



THE OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP

SECOND OPEN GOVERNMENT NATIONAL
ACTION PLAN FOR THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA: A PREVIEW REPORT

October 31, 2013

Introduction

Throughout his Administration, President Barack Obama has prioritized making government more open and accountable and has taken substantial steps to increase citizen participation, collaboration, and transparency in government.

At the inaugural Open Government Partnership (OGP) meeting on September 20, 2011, the President reiterated his belief “that the strongest foundation for human progress lies in open economies, open societies, and in open governments.” The United States has worked both domestically and internationally to ensure global support for Open Government principles to promote transparency, to fight corruption, to energize civic engagement, and to leverage new technologies in order to strengthen the foundations of freedom in our own Nation.

In support of these principles, the Administration launched the first [U.S. Open Government National Action Plan](#) (“NAP”) in 2011, a set of 26 commitments that have increased public integrity, enhanced public access to information, improved management of public resources, and given the public a more active voice in the U.S. Government’s policymaking process. Of the initial commitments, 24 have been [completed](#) and the Administration continues to work on completing the rest. A notable example of the progress made since the release of the first NAP is the successful launch of *We the People*, the White House petitions platform that gives Americans a direct line to voice their concerns to the Administration via online petitions. In two years, more than 10.35 million users have generated more than 270,000 petitions on a diverse range of topics, including gun violence, which received a video response from the President, and unlocking cell phones, which led directly to policy action.

Building upon these efforts to create a more efficient, effective, and accountable government, the Administration will issue the second Open Government National Action Plan for the United States of America in the coming weeks. The new plan will include a wide range of actions the Administration plans to take over the next two years, including commitments that build upon past successes, as well as several new initiatives. Among these are ambitious new commitments to modernize the administration of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and to significantly expand Open Data initiatives across the Federal government to increase transparency and fuel entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic growth.

This report provides an overview of new Open Data and FOIA modernization commitments, as well as highlights of additional proposals that the Administration plans to announce in greater detail in the second NAP, which will be released in December 2013.

In finalizing the second NAP, the Federal Government will continue to work with the general public, a broad range of civil society groups, and the private sector to refine the commitments highlighted in this document and to share new commitments to build a more open, transparent, and participatory United States Government. In developing the second NAP, Administration policymakers have also sought input from the public via a blog post and other interactive online platforms, requesting ideas about how to focus efforts to continue to build a Government that is more open and accountable.

Opening Data to the Public

Open Data fuels innovation that grows the economy and advances government transparency and accountability. Government data has been used by journalists to uncover variations in hospital billings, by citizens to learn more about the social services provided by charities in their communities, and by entrepreneurs building new software tools to help farmers plan and manage their crops. Building upon the successful implementation of open data commitments in the first NAP, the second NAP will include commitments to make government data more accessible and useful for the public. Through these commitments, the United States will:

1. Manage Government Data as a Strategic Asset

In an effort to make U.S. Government data more accessible and useful, Federal agencies will develop an inventory of their data and publish a list of datasets that are public or can be made public. Agencies will also develop new mechanisms to solicit public feedback regarding open government data.

2. Launch an Improved Data.gov

Data.gov allows the public to easily find, download, and use data collected or created by the Federal Government. The United States will launch a new version of Data.gov to make it even easier to discover, understand, and use open government data. The new Data.gov will index all Federal agency datasets in one easy-to-use catalog. This new site will help developers, researchers, journalists, and other stakeholders find data and will also help the public more easily find tools and resources to access government services.

3. Open Agriculture and Nutrition Data

Global development, agriculture, and health have been a key focus of the Administration's Open Data Initiatives. To expand these efforts internationally, the United States, in partnership with the United Kingdom, established the Global Open Data on Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN). GODAN aims to increase the quality, quantity, and timeliness of available data to support agriculture and nutrition efforts — as well as to increase the number and diversity of stakeholders who are applying data-based solutions to improve agriculture and nutrition. This initiative will support public and private global efforts to make agriculture and nutrition data more available and easier to access. The United States will create an interagency group that will promote open data efforts in the public and private sectors and encourage new efforts to release agriculture and nutrition data.

4. Open Disaster-Related Data to Support Prevention and Recovery Efforts

Government data is used to help first responders and survivors make better-informed decisions during the chaos of a disaster. Expanding the amount of disaster-related open government data will increase awareness of the effects of natural disasters and improve disaster relief and recovery efforts. FEMA, through its OpenFEMA initiative, will release new disaster-related data in a machine-readable format and host brainstorming sessions to build tools that support first responders, survivors, and impacted communities.

Modernizing the Freedom of Information Act to Better Serve the Public

On his first full day in office, President Obama issued a [memorandum directing a presumption of openness](#) be used by Federal agencies in responding to FOIA requests. The Obama Administration has already made important progress to improve the FOIA process by simplifying the process of filing requests at many agencies, by proactively disclosing information in the public interest in advance of requests, by speeding up processing times, by greatly reducing FOIA backlogs, and by publishing more data on FOIA compliance.

There is still much more that the Administration can do to improve the FOIA process. The United States is committed to further modernizing FOIA processes through the following initiatives:

1. Improve the Customer Experience through a Consolidated Online FOIA Service

More than 100 Federal agencies are subject to FOIA. For the average requester, this can mean significant energy spent searching for the right agency and navigating its website to figure out the unique process for submitting a request to that agency. The Administration will launch a consolidated request portal that allows the public to submit a request to any Federal agency from a single site and includes additional tools to improve the customer experience. The United States will establish a task force to review current practices, seek public input, and determine the best way to implement this consolidated FOIA service.

2. Develop Common FOIA Regulations and Practices for Federal Agencies

Certain steps in the FOIA process are generally shared across Federal agencies. Standardizing these common aspects through a core FOIA regulation and common set of practices will make it easier for requesters to understand and navigate the FOIA process and easier for the government to keep regulations up to date. The Administration will initiate an interagency process to determine the feasibility and the potential content of a core FOIA regulation that is both applicable to all agencies and retains flexibility for agency-specific requirements.

3. Improve Internal Agency FOIA Processes

Over the past few years, several agencies have analyzed existing FOIA practices and used this information to make dramatic improvements in their backlogs and processing times, as well as to increase the proactive release of information in the public interest. The U.S. Government will scale these targeted efforts to improve the efficiency of agencies with the biggest backlogs, and to share broadly the lessons learned and strategies to further improve internal agency FOIA processes.

4. Establish a FOIA Modernization Advisory Committee

Improvements to FOIA administration must take into account the views and interests of both requesters and the Government. The United States will therefore establish a formal FOIA Advisory Committee, comprised of government and non-governmental members of the FOIA community, to foster dialog between the Administration and requester community, solicit public comments, and develop consensus recommendations for improving FOIA administration and proactive disclosures.

5. Improve FOIA Training Across Government to Increase Efficiency

In order to efficiently and effectively respond to FOIA requests, every Federal employee — not just those in an agency's FOIA office — should fully understand the FOIA process. The Administration will make standard e-learning training resources available for FOIA professionals and other Federal employees and encourage their use.

Managing Natural Resources

Two years ago, at the launch of the OGP, President Obama announced the U.S. commitment to implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), an international standard aimed at increasing transparency and accountability in the payments that companies make and the revenues that governments receive for their natural resources. The United States has actively worked toward increasing revenue transparency and accountability in relevant industry sectors, ensuring that American taxpayers receive every dollar due for the extraction of the Nation's natural resources.

The United States continues to work toward EITI candidacy, including by seeking public comment and feedback on the Federal Government's candidacy application. The Administration intends to publish the first U.S. EITI report in 2015 and to achieve EITI compliance in 2016. The United States plans to expand on this commitment in the second NAP and will issue commitments to:

- Disclose additional revenues on geothermal and renewable energy;
- Unilaterally disclose all payments received by the U.S. Department of Interior;
- Convene a process to discuss future disclosure of timber revenues; and
- Promote the development of innovative open data tools that make extractive data more meaningful for and accessible to the American people.

In an effort to increase transparency and accountability, the United States will also begin to publish annual reports on U.S. Government spending on fossil fuel subsidies and will share this information with the Group of 20 (G-20) and other relevant international bodies.

Creating Safer Communities

Improving the safety of Americans in communities across the country continues to be a top priority for the Obama Administration. As part of a commitment in the first NAP, the United States launched the Public Safety Data Initiative, the largest multi-agency open data initiative in the Federal Government. Agencies including the Department of Transportation, Department of Justice, Department of Labor, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission have hosted workshops; launched challenges to encourage innovative uses of the data; and released datasets addressing transportation safety, law officer safety, disaster response and recovery, survivor support, worker safety, and product recall information. The second NAP will include commitments to:

- Identify and release additional disaster-related data;

- Harness the power of innovation to improve emergency management and preparedness; and
- Continue working to combat human trafficking through an initiative that pairs civil society groups with technologists to design innovative technology solutions.

Fiscal Transparency

The Administration's efforts to increase transparency in Federal spending have opened up new data on Federal procurement and financial assistance. The Administration intends to further increase the transparency of where Federal tax dollars are spent by committing to:

- Engage a wide range of stakeholders and users of Federal spending data to determine how best to improve the user experience of USASpending.gov;
- Make Federal spending data more easily available in open and machine-readable formats;
- Facilitate the publication of key Federal Government contract information not currently available; and
- Enable Americans to more easily identify who is receiving tax dollars, where those entities or individuals are located, and how much they receive.

Corporate Transparency

Enhanced transparency of legal entities formed in the United States will help prevent criminal organizations from abusing legal entities to obscure the true ownership and control of the businesses they operate, help address tax avoidance, and also help developing countries combat corruption. To promote transparency in company ownership, the second NAP will include commitments to:

- Continue to advocate for legislation that will require the disclosure of meaningful beneficial ownership information for corporations at the time of company formation; and
- Promulgate an explicit customer due diligence obligation for U.S. financial institutions. The Administration will work to enact a requirement for U.S. financial institutions to identify beneficial owners of customers who are legal entities.

Market Transparency

The Administration's ongoing advocacy for corporate and market transparency has already led to increased consumer protections for hardworking Americans. A clear example is the work underway at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) to protect consumers from potentially predatory practices. The CFPB launched "[Know Before You Owe](#)"—an initiative to crowdsource and redesign mortgage disclosure forms so that costs and risks are clear rather than buried in fine print. The Consumer Product Safety Commission released SaferProducts.gov which enables consumers to report unsafe products and search for other consumer product complaints. In addition, the Department of Transportation recently launched a similar tool for vehicle safety complaints, publicly releasing volumes of consumer complaint data.

Building upon these efforts, in the second NAP, the United States will commit to:

- Improve transparency of consumer-product-safety information, using collaborative social media, crowdsourcing, and analytics tools to create a real-time dashboard showing performance and safety issues for certain consumer products.

Empowering Citizens and Fostering Open Innovation

Creating a more Open Government and addressing our Nation's most challenging issues requires an informed and active citizenry. Citizens are critical to economic development in the global economy, where trade and investment flow to countries protected by the rule of law that gives citizens the freedom to create and develop new ideas. The United States will continue to expand opportunities for public participation in government, recognizing the value of the American public as a strategic partner in addressing some of the country's most pressing challenges. The second NAP will include U.S. commitments to:

- Harness the ingenuity of the public by enabling, accelerating, and scaling the use of open innovation methods such as incentive prizes, crowdsourcing, and citizen science within the Federal Government;
- Expand opportunities for public participation in the development of agency regulations; and
- Launch pilot collaborative public-private platforms to help monitor performance and safety issues for consumer products.

Conclusion

The Obama Administration remains fully committed to building a 21st-Century Open Government and fundamentally improving the relationship between citizens and government, as demonstrated by the significant progress made in the United States' first two years as a member of the Open Government Partnership. In the weeks ahead, the U.S. Government will continue to work with partners in government as well as the public and civil society to finalize and issue the second NAP. The United States will create and refine commitments highlighted in this document and identify new commitments to build toward a more open, transparent, and participatory United States Government.