

# Challenge.gov and the Paperwork Reduction Act.

The Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) requires agencies to follow a [clearance process](#) that helps ensure public reporting burdens are minimized and that the information collected is useful. In light of the PRA's flexibilities for certain types of citizen engagement, Challenge.gov is designed so that its use would not trigger the PRA's clearance process.

## Recent PRA Guidance

On April 7, 2010, the Office of Management and Budget issued guidance entitled [Social Media, Web-Based Interactive Technologies, and the Paperwork Reduction Act \(PDF\)](#). OMB subsequently determined that Challenge.gov, as designed, did not trigger PRA requirements under the new guidance. This finding is prompted by several key provisions of the PRA guidance:

- “Agencies are free to offer website users the option of creating user accounts or profiles. When doing so, agencies may request an email address, username, password, and geographic location (e.g., State, region, or ZIP code) for account registration. The collection of such self-identifying information is not subject to the PRA.”
- “Under the general solicitations exclusion, the PRA does not apply to...any general requests for comments ‘regardless of the form or format thereof.’ A general solicitation may have a degree of specificity...Similarly, agencies may offer the public opportunities to provide general comments on discussion topics through other means, including but not limited to social media websites; blogs; microblogs; audio, photo, or video sharing websites; or online message boards (whether hosted on a .gov domain or by a third-party provider).”
- “An agency might ask the general public for ideas for improving current practices under a statute that it administers, for potential solutions to a scientific, technological, social, or other problem, or for innovations (e.g., video and software applications) that might advance an agency’s mission. These general requests do not become subject to the PRA merely because they take the form of a contest, or because the agency announces that it will give a prize to the best submissions. It follows that, for example, essay or video contests that permit respondents to create their own submissions are not covered by the PRA if no additional information is collected for the contest beyond what is necessary to contact the entrants...[R]ankings, ratings, or votes submitted by website users to determine a winner are not ‘information’ subject to the PRA.”

These provisions mean that agencies do not need to secure an OMB clearance to use Challenge.gov in its basic state, **including** the platform’s registration, solution submission, public voting, and blog/discussion functionalities.

## When Might a PRA Clearance Be Needed?

Some customizations to individual challenges may require a PRA clearance from OMB. For example, any customization that collects more demographic information from more than 10 challenge entrants, finalists, winners, or their parent/legal guardian than what is strictly needed to participate in the contest. Agencies are strongly encouraged to consult their PRA Officers and/or OMB officials to explore any possible PRA implications of planned challenges over and above the baseline use of Challenge.gov.

## FACTS AT A GLANCE

- Based on recent Paperwork Reduction Act guidance from OMB, *Social Media, Web-Based Interactive Technologies, and the Paperwork Reduction Act*, Challenge.gov does not trigger PRA requirements and does not require a clearance.
- The guidance specifically exempts general solicitations, the creation of user accounts, rating or ranking of user-generated content, open-ended discussions or blogs, and the submission of contest entries from PRA requirements.
- Some customizations to individual challenges beyond the basic functionality of Challenge.gov may trigger PRA requirements. Agencies should consult PRA Officers or OMB about this possibility during the planning stages of any challenge or contest.