








YEAR END: Commitment 1 - Open Budget


Date: March - June 2018


Lead agency: The Treasury

To promote public discussion/debate and participation through accessibility of the Budget and include relevant groups outside of government in the formative phase of the Budget, ensuring they are informed about the process and issues.

Milestones		Stage
1	Ask key stakeholder groups how the Budget could be made more accessible	
2	Invite feedback on the previous Budget – this means making it available in forms people can engage with, which could include machine readable data, plain English published material and visual presentations <i>End date: May 2018</i>	
3	Provide Budget data in machine readable form – this could include open source formats <i>End date: May 2018</i>	
4	Work with agencies that have expertise in presenting Budget data in ways that make it easy to understand <i>End date: May 2018</i>	

 underway

 completed

 some delays

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING?

Data

- The Treasury has released Core Crown expenditure information for Budget 2018 in an open data format
- Treasury has agreed on a process for determining where licensing information needs to be in the data file

Budget 2018 Design

- Treasury has increased the use of table of contents, figures, page references, tabs, and hyperlinks within and across documents
- Treasury has released plain English material on the Economic and Fiscal Forecasts. We have incorporated a feedback section on the Budget website. Through this section, users of the data can complete an online survey which enables them to provide feedback, which will then be taken into consideration for future budgets
- Guides on the Treasury and Budget website have been published in an accessible, plain English format, including:
 - Guide to Budget documents - a list of all the documents published on Budget day and a short explanation of their purpose
 - Guide to New Zealand Budgeting Practices - a short guide on the how the budget is put together in New Zealand
 - Budget process - A short overview of the key phases in the New Zealand Budget process (this includes broad timeframes for the Budget process)
- Targeted information with links to more detailed information has been provided on the budget.govt.nz and treasury.govt.nz websites
- Booklets and foldouts on particular Budget packages have been developed to better communicate Budget decisions
- Agencies led on how initiatives were described qualitatively in the Budget, the presentation of quantitative data was standardised to ensure consistency.
- Change in budget documents from 2017 – Of the three new reports produced for Budget 2017, in the mid-term report only one currently remains. The reasoning for this is as follows:
 - i. As the decision around additional documents to support the Budget are made by the Minister of Finance, in certain years it may be necessary to produce an additional document to explain significant Budget decisions (for example the Families Income Package at a Glance in Budget 2017).
 - ii. For Budget 2018 it was deemed no additional document was needed, however as part of the mini-Budget released in December 2017 a document was produced to communicate the Government's Families Package.

INCOMPLETE MILESTONES

- *Work with agencies that have expertise in presenting Budget data in ways that make it easy to understand*
 - While some work towards presenting Budget data in accessible ways has been completed, this milestone has not been fully completed due to competing priorities in delivering Budget 2018. This included completing an audit review of the full budget process.
 - Work is in progress to complete this commitment and it will be included as part of the commitments for the next National Action Plan.

REFLECTION: HOW DID THIS COMMITMENT CONTRIBUTE TO OPEN GOVERNMENT?

- The Open Budget commitment relates strongly to the principles of Open Government. The Budget process can be considered as a closed process between agencies and the Government, with information being regarded as inaccessible. The Open Budget commitment towards sharing Budget information in plain English language and in an easily accessible format fosters greater public participation in the budget process.
- Making available information with the use of graphs and hyperlinks, including historical information and explanations of concepts provides an opportunity for stakeholders and citizens to better understand, analyse and interpret the data.
- The Budget feedback survey enables members of the public to provide input into the Budget process, making it more accessible and inviting discussion and debate, leading to more inclusive decision making and enhancing civic engagement.
- Releasing the Core Crown expenditure information for Budget 2018 in an open data format makes available information for stakeholders and members of the public. This release opens up the way for further releases on Core Crown debt, Core Crown Revenue and Core Crown Expenses, increasing transparency and accountability on the Government's accounting and fiscal practices.

LINKS

- Budget 2018 Foundations for the Future
<https://www.budget.govt.nz/index.htm>
- Budget 2018 overview
<https://www.budget.govt.nz/budget/2018/at-a-glance/index.htm>
- Guide to the Budget process – issue date 17 May 2018
<https://treasury.govt.nz/publications/guide/guide-budget-process>
- Budget 2018
<https://treasury.govt.nz/publications/budgets/budget-2018>
- Budget 2018 feedback on open data - survey form
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z6DVVZT>
- Functional Classification of Core Crown Expenses – issue date 17 May 2018
<https://treasury.govt.nz/publications/model/functional-classification-core-crown-expenses>