



Press Release

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Revised Plans Raise the Bar on Open Government: Agencies Respond to Feedback

Washington, DC— An updated ranking of agencies' Open Government Plans compiled during an independent [audit](#) reveals that 10 agencies joined the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the list of strongest plans, due to new plan versions created since the initial releases on April 7. The updated plans also decrease the wide variation in the strength of plans [noted](#) earlier this year. The response by so many agencies is very encouraging and truly in the spirit of the Open Government Directive.

The Obama administration's December 8, 2009, Open Government Directive (OGD) required executive agencies to develop and post Open Government Plans by April 7, 2010. This deadline was met, but an independent audit—organized by OpenTheGovernment.org and conducted by volunteers from nonprofit groups, academia, and other organizations that serve the public interest who have experience working with the agencies and evaluating information policies—found that many of the original Open Government Plans produced by the agencies failed to fulfill the basic requirements outlined in the OGD. The initial results of the audit did not include evaluations of the plans produced by several agencies that were not required to do so by the Obama Administration. Other entities also produced open government plans, but they did not have enough substance to fully evaluate the plans. OpenTheGovernment.org and the evaluators provided each agency with feedback from the evaluations, and committed to re-evaluating any plan that was updated by a June 25 deadline.

Twenty-three of 39 federal agencies evaluated during the audit issued revised plans by the June deadline. The revised plans were assessed using the same evaluation form as was used in the original audit. These forms rate the extent to which agencies meet the administration's standards as spelled out in the OGD and provide bonus points for exceeding the requirements.

Although not all agencies with the strongest plans meet all of the OGD requirements, almost a dozen agencies produced plans that serve as models by going beyond the OGD requirements in important ways. **Health and Human Services (HHS), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Department of Transportation (DOT)**, for example, should be particularly applauded for fully meeting all of the OGD requirements, and earning bonus points. Other agencies, such as the Department of Energy, continued to revise their plans after the June deadline for re-evaluation.

The lowest scores went to agencies that have not updated their plans since their initial publication. According to **Patrice McDermott, Director of OpenTheGovernment.org**, "Clearly, the race to the top is on. Agencies have improved their plans by responding to feedback from the Administration, and from the public and committing resources toward this initiative. We look forward to continuing to build on this momentum as we look at implementation of open government."

The coalition views the plans and the audits as the beginning first steps of an ongoing process to make government more transparent, participatory, and collaborative, and applauds agencies for continuing to work to improve and strengthen the plans. Currently, the coalition and their evaluators are developing metrics to evaluate how agencies are implementing open government. While OpenTheGovernment.org and our collaborators do not intend to re-evaluate plans in the future, almost all agencies are still accepting public feedback on the proposals. We encourage you to visit the agencies' "/open" pages to participate.

For a full updated list of how the agencies' plans rank, click here: <http://bit.ly/NewOGovRank>
For the full results of the audit and links to agency evaluations, click here: <http://bit.ly/OGovEvals>

Evaluators: American Association of Law Libraries, American Library Association, Center for Democracy and Technology, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, OMB Watch, OpenTheGovernment.org, Project on Government Oversight, Union of Concerned Scientists, faculty and students at the University of Maryland College of Information Studies, and volunteers, Nick Keune, Giovanni Piazza, Ted Smith, and Charlotte Yee.

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OpenTheGovernment.org is a coalition transcending party lines of more than 65 consumer and good government groups, librarians, environmentalists, labor, journalists, and others - focused on pushing back governmental secrecy and promoting openness.