

OPEN DATA ALLIANCE: INTERVIEW DOCUMENTATION

Introduction

Our team was given introductions to most interviewees by way of our project mentors: Will Saunders (WA State), David Christensen (Seattle Public Library), David Doyle, and Jim Loter (City of Seattle). The interviewees show a varied level of interest in using Public Records as Open Data as well as advocating for proactive disclosure. Some of these interviewees attended previous meetings of the Open Data Alliance or have shown interest in joining.

With these interviews, we plan to generate a thematic analysis of the various experiences with Public Records and Open Data from the perspective of small to large municipalities and state departments. The review will illuminate commonalities and differences that will help focus our set of recommendations in our final document for the Open Data Alliance.

Participants

ODLI1

ODLI1 was contacted because of their position as a Public Disclosure Officer. ODL1 has experience with public records requests and knowledge of the in-office protocols used for fulfilling these requests. ODL1 provided an extract of public records request logs for the team to analyze. As confirmed by ODL1, their office does not receive a high volume of requests compared to their population. We hope to use her information to gain an understanding of the PRR process as well as insights into the positives and negatives about the process.

ODLI2

ODLI2 was contacted because of their work with publishing several datasets on Seattle's open data website. They also used the City of Seattle's Public Records Request logs to generate a word cloud using Tableau. This word cloud and the code behind it is a helpful first step to our projects overall trend analysis. ODLI2 also provided significant insights into what steps are necessary for a successful coalition or alliance.

ODLI3

As a lawyer and consulting expert in public records, ODLI3 was contacted because of their wealth of knowledge about our research subject. With their previous work in the State

Auditor's Office, ODLI3 saw the financial impact of public records request fulfillment. ODLI3 was adamant that open data is about transparency, but that public records requests have a more significant problem with records management than with frequent requests. With her experience researching on a current legislative study, we felt that she provided a uniquely high-level perspective.

ODLI4

ODLI4 was contacted to interview because of their position as a Public Disclosure Officer and his relationship with David Doyle when focusing on open data. As being a part of a prominent City of Seattle entity, they receive a significant amount of Public Record Requests per year and has advocated for making some datasets open. We felt that ODLI4 is in a position where they deal with requests enough to recognize possible patterns but also understand the benefits and barriers to publishing specific datasets openly.

ODLI5 & ODLI6

Initially, ODLI5 was chosen because of his work as a Records and Disclosure Officer at a Washington State department. We felt that he would provide useful information about public records requests at the state level and for his department. ODLI5 suggested speaking with ODLI6, who is familiar with Open Data and the possibilities of an Open Data Alliance. ODLI5 and ODLI6 built upon several burgeoning themes for public records requests as well as their use as open data.

ODLI7

ODLI7 was selected because of his experience as a Public Disclosure Officer at the state level and as a previous attendee of the Open Data Alliance. We felt that ODLI7 provided an interesting perspective coming from a department that deals with different enterprise services and in combination with his law degree. ODLI7 also proactively publishes specific datasets, and we felt his insights into that process would be useful for our project.

ODLI8

ODLI8 was chosen because of his relationship with open data and his technical perspective concerning the logistics of proactively publishing data. ODLI8 is familiar with the Open Data Alliance and provided insights into the progress of such an alliance for the future. With their work advocating for accessibility in technology, ODLI8 gives us a look at open data with vulnerable populations in mind.

ODLI9

We chose to interview ODLI9 because of his previous participation in the Open Data Alliance as well as their position in a transportation department. ODLI9 spoke about their open data experience within his agency and with other informal organizations such as Data

Geeks. They offered insight into the risks associated with the automatic publication of data on an open portal, such as “staleness” as well as the issues with clarifying data stewardship.

ODLI10

The interview of ODLI10 was suggested by our previous interviewee, ODLI9. ODLI10’s work with a transportation data catalog and experience with open access items published on the agencies website. ODLI10 provided insights on the difficulties with making specific data sets available online and emphasized the need for data sets to be machine readable to fulfill the open data definition. ODLI10 also expanded on his participation in the Data Geeks meetings with ODLI9.

ODLI11

ODLI9 introduced us to ODLI11 because of their involvement with knowledge management in their agency and to speak with them about departmental data sharing relationships. ODLI11 provided information about the need for an enterprise architecture strategy towards organizing their agencies information and allowing for data sets to be freed up for publication.

ODLI12

ODLI12 was contacted because of their previous participation and interest in the Open Data Alliance. Working at a state agency, ODLI12 interacts with data from other agencies and institutions and works to consolidate those for their reports. As a hub of multi-departmental information, we felt their insights into this process would be useful to our project concerning the professional relationships of members in the Open Data Alliance.

ODLI13

ODLI13 and the moderately size city they work for, is an integral partner to the Open Data Alliance. As someone who works directly with Public Records and Open Data, ODLI13’s knowledge of both realms is useful to our project. ODLI13 spoke about the uniqueness of the cities requests and the difficult translation into identifying datasets to publish on an open data portal. ODLI13 also explored open data relationships between previous Open Data Alliance members and the establishment of public records data as one commonality between departments and municipalities.

ODLI14, ODLI15, and ODLI16

As a key open data authority in their county agency and a previous Open Data Alliance member, we felt it beneficial to gain ODLI14’s perspective. They spoke about the difficulties of getting others to understand the benefit of open data and questioned if that is still the term to be used. ODLI15 and ODLI16 work with public records requests and provided us with examples of requests that occur at the county level. We felt that we had not looked at

PRR's at the county level and that this interview would provide us with information on their process.

ODLI17

ODLI17's participation with the creation of the Fiscal Inventory Tool for the state of Washington piqued our interest because of the tool's use of data visualizations as its primary vehicle for data analysis. We felt their insights about the user experience aspects as well as the data sources and forms used to fuel the tool.

ODLI18

ODLI18 and the city they work for are at the beginning of a collaboration concerning the city's future Open Data Portal. We felt that information about the process and their insights into which datasets are selected for the launch of the portal would be useful to our project. They are also interested in being a part of the Open Data Alliance. (Current interview questions were sent, and we are awaiting the response.)