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Justin Johnson, Secretary

MEMORANDUM

TO: Agency and Department Heads
FROM: Justin Johnson, Secretary, Agency of Administration
Richard Boes, CIO & Commissioner
DATE: October 19, 2015
SUBJECT: State of Vermont Open Data Portal

The State of Vermont is the custodian of a great deal of public data. Until recently there has been no organized way to easily make this data available to others inside or outside state government. Such data has historically been shared as a result of a public records request or on an infrequent basis via downloadable spreadsheets on state Websites.

In October 2014 the state launched a new Open Data Portal using software created by the Socrata Corporation. The portal is now available for use by any Vermont State entity that has a need to share public data. The possibilities are limited only by the data that is available. During a small pilot project over the last year this system has been used to:

- provide transparency for the State's finances
- share locations of libraries
- publish a map showing day care providers with vacancies
- provide data on traffic accidents
- Avoid costs by providing an alternative to other contracted services

As well as providing a download point for public data the portal also includes custom charts, maps and views of any hosted data. Any person accessing the site can also create an ID and create their own views of the data for their own use or to share with others. The service allows direct download of data in various useful formats including Excel spreadsheets and CSV files. Each data set is also provided with an API so that any developer can access the data via Web based applications or mobile apps.

Another exciting feature of the system is that it allows users to create views of selected records and fields, charts based on the data and maps based on addresses in the data. Once these items are created they can be embedded into existing Webpages so the data can be shown in context with other related information. The placement works a great deal like embedding a YouTube video into a Website. Once the items are embedded into a page they will automatically update as the data is modified. So it is only necessary to create a chart, graph or map once.

The Portal is now finalized and ready to host public data. Training will be provided for any data owner so that updates to the data can be done as needed by agency staff. Data sets that cause regular extra work are being targeted for inclusion in the portal so that repetitive tasks can be automated clearing staff time for more meaningful tasks. This service is not intended for any sensitive data or personally identifiable information.

The Vermont Open Data Portal can be found at data.vermont.gov. The contents of the site can be viewed either by using the menu at the right that provides access by topic or by clicking on the "Catalog" link at the top of the page. In order for your staff to begin using the portal to host data contact the DII Director of Web Services at Harry.Bell@vermont.gov.