

Best Practice

City of Regina Open Data Portal

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THE PRACTICE

In February 2012, the City of Regina launched its Open Data Portal. The Open Data Portal provides a “self serve” option for citizens, application developers, academics and the business community to access City data. The Data Portal will help drive innovation and citizen engagement in Regina with easy, self-serve access to information commonly used by application developers, academics and businesses. The initiative will increase internal efficiency by reducing duplication and allowing for enhanced information sharing between departments.

THE PROCESS

A corporate information assessment undertaken in May 2011 indicated that the City was processing many duplicate requests from the public for information and data. In August 2011 a cross-departmental team assembled to evaluate the potential of an open data portal for the City. A project charter was constructed in late November 2011 for the development of an open data portal. In December, the City engaged with the Open Data Saskatchewan group as a data sponsor for Saskatchewan’s first “Hackathon.” This event allowed the City to trial the datasets it intended to post in a live environment external to the City. The feedback and engagement from this group helped to inform the development of the portal. An internal communications plan was developed to ensure all levels of senior leadership were aware of the launch and the program. Council was provided a briefing and a media release was provided. The project team ensured that there was a dedicated resource to respond to media and public inquiries the week of launch as well as additional IT support should questions or problems arise.

THE RESULTS

On February 27, 2012 the City of Regina launched the open data portal. Since then there have been at least six applications that the City has been made aware of that were developed using City data from the portal. These applications were developed by citizens for citizens without any other enticement from the City, other than making the data available through the easy to use, self-serve portal. There have been many circumstances across the corporation where time/resource has been saved by simply being able to refer the public to the open data portal for data needs. The City continues to receive interest from the public in making different data sets available and is putting together a large public stakeholder engagement strategy to continue working with citizens to leverage and enhance this tool, thereby driving innovation in our city through collaboration and knowledge sharing.

LESSONS LEARNED

Make sure that the right people are involved from the beginning; the project team was critical to the success of the project. It is important to have senior level executive support. Do not undervalue the business efficiency benefits to open data. Keep the project focused. New initiatives, particularly ones with a very innovative potential outcome, can get both internal and external people very excited. In order to make sure the portal was completed, the scope of the project had to be closely managed. It is not possible to anticipate everything, so make sure to have the right people on stand-by and be realistic with the public about anticipated performance or data shortcomings.