

Openness Floor

4/30/2010 Version

We believe there are core items that all agencies should be disclosing to ensure consistent transparency, accountability, and informed participation across the government. The Open Government Plans should serve as agency tools for going beyond these core items to build transparency, collaboration and participation that meet the specific needs of the agency, as well as reflect how to implement these standards in ways consistent with the mission of the agency. The items below comprise a detailed “openness floor” comprised of key elements for disclosure and standard activities in participation. Like all matters related to government openness, this floor should evolve over time.

Accountability & Influence

- List of employees and how to reach them; a collaborative and participatory government requires that citizens be able to contact employees concerning specific matters at each agency.
- Visitor logs for each of the agency’s decision-makers should be made public in timely (every 3 months at a minimum) fashion; the public has a right to know with whom agencies are consulting. If the agency is not currently keeping such records, the agency should have a system in place to both store and make public visitor logs within three months.
- Communications between the agency and Congress, including responses to inquiries, testimony before committees, reports mandated by Congress, etc.
- A list of all Inspector General reports, with online access to all unclassified reports.
- Calendars, correspondence logs, and ethics disclosure of top-level agency officials (e.g., the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and Assistant Secretary).

Spending

- Information about agency spending: who gets how much money, performance information about contractors, lobbying information about contractors, and audits.
- Contract and award documents include Requests for Proposals, Contracts, Task Orders, Contract Modifications, etc.
- Disclosure of contacts by the public to influence spending or financial awards.

Records and Data

- A list of all FOIA requests and any documents released as a result of a FOIA request must be posted to the web in an organized, searchable manner, on a timely basis.
- Audit of agency data sets with a public listing and metadata and, at a minimum, online publication of the data dictionary for each database.
- Comprehensive, well-maintained, and searchable archive of documents, including those that have been removed from the website.

Policies

- Records retention policy along with records schedules (GRS or SF 115) and a schedule of records that will be declassified and the timetable for such action.

- Public policies that make clear agency scientists' and researchers' right to publish results without requiring policy review or approval by government officials.
- Written and publicly available policies explaining how agency staff should communicate with the public and the media, and detailing the official procedures for peer review, clearance and release of agency information.
- Strong whistleblower protections that guarantee employees that disclose information about waste, fraud, abuse, mismanagement and other accountability issues will not be retaliated against.
- Scientific integrity policies that prevent political interference in the development of scientific research.

Participation

- Employee incentives (e.g., budget, professional recognition; criteria for professional advancement)
- Employee training
- Inventory of tools and techniques and evaluation of such tools and techniques; how to balance face-to-face and online practices
- Evaluation of participation practices (e.g., how many people participated; diversity; how participants felt about their engagement)
- Explanation of how the participation process will be used in agency decision-making and a description of how it was used
- Programs to build capacity of national, state and local groups to better engage the public in agency efforts