

Open and Shared Oulu

# City of Oulu's **OPEN GOVERNMENT ACTION PLAN** 2024–2027



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# Open Government in Oulu

Open Government in the city of Oulu means everything that brings the city and its operations closer to the citizens of Oulu. With the help of Open Government, the citizens receive opportunities to influence common matters through different channels. The principle of Open Government is offering the citizens of Oulu extensive information on how the city's administration works and what kind of decisions are made and have been made in the city.

The basis of Oulu's Open Government's focus areas are the themes and commitments of Finland's Open Government Strategy and Action Plan. Development areas that came up in surveys conducted to the city of Oulu personnel and Oulu's organizations and associations were used in defining the focus areas. Feedback and development suggestions given by the personnel, organizations and associations were utilized in the formation of the Plan's measures and goals.

The city of Oulu's Open Government Action Plan includes the central actions for promoting open governance. In compiling the Plan, we have utilized the experiences of past open government development work in Oulu. Even though openness in Finland has traditionally been excellent internationally, Oulu is committed in working harder than ever to promote openness.

## Open Government Work in Finland

In Finland, Open Government and its focus areas have been promoted heavily in the last decades. Open Government means transparency, ethics, accountability as well as the accessibility of information and services of the administration's operations. In Finland, the systematic Open Government development work is coordinated by the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance published the fifth Open Government Action Plan in October 2023 in Oulu's Regional Civil Society Academy.

Finland has participated in the international Open Government Partnership Project since 2013. 70 countries participate in the project and have committed to its three primary goals: promotion of the openness of governance and the participation of citizens, harnessing technology to reinforce governance and fighting corruption.



## Oulu City Strategy and Capital of Culture Year 2026



### Oulu 2030 Cultural Climate Change Now!

Oulu is a city of a higher degree of living, studying, working and entrepreneurship. Cultural Climate Change is a new feeling of communality, attitude of Ouluness and new methods of action.

In 2030, Oulu will be a sustainably growing international centre of 230 000 residents. Oulu brings together a humane and cheerful atmosphere, cutting-edge technology and entrepreneurship as well as original and innovative smart culture. Oulu has a competent workforce, high-quality supply of education and young population. Education builds Oulu. In Oulu, international success stories are written together, and digital opportunities are utilized boldly.

One of the City Strategy's strategic goals is: We enable people to meet and be active in a community and have a safe living environment. One of the measures of this goal is: We strengthen the participation models in Oulu. As an indicator: we develop new forms of participation together with municipal residents and try them out in different operating environments. The Participation and Interaction Plan of 2023–30 includes

goals that concern participation which are monitored every two years. One of the Open Government Action Plan's focus areas is Human-Focus and Participation. The goal is to increase good experiences for the citizens of Oulu about their home city and its services, as well as increase a sense of belonging and communality.

Oulu is the European Capital of Culture in 2026. One central goal of the European Capital of Culture Year, Oulu2026, is to offer the residents of the region opportunities to participate in the year's programming planning and implementation. Culture creates wellbeing and the goal is to create a more balanced community as a result of the Capital of Culture Year. Oulu2026 offers different participation opportunities during the coming years. During 2024, applications for Oulu2026 volunteer work and open programme applications will open. One central goal of the Oulu2026 activities is to promote equality and the acknowledgement of diversity in the field of culture. This goal is promoted by the *Yhdenvertainen Oulu2026* Project, the goal of which is to reach the minority groups in our region and reinforce their cultural participation. In order to reinforce the participation of communities of different language and culture backgrounds, a network has been established. The convenor of the network is Multicultural Centre Villa Victor.



## Focus Areas: How the openness of governance is developed through different focus areas?

### Openness and Comprehensibility

The administration's texts, services and reforms are clear and comprehensible. We communicate openly and take our target groups into account.

Comprehensible interaction and communication between Oulu's citizens and the city are a central part of the city of Oulu's operations. Openness is genuinely possible when the administration's activities are comprehensible. According to the Local Government Act, essential information about services organized by the municipality and the activities of the municipality must be published in public communication networks or be otherwise easily accessible, for example from libraries. Authorities must also use appropriate, clear and comprehensible language as well as develop the openness of their activities.

Interaction between the city and the citizens involves, among other things, using city services, activities in neighborhoods as well as participating in the planning of city activities. With the openness of information and decision-making, we promote the citizens' and associations' opportunities to receive comprehensible information about the city's activities and how decisions are made. The city's communication keeps up with the changing media landscape and adapts to new methods to develop communication and interaction between the city and citizens.

We communicate openly and take our target groups into account. With plain and comprehensible communication, we commit to promoting the wellbeing of Oulu's citizens by offering them information about the city's operations, services, plans and decision-making.

The use of plain language in the openness of governance and good governance is extremely important, since the use of plain language is a part of a citizen's legal protection: the citizens are given a chance to better understand what has been decided and why. The use of plain language is also secured with the Administrative Procedure Act.

An existing tool in the city's internal communications is the intranet Akkuna. It is the city of Oulu's most important and central tool of workplace communication. It acts as the home base of shared information about the city and compiles the city organization's central information, instructions and tools to support working as well as current news. Akkuna helps the personnel to understand their organization's operations and to work according to shared principles. The intranet also supports leadership, communality and participation in conversations of shared matters.

Akkuna is an accessible online service that fulfils the legislated intranet accessibility requirements of public administrations. Akkuna's usability and user satisfaction are regularly evaluated with surveys, and it is developed based on the given feedback.

Akkuna is a central part of the city's digital work environment. With it, daily work routines and services are easy to handle. Akkuna is developed continually along with the city's changing needs.

As work that is not tied to specific work sites increases, it is important that orientation, work community communication and digital work environments are implemented as clearly and fluently as possible.



OPEN GOVERNMENT IN THE CITY OF OULU

# Openness and Comprehensibility

**Focus Area:** The administration's texts, services and reforms are clear and comprehensible. We communicate openly and take our target groups into account.





## Trust and Responsibility

Experiences of trust are a central goal in the evaluation of openness of information and decision-making. We act as a responsible partner with different operators, including digital services.

The city of Oulu promotes the citizens' opportunities to receive information comprehensively about the city's operations and decisions. We will utilize the expertise of residents, interest groups and experts by experience in the development of the city and its services. We act as a reliable partner. We ensure the reliability and responsibility of human and digital working environments.

We prevent the intentional and accidental spread of misinformation and disinformation by working with different operators. Artificial intelligence solutions are adopted in a controlled manner and extensive background checks are carried out. We will understand the limitations of using artificial intelligence. The city's data processing follows the public governance and authority principles. We actively follow the development of legislation and directives, and we adapt to new guidelines. The city of Oulu's Communications Unit has compiled guidelines for the use of artificial intelligence in the city's communications. The guidelines can be read on the intranet Akkuna.

The goal of publishing open data is increasing the amount of public information and its comprehensive utilization by citizens, businesses, communities, education and research. Open data supports the development of online services over sector boundaries.

The city of Oulu shares datasets in the public [data.ouka.fi](https://data.ouka.fi) Data Portal, from which the datasets will be compiled in the national [avoindata.fi](https://avoindata.fi) website.

The City Board has decided on the sharing of datasets as open data in a machine-readable format (March 26, 2016, § 106). In the decision, the operational principles of open data have been approved and city sectors are committed to take them into account in their work. We realize the goals and obligations set by data processing and public information legislation. The city of Oulu has an operative Data Strategy that guides the publication and operation of open data. We consider the current security conditions in publishing open data. Responsible methods of work create security also in promoting openness.

Corruption means the misuse of influence to pursue advantages. In municipal administration, corruption can appear, for example, in old-boy networks, bribes, political designations and public acquisitions. The city of Oulu prevents corruption actively and follows the principles of good governance. The city of Oulu's Acquisition Programme has been prepared for the year 2024. In the city's acquisitions, the acquisition legislation's principles of openness, proportionality, non-discrimination and fairness are followed. The themes of the Acquisition Programme are the strategic and systematic conduct of acquisitions as well as making high-quality, effective and sustainable acquisitions. Open Government and its focus areas have been considered in the Acquisition Programme's goals, actions and indicators.



OPEN GOVERNMENT IN THE CITY OF OULU

## Trust and Responsibility

**Focus Area:** Experiences of trust are a central goal in the evaluation of openness of information and decision-making. We act as a responsible partner with different operators, including digital services.



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## Accessibility and Availability

We ensure accessible participation in our services, facilities, events and meetings.

We implement digital services and websites available and we acknowledge the need for digital support.

Accessibility and availability are a part of sustainable social development. Among other things, they mean the usability and physical accessibility of services and equipment as well as the possibility of participation in decision-making regarding yourself. It is the duty of authorities to promote equality and non-discrimination in their work. The city of Oulu has compiled an Operational Equality and Non-Discrimination Plan for the years 2022–26 that evaluates the realization of equality and non-discrimination in Oulu's services. Goals for promoting the wellbeing and health of citizens of different age groups have been set in the Wellbeing Plan 2022–25.

Accessibility means the accessible passage in physical environments, such as buildings, outdoor areas and public transportation. Accessibility is promoted by, for example, considering people using wheelchairs or aid equipment or taking visually impaired people into account in the design of public spaces. Accessibility criteria should be considered in construction.


Finland is obligated by the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Its purpose is the appreciation, equality and participation of people with disabilities in all activities like everyone else.


The promotion of accessibility requires competence. The city of Oulu is currently recruiting an Accessibility Specialist. Important expertise in matters of accessibility is also given by the Council for People with Disabilities. The Council issues statements about matters regarding the lives of people with disabilities. Such matters are, for example, accessibility of built environments, availability of digital services as well as the tendering, design and implementation of services. The Accessibility Specialist will participate in the operations of the Council for People with Disabilities and the Council for Older People.

The following accessibility goal has been set in the Public Transport Strategy 2040: Oulu Regional Transport's buses will be equipped with machinery that makes stop announcements possible and with easily readable stop screens by 2030. Additionally, accessibility will be considered in all public transportation vehicles and stop areas.

Availability includes, for example, the ease of use and comprehensibility of websites. The city of Oulu's website was renewed in late 2023 and its availability was inspected. For example, an availability inspection has been conducted on the Oulu Regional Transport's website. The website was found to be very available, excluding the price tables. Availability is continually developed by improving, among other things, city services, electronic services and attitudes. An available service can be used by everyone equally and they adapt for different needs and different users. Citizens can give feedback about the availability of the city's services. The city must respond to the feedback within two weeks. The city follows the current availability regulations and follows legislation actively.

Digital support offered by the city of Oulu is developed continuously and the accessibility and availability of services, events, operations and meetings is considered. Even though many services are being digitalized, the city of Oulu develops traditional forms of services as well.






OPEN GOVERNMENT IN THE CITY OF OULU

## Accessibility and Availability

**Focus Area:** We ensure accessible participation in our services, facilities, events and meetings. We implement digital services and websites available and we acknowledge the need for digital support.





## Human-Focus and Participation



OPEN GOVERNMENT IN THE CITY OF OULU

### Human-Focus and Participation

**Focus Area:** We act and plan with a humane focus by taking the needs of different citizens and businesses and other interest groups into account. Participation is a part of the development of services.



We act and plan with a humane focus by taking the needs of different citizens and businesses and other interest groups into account. Participation is a part of the development of services.

Human-focus means that the views and experiences of people guide activities and development. In the planning, the skills and requirements of people come first instead of developing products, services and programs based on technology and price. Participation in communities means the opportunity to experience being a part of a community important to you and to receive support in influencing as well as experiences of communality.

According to the Local Government Act, residents and users of services have the right to participate and influence the operations of the municipality. In the planning of services and the city's activities, we will consider the diversity of citizens, promote equality and prevent discrimination, hate speech and racism.

In 2022, the city of Oulu organized together with different operators the first Regional Civil Society Academy which is a part of the cooperation between Oulu's organizations, the Ministry of Finance, the Wellbeing Services County of North Ostrobothnia, the Council of Oulu Region and the city of Oulu. The Regional Civil Society Academy was re-organized in 2023 where a forum was offered for current discussion together with different operators. The regional event in Oulu is based on the Ministry of Finance's coordinated Civil Society Academy events and the goal is for them to be implemented regionally annually.

#### Measures of participation and interaction

Practical goals and measures for implementing participation and interaction have been established in the city of Oulu's Participation and Interaction Plan for the years 2023-30. The promotion of Open Government is based on human-focus and participation, which are the principles of the design, development and implementation of services.

In Participatory Budgeting, the city designates a specific amount of money, and the citizens get to decide how that money is used by ideation and vote. The goal is to increase the citizens' opportunities to participate and increase dialogue between the citizens and the city. The citizens' strong participation in different phases of the process is essential.

The city of Oulu has Councils, and their competence is utilized in the planning of the city's services: Council for Older People, Council for People with Disabilities, Immigration Council and Mental Health and Substance Abuse Council. Youth Council ONE also operates in the city. The Councils and the Youth Council promote equal participation of their groups in the city's development. The Youth Council has a right of presence and the right to speak in the City Council and Boards.

The city of Oulu has participated in UNICEF's Child-Friendly City model since 2016. Finland's UNICEF has granted the city of Oulu the status of Child-Friendly City twice, in December 2017 and February 2020. The latest status was granted in March 2024 and will be valid for four years.

UNICEF's Child-Friendly City operations model is based on the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child and is built on four key pillars:

1. Non-discrimination and equality
2. Priority of children's benefit
3. Right to life and development
4. Respect of children's views

The operations model helps municipalities to make correct choices considering children's rights in children's everyday services, municipal administration and decision-making. With the help of the model, the municipality strives to promote the rights of children above all.

The promotion of open government concerns children as well and is why this plan is important for them as well: the duty of open government is to increase child-friendliness, i.e., the children's equal opportunity to participate and receive information. People of different ages must be considered as widely as possible.

### Human-focused development of customer services

Development starts with the needs of people which means that people are the focus, and services are built around people. The citizens wish for services nearby, easily and digitally 24/7, but also traditionally, face-to-face.

The multi-provider model of services requires united guidance for citizens. Examples of this are the Oulu10 services. Guidance must be provided from many channels, digitally and face-to-face. Guidance for citizens is developed in, among other things, with a life and event focus while considering the needs of special groups. Customer service is developed in network cooperation with different organizations: for example, the wellbeing services county, other cities, Kela, ministries, businesses and universities. We include citizens, organizations and businesses by arranging shared events in Oulu10 for example.

Digital services are developed with a human focus. The OuluBot is developed to be more competent for general guidance for citizens and to map out the needs and ideas of citizens by utilizing, for example, artificial intelligence. Citizens are supported in the use of digital services by offering digital support in, for example, Oulu10 and libraries. We will compile a webpage about digital support as a part of the city's website where citizens will find information about operators offering digital support.

Communications will be reinforced by more active communication about guidance services and service experiences of citizens. The success of guidance services is evaluated by, for example, customer satisfaction surveys. The service experiences of digital services will be collected with the Suomi.fi quality tool among other things.

### Business-friendliness is continued development of services

Oulu's business-friendliness is, according to the City Strategy, continued development of business services and improving customer services as well as the capability to anticipate and react to the needs of businesses better. Business services are offered by BusinessAsema with the principle of ease of access. Services are developed with a customer focus and interaction between businesses is promoted in multiple ways. The continued development of the economic structure makes it possible for diverse lines of business and businesses of different life cycle stages to exist. The cooperation between Employment Services, businesses and regional educational organizations promotes the availability of competent workforce for the needs of businesses.

Due to the TE24 reform, TE Services will be transferred to municipalities starting from January 1, 2025. The goal of the reform is a service structure which promotes the fast employment of jobseekers in the best possible way as well as increases the productivity, efficiency, diversity and equal availability of employment and economic development services. Simultaneously, integration legislation and legislation on shared services promoting employment will be reformed.

The TE24 reform considers the means and channels of offering services from the customer's perspective. The goal is to build customers a service path that is as seamless as possible. There are multiple operators on the path and their cooperation and shared development are of primary importance. The customers (jobseekers/citizens, employers) and interest groups participate in the preparation.

# Goals and Measures of the Action Plan

The goals and measures of the Open Government Action Plan are listed below. These make the realization of the goals possible. In order to achieve the goals, training courses on the Open Government focus areas will be arranged during the years 2024–27 as a part of the city's central training plan. The goals and measures concern all sectors of the city of Oulu.

## **1. The administration's texts, services and reforms are clear and comprehensible. We communicate openly and take our target groups into account.**

- We increase the use of plain language in the city's communications and organize training courses for city personnel and produce instructions on non-discriminatory language.
- We communicate appropriately, plainly and comprehensibly and avoid official language.
- We train the city's administration and councilors on the use of social media.
- We consider the diversity of citizens in communications.
- Interaction between the city and citizens is important and we strive to continually create new opportunities for it.
- We will respond to the questions of citizens and maintain discussion in the city of Oulu's communication channels.

## **2. Experiences of trust are a central goal in the evaluation of openness of information and decision-making. We act as a responsible partner with different operators, including digital services.**

- We increase our personnel's awareness and understanding of the utilization of artificial intelligence.
- We implement the open data instructions and legislation as well as develop practices of open data.
- We regularly review the experiences of organizations on the city of Oulu's Open Government focus areas.
- We act responsibly and utilize scientific facts and given feedback in the evaluation of services.
- Personnel training is part of the development of Open Government.

### **3. We ensure accessible participation in our services, facilities, events and meetings. We implement digital services and websites available and we acknowledge the need for digital support.**

- The services produced by the city of Oulu are high-quality and we consider the digital service legislation and accessibility and availability directives.
- We increase our personnel's awareness of accessibility and availability.
- We nominate an Accessibility Specialist at the city of Oulu.
- We will compile an Accessibility Programme by 2027.
- We consider the opportunities brought by technology and the development of accessibility, for example, by maintaining feature information of built environments.
- We utilize the competence of experts by experience in the design of services.
- We coordinate digital support and, for example, compile a Digital Support webpage.

### **4. We act and plan with a humane focus by taking the needs of different citizens and businesses and other interest groups into account. Participation is a part of the development of services.**

- We make sure that citizens get to influence decision-making regarding them at the outset.
- We utilize the competence of the Councils and the Youth Council ONE in the city's development and we consider other interest groups and people with experiential expertise.
- We develop the cooperation between the city and businesses by promoting interaction with businesses and by offering customer-centered and easily available business services for different needs. We build a business-friendly Oulu with diverse measures.
- We establish the regional Civil Society Academy as a part of regular cooperation with different operators.
- We consider children and young people in the design of the municipality's services and decision-making according to the goals and measures set by the UNICEF Child-Friendly City Action Plan.
- We organize shared events with citizens, organizations and different parties.
- We develop guidance for citizens in cooperation with, for example, Pohde and Employment and Economic Development Services.
- We evaluate service experiences with customer satisfaction surveys, feedback services and the Suomi.fi quality tool among other things.
- We participate in human-focused life event development together with Kela and the cities of Turku and Tampere.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The city of Oulu's Open Government Action Plan and its measures for the years 2024-2027 are approved by the City Board. The implementation of the goals and measures will be reported to the City Board in 2025 and 2027.

The measures that are set to support the implementation of the goals will be updated, evaluated and monitored by focus areas. The people in charge of reporting on the measures are the Open Government Specialist Work Group's members. They are responsible for the implementation for sector-specific executive teams.

Other programmes and plans will be utilized in the monitoring and evaluation, such as the Oulu City Strategy, Business-Friendly Oulu – Economic Policy Development Plan, Wellbeing Plan, Operational Equality and Non-Discrimination Plan, Participation and Interaction Plan and Data Strategy.



## How the Plan was Compiled

The Mayor appointed a work group, which consists of representatives of different city sectors, to update the Open Government Action Plan.

### Work Group

- Spokesperson: Ari Heikkinen, Central Administration
- Specialist Secretary and Preparer: Merja Niemelä, Central Administration
- Educational and Cultural Services: Anne Kerälä
- Central Administration: Minna Parkkila, Anna Hoppari and Tiia-Maria Juuso
- Urban and Environmental Services: Ville Kauppi and Mervi Juppi
- BusinessOulu: Johanna Holma
- Central Administration Intern (Fall 2023): Lotta Ojala

A survey about open governance to support the Open Government Action Plan was held to the city of Oulu personnel and organizations and associations operating in the city of Oulu in the fall of 2023. The development ideas and feedback that came up in the survey were utilized in the Plan's goals and measures. Multiple different specialists were utilized in designing the Plan's focus areas. Additionally, statements were requested from the city's sectors and a statement opportunity was provided through a statement service. All statements have been processed in the Open Government Work Group and the development suggestions given in the statements have been applied in the Plan's contents, goals and measures.

## Sources

[Open Government Action Plan](#)

[Open Government Strategy 2030 \(avoinhallinto.fi\)](#)  
(in Finnish)

[The European Accessibility Act](#)

[Acquisition Programme 2024-28](#)  
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[Corruption Prevention in Municipal Administration: Steps towards good governance \(valtioneuvosto.fi\)](#)  
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[Offering Digital Services Legislation](#)  
(in Finnish)

[Child-Friendly City on the City of Oulu Website](#)

[City of Oulu's Operational Equality and Non-Discrimination Plan for 2022-2026](#)

[Participation and Interaction Plan 2023-2026](#)

[Yhdessä kotoutuva Oulu – Integration Programme 2022-2025](#)  
(in Finnish)

[Business-Friendly Oulu – Economic Policy Development Programme 2022-27](#)  
(in Finnish)

