in terms of time and resources.

Agencies may find that the task of analysing and making further use of submissions can be assisted by automated processes such as text mining tools. Text mining generally refers to the automated processing of large amounts of text to extract meaning and patterns. Another option could be to design the online submission mechanisms in such a way that there is already some level of meaning attached to content at the point of submission, for example by asking contributors to tag or categorise their submissions based on the topic/s of the consultation.

data.gov.au

One tool to assist agencies release PSI is data.gov.au, currently in beta as data.australia.gov.au.

Launched during late 2009 and managed by Finance as part of the Government 2.0 Taskforce work, the data.australia.gov.au beta website is the open data bazaar for Australian Government agencies data sets. The term "bazaar" is used to reflect that data.australia.gov.au is not simply a central data repository. Rather, it is a data discovery and access tool, in that it hosts some datasets as well as linking to others hosted elsewhere (usually agency websites). Part of the Government's response to the Government 2.0 Taskforce report included the development by Finance of a data.gov.au website to replace the current beta site.

Like its overseas equivalents, data.gov, data.gov.uk and data.govt.nz, the Australian site has the potential to realise social and economic benefits by facilitating discovery of and access to all openly released Australian Government data. If agencies are releasing data, they should ensure that it is discoverable through data.gov.au (and in the meantime, through the data.australia.gov.au beta website).

Conclusion and contacts

As mentioned in the introduction, this document is intended as an overview of common Government 2.0 scenarios and tools rather than a detailed guide. Please forward any questions about this document or any of AGIMO's Government 2.0 services to gov2@finance.gov.au. Agencies can also use this email address for any requests for assistance or information when implementing Government 2.0 initiatives or approaches.

We are interested in your feedback on this document. Based on the response to this document and its usefulness to agencies and public servants, AGIMO may prepare future versions, and may also seek public and agency feedback to do so. Please send any feedback to the email address above or post it on the AGIMO Blog.

To keep up to date with AGIMO's Government 2.0 work, including future versions of this Primer, you should follow the AGIMO Blog. AGIMO's latest Government 2.0 guidance is housed on the Web Guide. Public servants from any level of government should also consider joining the Government 2.0 community on govdex by sending a request for membership to gov2@finance.gov.au.