

Open Government Data: A Decade of Practice and Future Prospects

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Abstract

On October 16, 2022, the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China was solemnly convened in the Great Hall of the People, with the conference emphasizing the accelerated construction of Digital China. Government data openness constitutes an essential pathway for unleashing data vitality and realizing data value in Digital China construction. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, and particularly since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, explorations of practical pathways with Chinese characteristics have been developed based on China's practical and cognitive activities, yielding fruitful achievements in the practical exploration of government data openness. Following Shanghai's launch of China's first government data open portal in 2012, governments at all levels in China have gradually coordinated and advanced data openness initiatives across multiple dimensions, including strategic system construction, policy and regulation formulation, government data open platform establishment, and the mobilization of enthusiasm from diverse stakeholders.

Full Text

Government Data Opening in China: Ten Years of Practice and Future Prospects

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On October 16, 2022, the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China convened at the Great Hall of the People, emphasizing the accelerated construction of Digital China. Government data opening constitutes an essential pathway for unleashing data vitality and realizing data value in this

national endeavor. Since the founding of the People's Republic, and particularly since the 18th Party Congress, China has developed several distinctive practical approaches through its activities and accumulated rich achievements in government data opening. Following the launch of the nation's first government data open portal by Shanghai in 2012, governments at all levels have systematically advanced data opening by constructing strategic frameworks, formulating policies and regulations, establishing open data platforms, and mobilizing multi-stakeholder participation.

Strategic Framework Development

As a fundamental component of China's administrative reform, government data opening has undergone a gradual deepening process from local pilots to nationwide implementation, and from superficial coverage to substantive penetration. Since the 18th Party Congress, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has prioritized Digital China construction in response to global development trends and technological frontiers, while adapting to domestic realities. The 19th Party Congress report explicitly proposed the strategic goal of "building a cyber powerhouse, Digital China, and a smart society," and the 14th Five-Year Plan dedicated a special section to "accelerating digital development and building Digital China." Within this strategic implementation, government data opening serves as the core content of digital government construction at the government level, while at the societal level it underpins smart city and digital village development, and at the enterprise and organizational level it accelerates digital transformation. Information and data undoubtedly form the core foundation of this strategy.

Policy and Regulatory Evolution

Since Shanghai launched the first government data open portal in 2012, China has issued 15 important national-level documents, including the *Outline for Promoting Big Data Development* (2015), the *Implementation Plan for Integrating and Sharing Government Information Systems* (2017), and the 14th Five-Year Plan 纲要. From a policy-driven perspective, the primary motivation behind current government data opening policies is to enhance public service satisfaction. Reforms such as the "streamlining administration, delegating power, and improving government services" and "maximum one visit" initiatives have become integral to citizens' daily lives. Building a unified national government service platform represents a critical pathway to improving service satisfaction and demonstrates the utilization value of open government data, helping to address China's principal social contradictions.

Platform Infrastructure Development

The promulgation and implementation of relevant policies have laid a solid foundation for government data opening applications, while China's goal of achieving modernized governance by 2035 creates 倒逼 pressure for further development.

Under these dual forces, the General Office of the State Council issued the *Guidelines for Constructing a National Integrated Government Service Platform Mobile Terminal*, requiring local governments to accelerate the development of standardized mobile government service platforms, integrate them into the national platform, unify standards and specifications, achieve interconnectivity, improve mobile government services, and enhance service capabilities to maximize benefits for enterprises and citizens. In recent years, the number of data opening platforms built by local governments has continuously increased. According to incomplete statistics, by December 2021, over 670 provincial, municipal, and county-level governments had established local government data open platforms. Platform numbers grew steadily between 2012 and 2018, then increased substantially from 2018 to 2022, with platform construction now reaching considerable scale.

Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

By reviewing typical cases of government transparency from various provinces and municipalities over the past decade, China has explored relatively mature models for government data opening. Examples include Beijing's "Xicheng Model," Xi'an's "Weiyang Model" featuring "offline 123, online 789," Shenzhen's "three-level, five-open, full-chain" mechanism, and Jiyuan's "integrated, zero-distance" approach. These models achieve normalized, standardized, and integrated online-offline multi-level, full-chain government data opening from the perspectives of mechanisms, forms, quality, platforms, and resources. As data opening flourishes like a forest, the School of Information Management at Central China Normal University and the Hubei Data Governance and Intelligent Decision-Making Research Center have jointly published annual *Research Reports on the Utilization of Chinese Government Open Data* from 2018 to 2022. Meanwhile, Fudan University's Digital and Mobile Governance Laboratory has continuously released reports on local government data opening and the "China Open Data Forest Index," contributing Chinese wisdom to advancing government open data construction, improving utilization efficiency, promoting data empowerment, and enhancing data value.

The 20th Party Congress report profoundly summarized the work of the past five years and the great transformations of the new era's first decade. The Party's practice demonstrates that Marxism works, particularly when adapted to the Chinese context and the times. During this decade, China's government data opening has continuously advanced—from early exploratory and prudent promotion to increasingly deepened understanding, gradually improved laws and regulations, initial scale construction of integrated digital open government service platforms, and continuously strengthening enthusiasm among citizens and enterprises. This decade has witnessed the transformation from government information disclosure to government data opening, emphasizing data interconnection and sharing, encouraging multi-stakeholder participation in governance, promoting whole-process and comprehensive openness of government data, and

improving laws, regulations, and policy systems to standardize and normalize government data opening.

As the world undergoes unprecedented transformations and China enters a new development stage—grasping historic opportunities from the information revolution, accelerating the comprehensive establishment of a digital government, and transitioning toward intelligent industries—government data opening in China should advance in three directions:

First, adhere to the path of Chinese modernization by improving technical capabilities and expanding application scenarios. Guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and by integrating Marxist basic principles with China's specific realities, China should improve the theoretical, methodological, and technical systems of government information resource management, perfect the legal framework and standards for government data opening, and broaden application scenarios. The goal is to build a national-level integrated, unified, and collaborative government data opening service platform that is scenario-based, guided, and personalized based on user profiles, thereby contributing Chinese wisdom, solutions, and strength to national rejuvenation.

Second, advance data opening value-added utilization and enhance digital government governance capabilities in line with the modernization of the national governance system and capacity. Digital government construction constitutes a foundational and pioneering project for implementing the cyber powerhouse and Digital China strategies, representing an important measure for advancing national governance modernization. Focusing on data—the core element of digital government—and grasping the “key” of data governance, China should comprehensively employ institutional and technological tools through dual innovation drives in technology and institutions. While ensuring data security, this approach should address the activation of data resource value and accessibility issues, boosting data empowerment for governance modernization.

Third, uphold fundamental principles while breaking new ground and forge ahead with vigor, emphasizing youth talent cultivation in data opening. As the strength of youth determines national strength, the 20th Party Congress emphasized making youth work a strategic priority. Against the backdrop of renaming the “Information Resource Management” primary discipline, the discipline will constitute a substantial academic cluster. It is essential to fully leverage the disciplinary community's role in cultivating information resource management talent, build academic exchange platforms, gather data professionals, and cultivate more young talents needed by society to contribute to Digital China construction.

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