STATE OF ISRAEL

THE OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP

DRAFT ACTION PLAN FOR 2012

DECEMBER 2011

Part 1: Introduction

The Government of Israel has elected to promote the policy of open government, and has joined the International Open Government Partnership, which promotes Open Government Policy. This decision was born of the understanding that recent innovations in communication and information technologies allow a significant improvement of the traditional democratic system, and its relationship between the individual and the government. The goal of open government policy is to empower the individual, the society and the state on the basis of three fundamental principles:

- Transparency and active reporting to the public
- Public participation
- Accountability

These three principles, combined with the recognition of technology's significant role in facilitating change, are the central components of the International Open Government Partnership for Promoting Open Government Policy.

Principle of Transparency and Active Reporting to the Public

The Government of Israel is committed to freedom of information, and to promoting transparency and accessibility to data and information produced in the public sector. Currently, we are in the midst of a transition from the old perception, which views the Government as having a monopoly on the information it obtains, to a newer perception that views information as a public resource that each citizen has the right to access freely. The Government has an obligation to make public information accessible to the public, in a manner that allows it to be used in a variety of ways (including processing or improving it). The principle of transparency and active reporting to the public should not contradict the expression of individual rights and other public interests defined by law, such as the right to privacy, state security and intellectual property.

Principle of Public Participation

The Government of Israel will implement a policy of public participation and intelligently make use of the "wisdom of the crowd," with the goal of improving decision-making processes and strengthening public trust in our systems of government.

Principle of Accountability

The Government of Israel will promote the concept of accountability. The Government believes in the public's right to examine and critique and supervise governmental action, and the public's need to review the activities of publicly-elected officials and civil workers according to clearly defined benchmarks. The Government will publish work plans that are under consideration and will develop methods of measurement that allows the public to measure and evaluate the activities of each office. The Government shall report on the level of service that is provided, as well as the level of bureaucratic procrastination involved. It will check the level of public satisfaction with the Government's activities and continual strive for improvement and excellence.

Implementation of Innovative Technologies

The Government of Israel will integrate innovative and interactive information technologies, and will develop technological tools that are capable of improving:

- Flow of information from governmental sources
- Dialogue between the Government and citizens
- Level of public service provided to the public

The Government will need to overcome organizational, political, and social challenges that will arise as part of the transition process. For the project to succeed, it is essential that the Government (including all of its central and administrative leadership) recognize that these changes are a priority.

In joining the Open Government Partnership, the Israeli Government took upon itself the task of following the Partnership's road map, and decided to focus on two "Grand Challenges":

1. **Improving the level of service provided by the Government to the public:** The Government of Israel will adopt methods of management, incentives, and benchmarks that are widely used in the private and business sectors; and accordingly it will make necessary changes in the public sector. In addition, The Government will raise awareness of this issue among governmental service providers and the general public. Furthermore, the Government will establish a governmental customer service unit, which will measure and publish the level of government service to the public, and widen the use of sophisticated customer-service technologies in the public sector.

2. **Strengthening public trust in governments' systems:** The Government will promote initiatives and projects that advance information transparency and the active reporting of information to the public. Work plans developed by government offices will be available, allowing the public to see whether defined milestones are met (such as timetables, budgetary constraints, and quality of work). An increasing number of projects will require hearings in the early planning stages. These actions will increase the public's ability to supervise governmental work, leading to fewer cases of failure and corruption, and a sense of strengthening public trust in governments' systems.

As part of the Israeli Government's commitment to the road map of the Open Government Partnership, the Government will define clear goals for 2012 in this document. The stated goals address each of the challenges described above. In addition, as outlined in the road map of the Partnership, the Government will establish a cross-sector forum that includes senior representatives of the Government, academia, NGOs, civil society, and the public. A broad public coalition will inform Open Government Partnership commitments and create a multi-stakeholder forum, for public consultation on the implementation of its commitments.

The Government of Israel is interested in benefiting from the experience of other countries that are members of the Partnership, through reports and information shared in international forums (as part of the Partnership). The Government is prepared to report on an ongoing basis and share the information and experience that it gains while going through this process, for the benefit of other countries, and members of the Partnership.

Part 2: Assessing Existing Initiatives of Open Government

1) Improving the Level of Service Provided by the Government to the Public

A. Access to Government Information

The Government of Israel works to increase the level of usability and effectiveness of governmental information. It aims to improve government information on the Internet, interoperability among offices, and increase the distribution of governmental information using an easily accessible, secure, and multi-channel approach.

1. **Government portals that provide information and services:** The Israeli Government developed portals that use a one-stop shop approach, by following complex, cross-agency processes. These portals orient users by providing information about services and processes, offering concrete information and allowing users to complete some of the services online. For example, the supplier portal provides a database of government suppliers, offers information about financial issues such as tenders, and allows users to purchase online. For example, the business portals allow registration of businesses, construction, import and opening a business. The main government portal is the *gov.il* portal, which includes information about different topics, explanations regarding eligibility to services, and referral to other sites run by government agencies and local authorities.

2. **Government databases:** The Government regularly releases online applications that are based on government databases, and allow analysis and the retrieval of information. This includes calculators, visualizations and simulators about individual rights, such as information about transactions, property ownership, eligibility for pensions and other allowances, subsidies, exemptions from taxes, and information about liens and mortgages.

3. **Government services for forms and payments:** The governmental service for forms currently includes 1,800 online forms, some of which allow users to fully conduct processes and services via the Internet. The payment service increases the accessibility of hundreds of different types of payments for a wide range of government agencies and local authorities. The services use credit cards and bank transfers. For 2011, business transactions are expected to reach approximately 14 billion NIS.

4. **Standardization of government sites:** The standardization process is designed to ensure a unified structure for government sites, the publication of essential information on government sites, and the successful usability of the sites for all target audiences (including accessibility for people with disabilities and accessibility in multiple languages). The use of standards will be reviewed annually and included in the annual report. It will be reported to the Committee of Information and Technology in the Knesset.

B. Cutting Red Tape

The Government of Israel aims to simplify internal and inter-office work procedures, and is developing initiatives that lessen the bureaucratic red tape and help develop a customer-oriented service mentality among government workers.

1. **Establishing a ministerial committee for improving government service to the public and open government:** The committee's authority includes establishing an overall policy and plans for providing government service to the public; establishing policy and decision-making guidelines regarding open government; establishing guidelines for government agencies, simplifying procedures and making them more efficient; establishing processes that relate to the measurement and type of service; deepening professional knowledge in the area of open government and service to the public; and initiating central IT projects that work toward these goals.

2. **Inter-office committee for improving business processes:** As per a government decision in June 2009, the Israeli Government established a steering committee, headed by the CEO of the Ministry of the Treasury. The committee aims to improve the efficiency of procedures that are required in order to do business in Israel. The committee has the authority to examine the processes and suggest ways to cut the bureaucratic red tape, for the business sector (the cost of the bureaucratic red tape is estimated to be 30 billion NIS annually.) In addition, the committee was asked to review the processes for doing business in other countries; to assess critical failures involved in the process of doing business in Israel; to determine quantitative goals and measurements for checking the process of doing business in Israel; to integrate ways of improving and simplifying the process of doing business based on the Doing Business model of the World Bank.

2) Strengthening Public Trust in the Systems of Government

A. Deliberative Processes Strengthening Participatory Democracy

The Government of Israel initiated a process of public participation in key areas of its agenda: legislation, government reforms, and ongoing decisions on subjects of broad national interest. Extensive use of tools that include the public in the process of determining policy, has many advantages: Building consensus and preventing conflict; closing social gaps and enabling the Government to receive extensive information about public opinion; obtaining and using diverse information from different sources during decision making; minimizing alienation between citizens and the Government; and sharing innovative, diverse, and original solutions with those who determine policy.

1. **Planning reforms for improvement of government service to the public and open government:** In August, 2010, the Government decided on a reform of government service to the public. The planning of the reform was executed in a broad and comprehensive process of public participation, and with the help of volunteers. Minister Michael Eitan, who initiated the program, established roundtables of experts in the fields of technology, law, and customer service, all of whom provided assistance on a voluntary basis in order to help develop the program. Similarly, there was a process of consultation with organizations of the third sector and representatives of the general public, who were asked (at the initiative of the Government) to comment on the government decision and drafts of the program. In this way, projects (mentioned in Part 3) such as government customer service and contact centers were established.

2. **Project "Public Participation":** The public participation site provides information about government reforms, initiated bills, and decisions with broad impact on the public. The public is able to vote for or against the subject under discussion, to express and discuss their views, via participatory platforms that are on the site. The public's position and suggestions are brought to the attention of policy makers

on parliamentary and ministerial committees. Suggestions are sometimes integrated as part of the legislation or become a part of government decisions. In some instances, the public is invited to meetings with representatives of different agencies; in other cases government agencies select professional representatives to provide answers to questions. Examples for important topics discussed on the site include the Arrangements Law, the National Project for Prevention of Smoking and the Noise Reform of the Ministry of the Environment. Similarly, a public hearing was held on the site for the Google Street View project, where the public debated whether to allow a company to photograph the streets of Israel. Use of the site is gaining momentum, and tens of thousands of Internet users visit monthly.

3. **Public hearings regarding activities of the committee for social and economic change:** The nation-wide social protest that raged across Israel last August regarding the economic-social agenda of the country forced the Government to review and assess anew the distribution of public resources among different segments of the population. A public committee established for this purpose conducted a public hearing, in which tens of thousands of representatives of the public were heard. Civil society and people "off the street" were invited to share their opinions with the committee in public forums, roundtables, targeted discussions and via the website. A *deliberation site*, set up as part of the committee's activities, allowed the public to raise issues for discussion, to express their opinions and respond online to other ongoing discussions. In order to make the site a space for open dialogue, users were invited to upload editorials and position papers, some of them highly critical of government policy. Within the activity of the deliberation site, eight of the committee's public hearings were broadcast, approximately 140 articles and position papers were uploaded, and 3,336 suggestions from users were received—and all of this information was brought to the attention of the committee. The influence of the public was clear by the number of suggestions taken off of the website that were being integrated into legislation, government decisions, and adjustments to budgetary allocations.

B. Increasing Accountability: Measurement, Review and Publication of Information

Accountability involves adopting methods for measuring and reviewing government activity, and publishing that information. These methods allow the public to keep track of the Government's implementation of policy, and goals, budget allocation, the level of bureaucracy that exists in various agencies, and the services provided to the public. Examples for such projects, include:

1. **Portal data.gov.il:** The portal includes factual information of importance to the public, in an open and accessible format (Excel files). In addition, the portal includes a partial listing of government databases that are accessible to the public.

2. **E-Government Report:** An annual report, which has been published for the past six years, rates online information and services according to parameters such as: availability of services; availability of information; and success in implementing standards regarding accessibility and usability for people with disabilities. These evaluations urged government agencies to improve their working plans (e.g., payments, forms, site accessibility, browser accessibility, social media activity, etc.)

3. **Open Budget Website:** Since 2011, due to public demand, the Ministry of the Treasury publishes the details of the budget in Excel files. Using the information that was published, the NGO Workshop for Public Information created the Open Budget Website, which allows the budget to be searched and analyzed from different perspectives. The site includes participatory platforms that allow discussion about sections of the budget and participation on social media sites.

Part 3: Commitments for 2012

The Government of Israel will continue to initiate and develop programs based on new technologies that reflect the principles of Open Government. The programs presented here were selected on the basis of these criteria:

1. Projects that focus on one of the two grand challenges that the Government has chosen to focus on as a member of the Partnership:
    a. Improving government service to the public and reducing the bureaucratic red tape.
    b. Increasing Public Integrity in the government.

2   Projects that involve a large number of government offices.

3. Projects that deal with developing new organizational and technological infrastructure, or highly innovative and cutting edge projects.

A. Improving Government Service to the Public and Cutting the Red Tape

1. **Establishing a unit for government service to the public:** The Government is currently establishing a central "headquarters" for improving the government service to the public. This unit will develop guidelines for governmental customer service, determining standards and developing central projects for improvement. The unit will run a set of measurement and review of government services, and will publish these to the public. The unit will coordinate its activities vis-à-vis those who are in charge of different services in a range of government agencies. **Goals:** The Government will establish the unit, recruit, and write a strategic plan defining the unit's work. The unit will provide ongoing measurement of the level of service provided by government agencies. It will publish a Government Service to the Public report for 2012. The unit will have ongoing activity vis-à-vis other agencies, defining acceptable standards by the stakeholders, regarding the levels of service necessary in each section of government.

2. **Establishing a national information technology (IT) unit headed by a government CIO**: In an effort to improve the coordination and cooperation between the governments' information systems, the Government decided to establish a national IT unit, headed by a government CIO. The unit will have horizontal authority including developing the Government's IT strategy; developing extensive governmental IT projects; defining the unified architecture and standards for the government's IT unit; and promoting the development of databases and professional expertise within government agencies. The government CIO will also be responsible for the e-government unit, which promotes digitalized governmental services for the public and develops a horizontal technological infrastructure for administrative services. **Goals:** The government CIO will be appointed at the beginning of 2012. Staffing the unit will be completed by the end of the first half of the year. Once it is established, the unit will create a working plan defining their work, budget, and institutionalizing their relationship with other agencies.

3. **Online catalog of government services:** An online catalog will be developed with extensive information about government services, on a unified interface, with defined metadata. The catalog will describe the service, conditions of eligibility, times and places where services are provided, responses of users, and additional information provided by other stakeholders

from the civil society with relevant expertise. Government agencies will regularly update the information in the catalog, and at a later stage, add additional metadata and information, including extensive information about rights, simulators, calculators, and search engines. **Goals:** Staff for this project is currently being recruited. Throughout 2012, a pilot project will be developed that will provide a catalog of services for 3 to 10 government offices with a range of services.

4. **Creating a government Contact Center (meeting points for private citizens):** As part of this project, during the initial stages, a phone support system will be established that provides information about government services. The information will be based on the online catalog of services. In the future, routing and follow-up services will track a query until it is appropriately handled and completed. The phone support system will also offer basic services such as setting up appointments, receiving payments, filling out forms, etc. **Goals:** The first step involves developing a working plan for the Contact Center and publishing a tender for a company that can provide phone support services.

5. **Inter-office committee for improving business processes:** After a steering committee for improving business processes in Israel has been established, the committee will work in 2012 toward launching a business portal that will include comprehensive, concentrated information about services for businesses. The committee will also continue to review inter-office processes and find ways to make them more efficient.
   Goals: The committee will work toward shrinking the time involved in setting up a business, from the current 34 days to between 5 and 7 days (reducing the bureaucratic red tape by 40%); shortening the registration process for properties, from between 100 to 200 days, to between 40 to 70 days (reducing the bureaucratic red tape by 75%); and reducing the bureaucratic red tape by 30% regarding processes necessary in order to receive approval for import and export.

6. **Developing technology infrastructure for providing government services:** The Israeli government will enable individuals to provide information and obtain personal services online, while ensuring maximal protection and privacy, and using security processes that identify users with the highest possible level of certainty.
   Goals (1): Developing a system for remote identification of citizens: Developing an identification system that meets the stringent requirements for information security, and is based on a one-time verification of credit card details and creation of a password, sent to the customer's cellular phone.
   Goals (2): Developing a government server for forms and payments: The Government will continue to develop a system of 150 new form services and 10 additional payment services.
   Goals (3): Developing information infrastructure and government services through cellular phones: In 2012, the Government will select a technology for developing government applications for cellular phones, and will launch a central infrastructure enabling government offices to develop applications.

B. Strengthening the Public's Trust in Systems of Government

1. **Establishing a unit for freedom of information in the Ministry of Justice:** The Government has had difficulties implementing the Freedom of Information Law. Individuals who are responsible for implementing the law within Israeli government offices only partially use their authority in this matter. The unit for freedom of information, which is currently being established by the Ministry of Justice, will have the authority to make broad policy decisions. It will publicize initiatives regarding government information, and develop standards for simplifying the process of submitting requests for

freedom of information. In addition, the unit has the authority to establish and manage a central Website for freedom of information, determining guidelines and publicizing information by the government, holding seminars and providing professional consultations for those responsible for freedom of information in government offices and the public sector. The unit will also clarify complaints against government offices relating to enforcing the Freedom of Information Law, and raise public awareness to the topic of freedom of information. The director of the unit was appointed in November, 2011. **Goals:** Completing the initial stages of setting up the unit and staffing it. Defining policy and developing initial programs of work. Establishing ongoing work flow vis-à-vis those individuals who are responsible for freedom of information in government offices and the public sector. Establishing a central Internet site for freedom of information. Preparing seminars and workshops for employees in the public sector.

2. **Public Participation in Policy Making Process:** The Government will widen public exposure to the processes of planning and establishing policy, and will invite the public to respond to issues that are on its agenda.

   Goals (1): Developing a technological infrastructure for public participation: The Government will launch a central, technological infrastructure that allows public participation, which will be available for use by government offices. The infrastructure will include participatory platforms and tools that will allow a summary of discussions, and the opinions of the public, to be displayed. The Government will also prepare a position paper regarding the allocation of incentives that will encourage use of these tools by government offices.

   Goals (2): Establishing obligatory guidelines for processes involving public participation: The Government will define and approve protocols for involving the participation of the public, as relates to government offices and central processes. Part of the protocol will define the types of policy and kinds of decisions that are appropriate for public participation. The protocol will also define appropriate forums for different types of consultation with the public at large (roundtables, professional forums, cross-sector coalitions), and different ways of receiving the public's opinion.

   Goals (3): Expanding the public discussion as part of establishing policy: In the course of 2012, the Government will initiate at least 50 public discussions about topics that are on the Government's agenda.

3. **Cooperation between the Government and the public in developing online applications:** The Government will publicize information and datasets that are of importance to the public in order to allow private initiatives, which will develop applications for the benefit of the public. Similarly, the Government will offer grants and support for private social organizations that work toward these goals.

   Goals (1): Government support of private social organizations that advance awareness of freedom of information, and developing online services: Currently, the Ministry of Justice is formulating a call for proposal for private social organizations that advance initiatives in the area of freedom of information to submit requests to receive support and grants for advancing their activities in these areas.

   Goals (2): Contest for application developers for government information: The Government will initiate a contest for developers who create applications designed to display and present government information. The contest will be publicized and will offer, in cooperation with private IT companies, a financial award for whoever develops the winning application. The prize will be awarded in accordance with defined criteria, such as the efficiency of the application in improving service and reducing bureaucratic red tape, the breadth of the target audience (the population that will be using the application), the originality of the application, its reliability, etc.

Goals (3): Promoting the data.gov.il portal: Continuing to develop the portal and adding tools for the presentation of information, graphic displays, presenting information in a unified manner and/or with tables, standardized downloading of series of information, creating standard APIs for information series.

4. **Establishing a system of measurement and review, and publicizing a report of government service to the public:** The Government will measure the level of government service, and will publicize a report on government service to the public, with the goal of advancing the principle of accountability. By gathering measurement information and publicizing a comparison of operations in different government offices, the public will be able to supervise government activities and judge its operations. This will lead the government offices to define new goals and programs for improvement.
Goals: The Government will work toward an initial publication of measurements (identifying different levels of government service to the public) by the end of 2012. Toward this end, the Government will work with suppliers that provide measurement services. The process will take place in all three channels of government service (service branches, phone services and the Internet). The Government will process and analyze the data.

5. **Publication of work plans in government offices:** The work plans developed by government offices, and the goals defined in these plans, will be publicized on the Prime Minister's Office Internet site. These plans will be displayed and discussed annually in a forum of government office director generals.
Goals: The Government will initiate an annual discussion in which director generals of the ministries will present the prime minister with a report relating to milestones established in the work plans for 2011. Similarly, an Internet site will be built, in which work plans will be presented in an open format, allowing information processing, search capabilities, and the extraction of information.

6. **Promoting a Website for the open budget:** The Government will make additional information about the state budget accessible, and will support the initiatives of private nonprofit organizations that develop online tools for complex processing of the information. It will work toward strengthening the public review of the state budget.
Goals: The Government will work toward making the following information accessible: Further explanations of the state budget (in clear language, and in accordance with the budgetary section), budgetary excesses, discussions of the finance committee, and the degree to which the budget has been correctly utilized.

7. **Establishing a cross-sector forum that promotes Open Government programs:** As part of its commitments to the Open Government Partnership, the Government will establish a cross-sector forum, as an official forum that will keep track of the Government's implementation of its responsibilities, as outlined in this document. The forum will update the Government's goals in accordance with recent developments. The forum will include the appointment of senior academics, representatives of third sector organizations, private initiatives, and senior government officials.
Goals: The document outlining Israel's commitments to the Open Government Partnership will be discussed and evaluated in the Israeli forum that will be established. The document will be approved by the Government before it is presented in the founding conference of the Partnership in Brazil, in April, 2012. Throughout the year, the forum will hold at least four meetings that will be dedicated to topics of Open Government in Israel and the world. Similarly, the forum will hold a national seminar that will be dedicated to issues of Open Government policy and the Partnership's conference in Brazil.

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Open
Government
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