The increasing amount of electronic data collected across ministries at the Government of Ontario requires data analytics to extract information to inform policy decisions. Sharing raw government data internally and to external institutions creates opportunities for collaboration. The purpose of this investigation was to explore the definition of data analytics within a government context, understand current internal research progress, and engage academics regarding data collaboration. Based on the results of surveys, focus groups, and interviews, several next step considerations emerged for the Government of Ontario: creating research social networks that include government, academics, and other external researchers; encouraging government policy analysts to use open academic journal data bases; opening raw government data sets and reports to external institutions; developing an ethics framework at the government that aligns with the Tri-Council Policy Statement; and clarifying research priorities at the government to create a formalized process to engage the academic community.

Opening raw data and moving research from the laboratory to the community can be an enriching experience. It adds context to academic research and provides the opportunity to apply results to practical issues. Research collaboration improves access to resources for government policy analysts and academic researchers, thus resulting in more sophisticated policy outcomes directly benefitting the community.