

Open Government Survey for the Academic Sector, 2017

The City of Toronto's Open Government Committee and senior staff promote an organizational culture of greater collaboration and openness. In 2017, staff engaged with a University of Toronto iSchool Student to conduct a survey to learn more about the views students and faculty have on Open Government.

Six faculties participated. 14 percent were undergraduate students. 76 percent were graduate students. 10 percent were faculty or staff.

The respondents were asked about their familiarity with open government. 42 percent replied that this was their first time learning of the concept. 48 percent said they were somewhat familiar with the concept. 10 percent said that they knew a lot about the concept.

Next, they were asked what open government means to them. 60 percent replied that it means access to information. 47 percent said that it means transparent, honest government. 20 percent replied that it means participatory government.

On the question of whether Toronto is an open government, 23 percent replied no, 32 percent replied yes, and 45 percent said they didn't know.

Next question was, what have you accessed from the City? 51 percent said a report from the City website. 46 percent said they used an open dataset. 41 percent said they visited the Archives. 51 percent said that it was easy to access City resources.

Next question was, how does open government benefit you in an academic capacity? 30 percent said it is a source of information and data. 26 percent said it is a teaching and learning resource. 16 percent said it enables better research.

Next question was to identify challenges they have encountered. The top challenges were (1) poor website design; (2) academics unaware of City initiatives; (3) limited availability of City information; (4) incomplete or out of date information; (5) Restricted access; and (6) lack of communication.

Academics were asked if they have had opportunities to participate and engage with the City on topics that interest them. 24 percent said yes. 70 percent said no. 6 percent said they didn't know. They were asked if they had ever participated by (1) online surveys;

50 percent said yes; (2) using an email or feedback form; 33 percent said yes; (3) using social media; 31 percent said yes; (4) attending a public meeting; 28 percent said yes; (5) talking to a Councillor or City staff ; 19 percent said yes; (6) an online discussion; 19 percent said yes; (7) a workshop or conference; 19 percent said yes.

The final question was, how can the City of Toronto be a more open government? 38 percent said to raise awareness about open government. 19 percent said to improve the usability of the City Website. 10 percent said to partner more with academia.

Suggestions included long term potential for academic liaisons with Universities.

For more information on Open Government at Toronto, go to:
<http://www.toronto.ca/opengovernment>