

CTG Online News

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Nigeria Harnesses the Power of Open Data

When the Federal Government of Nigeria was ready to launch their Open Data Initiative, they reached out to the World Bank for their support, and they in turn, to the Center for Technology in Government (CTG) for their expertise.

In January 2014 CTG, as part of the Open Government Alliance (OGA), led the Federal Government of Nigeria's first ever *Open Data Stakeholder Engagement Forum and Workshop*. This historic event brought together government leaders, civil society advocates, industry experts, and media professionals, to create awareness, foster discussion, and provide the opportunity to identify both short and long term goals for Nigeria's Open Data Initiative.

CTG began working with the Nigerian government on its open government efforts in 2012. The 2012 project focused on the development of an *Open Government Action Plan*, *Open Data Ecosystem Roadmap*, and *Technology Innovation Roadmap for Nigeria*. A preliminary *Open Government Readiness Assessment* was also conducted. The *Open Data Stakeholder Engagement Forum and Workshop*, a planning step recommended in the 2012 work, was carried out in partnership with the World Bank, the Department for International Development (DFID), and the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Workshop was designed to engage both demand-side and supply-side stakeholders of open data to discuss the economic and social value from opening data, identify challenges and concerns around opening data, and develop and collectively prioritize short and long term open data strategies for the Nigerian government. During the Workshop, Nigeria's first Open Data Working Group was inaugurated by the Nigerian Minister for Communication Technology with a focus on building a governance structure and prioritizing processes and responsibilities.

"Nigeria is a story of firsts" said Mrs. Omobola Johnson, Honorable Minister for Communication Technology. She went on to say "Four months ago Edo State launched Africa's first sub-national open data platform; today, the Federal Government is kick starting the first Federal Open Data Initiative, which is being launched simultaneously with the data clinic designed to surface the demand for open data from various non-government actors. This could pave the way for a new form of government-to-citizen interaction across the country."

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"Nigeria's commitment to a user centric approach," according to Meghan Cook, "allowed us to convene a diverse group who provided input on information needs, access issues, and overall projected impact. They discussed their concerns as well as their ambitions and in the end, set forth an actionable plan with input from over 40 government, civil society and industry organizations. This was a significant accomplishment."

Implementing such an event required the collaboration of several teams. Meghan Cook, CTG's Program Director and lead for CTG's Nigeria initiatives, led the overall planning and implementation of the event as well as served as chairing the event itself. The World Bank Team brought their knowledge to the event in the form of expert contributions from Alla Morrison presenting on the economic value of opening data, Jeff Kaplan and Tim Herzog presenting preliminary findings of the open data census assessment. The World Bank team, led by Lyudmila Bujoreanu, also included Sandra Moscoso, Tokunbo Fayomi, Matthew McNaughton, and Craig Hammer who provided content expertise as facilitators and overall support for this event.

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Dr. Natalie Helbig, Assistant Research Director at CTG provided a presentation on the foundations of opening data and the roles and capabilities necessary to plan and implement an open data effort. H. Giovanni Leusch-Carnaroli, Grant Thornton and OGA partner, described the critical success factors in developing an open data ecosystem and guided discussions on the internal challenges of opening data. Civil Society leaders including

Justin Arenstein, Code for Africa and Code for Nigeria, presented examples of societal impacts of opening data.

The team from the Nigerian government included Mr. Chibueze John Eweama, Deputy Director of Planning and Statistics, MCT who provided essential guidance and direction and Mr. Bunmi Okunowo, Special Assistant on IT to the Honorable Minister of MCT, who set a high level of excellence while leading the teams from planning to implementation.

Through these and other engagements in the United States, Africa, and elsewhere, CTG continues to partner with funding organizations and other experts to help governments navigate the technical, management, and policy implications associated with opening their data and achieving measurable and sustainable public value.

About the Open Government Alliance The Open Government Alliance (OGA) is a strategic partnership of Grant Thornton LLP, Phase One Consulting Group, and the Center for Technology in Government (CTG) at the University of Albany/SUNY. Together, this team assists governments around the world in planning, implementing, and assessing their open government efforts. The Alliance guides governments in identifying best practices, using innovative technologies, and developing appropriate policies so that they provide value to citizens. The Alliance brings together an extensive, international network of partner firms and clients connected by cultural understanding and commitment to advancing open government across the world.