



Employment and Social Development Canada Response to the Data Strategy for the Federal Public Service

It is with great pleasure that Employment and Social Development Canada provides this response to Recommendation 1 of the Data Strategy Roadmap for the Federal Public Service – “By September 2019, all departments, agencies or portfolios have a data strategy in place appropriate to their line of business.”

Employment and Social Development Canada recognized the value of having a corporate Data Strategy early on. The department developed a Data Strategy 1.0 in 2017, and has since been implementing it throughout our organization. The Data Strategy Roadmap for the Federal Public Service call for all Departments to have a data strategy in place provided Employment and Social Development Canada with an opportunity to take stock, refresh and share recent developments that we hope will be useful across the Federal data community. We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the authors on the development of a government-wide roadmap and for championing leadership through the establishment of the DG Data Leads and Chief Data Office Council that have generated momentum to propel the agenda forward.

Each year, Employment and Social Development Canada processes millions of applications and manages subsequent interactions with clients through 37 services, including several of the Government of Canada’s largest programs. In addition to administrative data generated by programs, the Department generates data to manage its operations, has numerous Information Sharing Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding, and manages an over \$40M annual survey portfolio relationship with Statistics Canada to create the knowledge base to develop policy options, enable research, improve programs, deliver services and manage operations. However, data at rest does not deliver value. The ability to find, understand, trust, share and use data quickly, and in ways that respect the privacy and security of Canadians, is at the core of generating more value from the data we hold.

Employment and Social Development Canada’s Chief Data Office was created in 2016 to act as an agent of change. The Chief Data Office led the development of Employment and Social Development Canada’s first enterprise level Data Strategy, which was approved by the Department’s Portfolio Management Board in September 2017. The Strategy has been designed to build necessary capabilities to generate strategic insights, increase opportunities for collaboration and to realize greater efficiencies and improvements in program, service delivery and internal operations.

I am happy to see the reinforcing nature of the Data Strategy Roadmap for the Federal Public Service and our Department’s Data Strategy, and that our efforts to date have positioned Employment and Social Development Canada to contribute to many of the Roadmap’s recommendations. The Department is continuing to implement six work streams to build foundational capacity to drive value with data: *Access, Analytics/Data Science, Data Governance, Data Management, People and Enablement*. These streams are aligned with the pillars of the Data Strategy Roadmap for the Federal Public Service and recognize the need to build a Data Strategy on strong foundations.

Employment and Social Development Canada’s efforts to build data governance and stewardship will enable increased use of the Department’s data assets for better policy





development, decision making and analytics, using higher quality data for research, performance measurement and client service. The Department has already launched a new Data and Privacy Committee to provide information and updates on the evolution of Employment and Social Development Canada's Data Strategy, as well as to validate and put the Data Strategy into action. Looking ahead, our work will include continuation of the development of our Department's first Data Policy, as well as the creation of AI governance and processes to maximize value from AI in ways that are ethical and minimize bias.

In terms of data access and use, as of September 2019, the Department has completed 15 data science projects that have provided solutions to concrete business problems, delivered tangible benefits, and demonstrated the potential of artificial intelligence (AI). For example, using the latest smart search tools the Department is enabling service delivery agents to spend less time searching for relevant information when directly serving clients, demonstrating the potential to increase agent efficiency, reduce call durations and processing times, and increase employee and client satisfaction.

As a department where clients are at the centre of everything we do, we are committed to providing quality, easy-to-access, simple and secure services that are responsive to their needs. Improvements that make it easier for people to apply for and receive their benefits rely on solid data foundations. The Department's efforts to improve data management focus on the ability to secure and assure the privacy of data, as well as to modernize infrastructure to provide users with access to data and the tools they need to analyse it. Employment and Social Development Canada's Chief Data Office is maturing data management through activities including the development of standardized reference data, such as the national address register developed in cooperation with Statistics Canada and Canada Revenue Agency.

Our Department recognizes the importance of recruiting, retaining and engaging with people who have the skills and experience needed to advance data strategy development and implementation. Recruitment through non-traditional government processes, such as interchange and social media recruitment, has attracted top talent to the Chief Data Office, bringing in individuals from disciplines outside those typically found in the public service. To acquire, retain and develop talent, the Department is increasing data literacy and empowering employees to better manage and use Employment and Social Development Canada's data holdings, but is also developing a Recruitment and Retention program for launch next fiscal year.

Communication is also essential to advancing effective data strategy. Employment and Social Development Canada's Chief Data Office is consulting widely on the development of products and sharing draft documents to collect feedback from Government of Canada stakeholders and to share the learning process with others. As part of reporting back on our progress on maturing our Department's Data Strategy, we welcome the opportunity promote a few well-circulated documents to newer members of the Federal data community, in particular, Employment and Social Development Canada's [Data Strategy 101](#) and [Data Strategy Placemat](#), which were pivotal to our first two years of implementation. Both can be found on Employment and Social Development Canada's Chief Data Office Gcpedia site alongside updates on our Department's Data Strategy development and implementation (http://www.gcpedia.gc.ca/wiki/CDO_Resources).

As we come to the end of our first phase of our Data Strategy implementation, we are happy to report that our early efforts to better manage and ethically leverage existing data assets, reduce privacy risks, and maximize value for Canadians have largely proven successful. The Department will continue to expand the work by releasing an updated data strategy next fiscal year that will highlight the lessons learned and pivot to become less about identifying the right pillars, and more about how building and strengthening these pillars responds to business needs and improves services for Canadians. Employment and Social Development Canada's Data Strategy 2.0 will include a renewed focus on data governance and getting this critical pillar right. It will also place even greater emphasis on the importance of grounding the strategy in finding solutions to real business problems.

We look forward to continued collaboration and success across the Federal data community.

Sincerely,



Sandy Kyriakatos
Chief Data Officer
Employment and Social Development Canada

