

# U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Open Government Plan 2.0



# Open Government Plan 2.0



## Table of Contents

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Table of Contents .....	i
I. Introduction and Background .....	1
II. Progress and Accomplishments to Date.....	1
A. Community Engagement Flagship.....	1
1. Expanding the Environmental Conversation with Communities .....	1
2. Expanding Public Awareness & Involvement in Developing Rules & Regulations .....	2
3. EPA Mobile Apps to Empower Citizen’s Environmental Decisions.....	2
B. Additional Commitments.....	2
III. Evolving and New Areas of Emphasis.....	2
A. Stakeholder Involvement in OpenGov Plan .....	2
B. OpenGov Plan 2.0 Flagship and Other Efforts.....	3
1. Expanding Public Participation in Developing Regulations .....	3
2. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Module (Flagship).....	4
3. Science-Based Decision Support Tools.....	5
4. Data-Focused Efforts and the Strategic Data Action Plan (SDAP).....	6
IV. Conclusion .....	7
Appendix A: OpenGov Plan 1.0 Milestones .....	A-1
Appendix B: Milestones OpenGov Plan 2.0 Featured Projects.....	B-1
Appendix C: Links to Some of EPA’s Major Reports, Plans, and Resources Related to OpenGov.....	C-1

# Open Government Plan 2.0



## I. Introduction and Background

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The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is pleased to present the EPA Open Government Plan 2.0. We developed our initial plan in April 2010 in response to the Administration's Open Government Directive (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/open/documents/open-government-directive>), and this updated plan provides access to our progress and a roadmap of our continuing efforts and new areas of focus. The body of our work supports the tenets of open government – transparency, participation and collaboration, and upholds EPA's mission "to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment – air, water and land – upon which life depends."

Since the development of our OpenGov 1.0 Plan, EPA's leadership committed the Agency to working as "One EPA" both in how EPA employees work together and in how EPA works with and presents itself to the American people. Through the Agency's OpenGov Plan 2.0, we recognize that the Administration's and EPA's commitment to transparency and open government are mutually reinforced by our commitment to One EPA's principle of "Alignment," in which we've committed to "develop a shared understanding of problems and synchronize our efforts to implement solutions all can support." In this OpenGov Plan 2.0 and our updated Strategic Data Action Plan (SDAP), we strive to create even closer alignments between the One EPA and OpenGov efforts.

## II. Progress and Accomplishments to Date

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Since the Open Government Directive was issued on December 8, 2009, EPA has taken many steps to support open government efforts. The Agency's OpenGov Plan 1.0 contained a broad spectrum of commitments intended to advance the principles and objectives of the OpenGov Directive throughout the Agency. Examples of these and other activities across EPA offices and regions are included in our quarterly progress reports, which can be found at [www.epa.gov/open](http://www.epa.gov/open). The quarterly progress reports also provide a status on the progress of individual flagship efforts that are part of the Community Engagement Flagship.

### A. Community Engagement Flagship

Our Community Engagement Flagship efforts are of particular importance to the Agency. The status of each individual effort, grouped into three themes, is provided below, with details of these flagships available in the most recent OpenGov Quarterly update at [www.epa.gov/open/progress.html](http://www.epa.gov/open/progress.html).

#### 1. Expanding the Environmental Conversation with Communities

- Urban Waters (Completed)
- Improve Communication of Sampling and Testing Results (Ongoing)
- Improve Delivery of Information to Communities (Ongoing)

# Open Government Plan 2.0



- Faces of the Grassroots (Completed)

## 2. Expanding Public Awareness & Involvement in Developing Rules & Regulations

- Chesapeake Bay TMDL Webinar Series (Completed)
- Healthy Waters (Completed)
- NPDES Pre-proposal Involvement (Completed)
- Rulemaking Gateway (Completed)

## 3. EPA Mobile Apps to Empower Citizen's Environmental Decisions

- Apps for the Environment Challenge (Completed)
- EPA's Mobile efforts (Ongoing)

Recently, the Deputy Administrator initiated a review of how community based efforts are coordinated across the Agency. The report on this review is due soon, and we will share key initiatives that come out of this review as appropriate.

## B. Additional Commitments

Additional commitments set in EPA's OpenGov Plan 1.0 are summarized in Appendix A.

## III. Evolving and New Areas of Emphasis

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EPA's approach in identifying new areas of emphasis was guided by government-wide and global open government efforts as described in the following two White House documents:

- [The Obama Administration's Commitment to Open Government: A Status Report](#), dated September 16, 2011
- [The Open Government Partnership: National Action Plan for the United States of America](#), dated September 20, 2011

The status report takes stock of open government noting many of the successes to that point. The National Action Plan (NAP) describes the United States' efforts in support of President Obama's commitment to increase openness on a global basis – the Open Government Partnership – by identifying a number of commitments we are making domestically that support OpenGov and global advances in transparency and public participation.

These two documents heavily influenced the selection of the flagship and key efforts that are being included in the Agency's OpenGov plan 2.0.

## A. Stakeholder Involvement in OpenGov Plan

In developing our initial plan, we reached out to the public and other stakeholders via a variety of methods including the Greenversations blog, IdeaScale, and outreach meetings with groups such as OpenTheGovernment.org. We continued our dialog with stakeholders over the past

# Open Government Plan 2.0



two years as our plan and initiatives have evolved. In developing our revised OpenGov Plan we met with a number of external organizations including America Speaks, OpenTheGov, OMB Watch, and SunshineInTheGov to help assess where EPA is investing in OpenGov related efforts.

## B. OpenGov Plan 2.0 Flagship and Other Efforts

The Administration directed agencies to include at least four new OpenGov efforts in their 2.0 plans that span 2012 to 2014. In determining where to focus, EPA decided to select projects that continue advancement in OpenGov and promote alignment with the OneEPA focus. In addition to the new efforts that meet the Administration's request, we will continue to provide opportunities to report and promote OpenGov and OneEPA efforts in our quarterly progress reports. The Agency's four new OpenGov efforts are:

### 1. Expanding Public Participation in Developing Regulations

EPA serves as the eRulemaking Program Management Office, which manages Regulations.gov – a Federal-wide E-Gov and Open Government program. Regulations.gov was created to provide public access to and participation in the Federal regulatory process. Thirty-nine partner departments and agencies, representing more than 90% of the Federal regulations issued each year, use the system to receive public comments on all regulations as well as to upload regulatory information.

In addition, members of the public can search for regulatory information (i.e., analytical data) and submit comments on regulations or other comments. Today, visitors can search for regulations and quickly access those newly posted or with comment periods closing soon directly from the home page.

In the future, the program plans to continue a series of big improvements to Regulations.gov under guidance from Section 2 of Executive Order 13563. The order charges the program and partner agencies to afford “the public a meaningful opportunity to comment through the Internet on any proposed regulation” and to base regulations on “the open exchange of information and perspectives” among affected stakeholders, including the public as a whole.

In response, the program will share data, improve usability, leverage social media, and provide more opportunities to educate about the regulatory process. Subsequent improvements throughout 2012 include enhanced commenting mechanisms, search functions, docket folders, document pages, and other new features to facilitate public participation in rulemaking.

Specifically:

- Overhaul Regulations.gov completely – to include a new look and feel, more intuitive navigation, more accurate search results, and richer tools for assessing regulatory data and public comments
- Develop Application Programming Interface (APIs) – to allow other government and non-government sites to repackage and incorporate eRulemaking data into their sites and applications – broadening the reach and impact of the data and participation platform

# Open Government Plan 2.0



- Change the Federal Docket Management System – to include new agency tools to more efficiently manage input from the public and deliver it directly to federal policy makers
- Employ social media and partnerships with other agency and non-governmental organizations – to improve outreach, public awareness, and public participation in the regulatory process

This effort supports:

- EPA’s Customer Service Plan, December 2011
- The US Open Government Partnership National Action Plan (NAP) “Expand Public Participation in the Development of Regulations” initiative, September 20, 2011

## **2. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Module (Flagship)**

The effective functioning of our constitutional democracy depends upon a public that is well informed and participates in government and for a government to be accountable to the public it serves. In 1966 the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. § 552) was passed so that the public could obtain records from any Federal agency, subject to the exemptions enacted by Congress. With the emergence of new technologies, the public and Federal agencies have an opportunity to improve access to government records with an automated tool that supports FOIA administration and allows the public to submit, track and review FOIA requests and responses.

EPA is partnering with the Department of Commerce and National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to develop a multi-agency FOIA module to increase transparency, reduce costs, and streamline back-end processing. The FOIA module will offer EPA substantial cost savings and enhanced capabilities over the Agency’s current solution while expanding public access by providing the ability to submit FOIA requests online, track the status of requests, and search for, view and download FOIA responsive records.

The FOIA module will enable the public, EPA and other agencies the ability to:

- Submit a FOIA request from a single portal to any participating agency
- Receive and process FOIA requests
- Store requests and responses in an electronic records repository (compliant with the DOD 5015.2 standard) for internal and external search, retrieval, and download of publically released responsive documents
- Prepare billing and customized invoices for charge backs to those who initiate FOIA requests
- Automatically generate the annual FOIA Report
- Support the referral, consultation and transfer of FOIA requests and responsive documents for all participating agencies

# Open Government Plan 2.0



This effort supports:

- The US Open Government Partnership National Action Plan (NAP) “Harness the Power of Technology” commitment within the “Continue to Improve Freedom of Information Act Administration” initiative, September 20, 2011
- Reducing duplication and eliminating redundancy (Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996)
- The November 28, 2011 Presidential Memorandum on “Managing Government Records”
- DRAFT “Federal Information Technology Shared Services Strategy: Shared First” to:
  - Expand Intra-Agency shared services for commodity IT
  - Leverage existing efforts to develop the next generation of Inter-Agency shared services
  - Drive shared services delivery through higher return-on-investment (ROI) investments

### 3. Science-Based Decision Support Tools

Community sustainability is often defined by the desire to meet today’s needs without compromising the quality of life for future generations. However, as communities are faced with real difficulty meeting “today’s needs,” making progress on sustainability often requires finding solutions that improve environmental conditions in both the short and long term. The challenge is to help identify the right mix of policies and investments that protect our shared environment, while improving public health, supporting economic recovery, making the most efficient use of public dollars, and enhancing the quality of life for a broad range of residents.

EPA scientists are partnering with Agency community programs, American Indian tribal groups, and other Federal Agencies to design and refine Web-based decision support tools for improving access to relevant scientific information. The Agency’s [Sustainable and Healthy Communities Research Program](#) is developing a number of tools, and the following two specifically support OpenGov principles:

- [Community-Focused Exposure and Risk Screening Tool \(C-FERST\)](#), a community mapping and assessment tool which is being designed to facilitate local population-based cumulative exposure/risk assessments, and help identify and prioritize issues for risk ranking
- [Tribal-Focused Environmental Risk and Sustainability Tool \(Tribal-FERST\)](#) which will also incorporate information on unique considerations for assessing and fostering tribal well-being

C-FERST, Tribal-FERST, and other tools are being designed to be interoperable with each other and with other tools such as EPA’s Geoplatform. The Agency will develop and share individual examples of applying these tools and assessing their benefit and utility.

This research will provide communities with data, methods, and computer applications that can inform decision making and track progress made towards meeting community goals and improving sustainability.

# Open Government Plan 2.0



## 4. Data-Focused Efforts and the Strategic Data Action Plan (SDAP)

In the OpenGov Plan 1.0, we committed to developing a Strategic Data Action Plan (SDAP) to increase transparency and enhance our data publication efforts. The SDAP 1.0 helped us chart a course to more systematically provide improved access to EPA's data holdings for public and Agency uses, and to increase the understanding of this information. The SDAP established goals, guiding principles, and initial processes and procedures for more strategically managing our data. We also defined and set a schedule for actions to establish enterprise policy and governance mechanisms, in addition to improved methods for data management intended to expand and promote the use of EPA's publicly-available data.

EPA is committing to update the SDAP as one of the key activities in our OpenGov Plan 2.0. We are in the process of developing SDAP 2.0 to reflect progress achieved since initial SDAP publication. SDAP 2.0 will include improved data management and publication activities and support the Agency's commitment to OneEPA. Our evolving focus is on better management of one common set of information and data. SDAP 2.0, expected to be released in Q4/2012, will provide an update on commitments made in SDAP 1.0 and address the following key areas:

- New and existing Data.gov communities and White House initiatives
  - Data.gov communities such as:
    - Ocean
    - Energy
    - Law
    - Health
    - OpenData
  - Current White House initiatives expected to include:
    - “Big data” (EPA includes unstructured data in this category)
    - Smart disclosure
- Data registration and description efforts
- Linked open data
- Improved access/providing more data to the public
- Forums for innovation and feedback
- The GeoPlatform (an integrated platform for geospatial data and services)



# Open Government Plan 2.0



## IV. Conclusion

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Implementing OpenGov afforded us the opportunity to reassess how we engage the public in carrying out EPA's mission. Since releasing our initial plan, the Agency received significant positive feedback on a range of outreach efforts including a webinar series and the Apps for the Environment Challenge. We are learning from and building upon these and other efforts that employ the use of proven technologies to connect with the public in new ways. The beneficial legacy of implementing OpenGov at EPA is a renewed focus on leveraging technology to effectively reach our stakeholders – with the goal of empowering the public with information and engaging them in our decision-making processes.

# Open Government Plan 2.0



## Appendix A: OpenGov Plan 1.0 Milestones

Category	Milestone	Due Date in OG Plan	Approach/Deliverable	Status
EPA's OG Plan	Identify and share lessons learned	2011/Q2 through 2012/Q2	Initially developed an internal Wiki to collect input for Agency Plan 1.0 and to post and share benefits and lessons learned; currently posting this information on the Open site so that it is useful outside EPA	Complete and ongoing
	Develop plan addendum	Optional 2011/Q2 through 2012/Q2	Update OpenGov plan per Administration direction and as needed	Complete; Quarterly updates provide new information
	Verify alignment with FY 2011-2015 EPA Strategic Plan	2011/Q4	Review for alignment; Updated OG Plan or Addendum as needed	Complete
	Publish OpenGov Plan V2.0	N/A	OpenGov Plan 2.0 published	Complete
Data Specific Activities	Define process to identify innovative uses of data	2010/Q4 to 2011/Q1	Developed internal procedures that promote bringing outside innovative uses of data to EPA's attention	Complete and ongoing; conducted Apps for the Environment Challenge and supporting developer resources
	Publish Strategic Data Action Plan (SDAP) V1.0	2011/Q2	Strategic Data Action Plan (SDAP) developed by SDAP Project Team	Completed and published 2011/Q2
	Make 5 new high-value data sets available	2011/Q3-Q4	Published more than 5 new data sets by the deadline	Complete and ongoing; Additions to Data.gov continuous
	Publish SDAP V2.0	N/A	Update SDAP to reflect advancements in each area, i.e. metadata capture and processing	In process and on track for completion 2012/Q4
	Expansion of Geodata Gateway (GDG) to accommodate non-geo data; creates Environmental Dataset Gateway (EDG)	N/A	Transition GDG to the Environmental Dataset Gateway (EDG), providing new functionality and processing capability for all types of datasets/tools	Complete and ongoing
	Data.gov Inventory V1.0	N/A	Create inventory of data assets on Data.gov that provides descriptive and other metadata	Complete
	Data.gov Inventory V2.0	N/A	Establish automated inventory from the EDG	Established test flow; anticipate production inventory to be available 2012/Q3
	Dashboard V1.0 (Internal)	N/A	Create an internal dashboard to assess progress in posting data publically	Complete
	Dashboard V2.0 (External)	N/A	Create an external facing dashboard to assess progress in posting data publically	Anticipate production dashboard to be available 2012/Q4
Governance	Establish/institutionalize sustainable governance structure	2010/Q3	Established a governance structure that includes a standing senior executive council for policy and resource implications, and an Agency-wide workgroup to develop direction, promote OpenGov principles, foster communication, and ensure commitments are met	Complete and ongoing
	Update OG performance metrics on www.epa.gov/open	2010/Q3 on	Develop measures for Flagships; measure and report on commitments in OpenGov Plan	Complete and ongoing
	Hold quarterly governance meetings	2010/Q4 on	EPA's OpenGov/SDAP Workgroup meets bi-weekly or monthly; QIC meets monthly; senior executive council schedule meets about every month	Complete and ongoing
Policy	Develop policy for maintenance of public engagement site	2010/Q3	Review existing policy; draft approach and incorporate into the first quarterly update	Complete
	Promote culture change by encouraging use of new media tools	2011/Q1	Review training procedures and update new policy	Complete and ongoing
	Data Policy	N/A	Establish policy on data management including good metadata management with emphasis on making data available to the public; include components of the SDAP with the goal of retiring the SDAP	Draft Data Policy being internally reviewed
	Linked Open Data Pilots	N/A	Pilot creation of linked open data (LOD), putting data in self-describing machine-readable form for automated discovery	Complete and ongoing

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# Open Government Plan 2.0



## (Continued) Appendix A: OpenGov Plan 1.0 Milestones

Category	Milestone	Due Date in OG Plan	Approach/Deliverable	Status
Communication	Analysis of public input	2010/Q3 on	Include summary statement in Quarterly report	Complete
	Maintain Open Government Website	Ongoing	Update website	Complete and ongoing
	OMB reporting	As needed	Self-Evaluation; Quarterly Report; Support for Annual White House Report	Complete and ongoing
	Employee Engagement Plan	2010/Q4 on	Employee Engagement Plan	Modified approach to work within OpenGov workgroup and follow program and professional network and internal collaborative efforts
	Post and maintain Web pages for flagship projects	2010/Q4 on	Provide additional level of detail for Flagship projects on a routine basis	Complete and ongoing
	Update performance measures	2011/Q2	Performance measures (post)	Complete and ongoing
	Flagship reporting	2010/Q3 and thereafter on a quarterly basis	Develop one page summary (link from Quarterly Report Summary) of Flagship status (by 3 themes) with links to individual project details	Complete and ongoing
	EPA website update effort (OneEPA Web)	Quarterly	Web site restructuring effort to more effectively deliver information	Complete and ongoing
Cross-Agency Transferability	Repository of Best Practices	N/A	Collected lessons learned for Flagship projects and posted to open webpage	Complete and ongoing
	Identify, monitor, and participate in cross agency activities	2011/Q2 through 2012/Q2	Partner with other Agencies on Challenges and other data efforts	Complete and ongoing
Flagship Initiative	FOIA Module	N/A	Develop a FOIA process solution to manage and publically share FOIA requests and responses; This is a multi-agency effort leveraging an existing platform; the first phase will be agency-facing; the next phase will have a public-facing view	Partnership developed between EPA, Department of Commerce and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); requirements validation complete; design and development in progress
	Identify Web 2.0 strategy and tools	2010/Q3	Identify and publish the Web 2.0 strategy	Complete
	3 new programs/projects use integrated Web 2.0 tools to engage the public	2010/Q3	Capture in Flagship summary--quarterly report	Complete
	Implement Web 2.0 strategy and tools	2010/Q4	Encourage use of Web 2.0 tools	Complete
	2 new outreach events held	2010/Q4	Conduct events	Complete
	1 new program/project using mobile application to support citizen environmental decisions	2011/Q1	Post detail in quarterly progress report and post to <a href="http://www.epa.gov/open">www.epa.gov/open</a>	Complete
	2 recommendations for new/revised policies/procedures that support Open Government	2011/Q2	Update in Quarterly Status Report; Review policies to support analysis and recommendations	Complete and ongoing
Identify Best Practices to share	2011/Q2 through 2012/Q2	Develop a Wiki; capture benefits and lessons learned from Flagships	Complete and ongoing	

# Open Government Plan 2.0



## Appendix B: Milestones OpenGov Plan 2.0 Featured Projects

Initiative and Related Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	FY2012				FY2013				FY2014			
<b>Expanding Public Participation in Developing Regs</b>												
•Overhaul Regs.gov	★	★	★	★								
•Develop APIs				★								
•Update Federal Docket Management System				★								
•Leverage Social Media and Partnership						★						
<b>FOIA Module</b>												
•Gather Agency Feedback	★	★										
•Test Module			★									
•Initial Release (Internal to Agencies)				★								
•Public-Facing Release					★							
<b>Science-Based Decision Support Tools</b>												
•Enhance C-FERST and Tribal-FERST		★	★	★								
•Release Case Study Report								★				
•Deploy to EPA Internet Website												★
<b>Strategic Data Action Plan (SDAP) 2.0</b>												
•Release SDAP 2.0				★								
•Implement SDAP 2.0 Activities					★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★

# Open Government Plan 2.0



## Appendix C: Links to Some of EPA's Major Reports, Plans, and Resources Related to OpenGov

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- Established EPA's Open page with full access to open government information and progress (visit [www.epa.gov/open](http://www.epa.gov/open))
- Created the Open Government Implementation Work Group, with agency-wide representation, to guide open government efforts; the work group charter can be found at ([http://www.epa.gov/open/OGIWG\\_Charter.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/open/OGIWG_Charter.pdf))
- Developed the initial EPA Open Gov Plan v1.0 in April 2010, updated as v1.1 in June 2010 ([http://www.epa.gov/open/EPAOpenGovernmentPlan\\_11.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/open/EPAOpenGovernmentPlan_11.pdf))
- Established the Data Quality Plan for financial information in May 2010 ([http://www.epa.gov/open/opengov\\_data\\_quality\\_plan.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/open/opengov_data_quality_plan.pdf))
- Created the Strategic Data Action Plan in March 2011 ([http://www.epa.gov/open/EPA\\_SDAP\\_V1.0.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/open/EPA_SDAP_V1.0.pdf)) that will be updated in April 2012
- Reported on the first year of Open Government accomplishments in April 2011 ([http://www.epa.gov/open/EPA\\_OpenGovPlan\\_YearOne\\_Assessment4-6-11.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/open/EPA_OpenGovPlan_YearOne_Assessment4-6-11.pdf))
- Developed a plan to improve public access to regulatory compliance information in May 2011 ([http://www.epa.gov/open/OG\\_Enf\\_Plan\\_05122011.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/open/OG_Enf_Plan_05122011.pdf))
- Established a plan for periodic retrospective reviews of existing regulations in August 2011 (<http://www.epa.gov/improvingregulations/documents/eparetroreviewplan-aug2011.pdf>)
- Developed a web improvement plan as part of the .gov Reform Initiative in October 2011 (<http://www.usa.gov/webreform/agency-plans/epa.pdf>)

To help the public and other reviewers monitor EPA's past and current progress in open government, we established a quarterly reporting process and report. Access to our quarterly reports since the OpenGov Plan was initiated can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/open/progress.html>. The Agency's comprehensive accomplishments and progress related to open government can be found by reviewing the full suite of progress reports.