



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN

APRIL 7, 2010

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Flagship Initiatives	7
Transparency	9
Participation	19
Collaboration.....	23
Next Steps	24

The screenshot shows the U.S. Department of State website's Open Government Initiative page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Blog, Video, Photos, News, Share, and Contact Us. Below this is the U.S. Department of State logo and the text "DIPLOMACY IN ACTION". A secondary navigation bar lists various topics: SECRETARY CLINTON, MEDIA CENTER, TRAVEL, CAREERS, BUSINESS, and YOUTH & EDUCATION. A third navigation bar lists: ABOUT STATE, POLICY ISSUES, COUNTRIES & REGIONS, ECONOMICS & ENERGY, ARMS CONTROL & SECURITY, DEMOCRACY & GLOBAL AFFAIRS, PUBLIC DIPLOMACY & PUBLIC AFFAIRS, and ASSISTANCE & DEVELOPMENT.

The main content area features a search bar, a "Browse by" section with dropdowns for Topic, Speaker, Publication, Country, and Date, and a "Quick Links" section. Below these is a "Country Profiles" section with a dropdown menu.

The main heading is "Open Government Initiative" with the sub-heading "Transparency * Participation * Collaboration". A quote from President Barack Obama, dated January 21, 2009, is displayed: "My Administration is committed to creating an unprecedented level of openness in government. We will work together to ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration." This quote is accompanied by the "OPEN GOV" logo and the URL "WHITEHOUSE.GOV/OPEN".

A photograph shows President Obama and Vice President Biden signing the Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government. The text explains that the Open Government Directive and the Progress Report to the American People lay out how the Obama Administration is breaking down long-standing barriers between the Federal government and the people it serves. The Directive instructs agencies to take immediate, specific steps to open their doors and data to the American people.

Below the photo, it states: "President Obama signed the Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government as his first executive action, ushering in a new era of open and accountable government meant to bridge the gap between the American people and their government." A "Learn More" link is provided.

The "Public Engagement Activity" section encourages users to "Share your comments on State's Open Government Plan." and lists ways to help: "We also want your help on how we can:"

- Work better with others inside & outside the government.
- Solicit feedback from the public.
- Improve the availability & quality of information.
- Be more innovative & efficient.

A link to "Ground Rules and Terms of Participation" is provided. The "OpenState SHARE YOUR IDEAS" logo is also visible, along with a graphic showing "Participate", "Innovate", "Transparency", and "Collaborate" in speech bubbles.

The "Highlights" section includes a link to "Subscribe to Open Government Updates" and the "Open Government Plan" section, which states: "The Department of State has a longstanding history and commitment to sharing information with the public about the diplomatic work that we conduct domestically and overseas. Read the Open Government Plan." The "State @ Work" section states: "The U.S. Department of State manages America's relationships with foreign governments, international organizations, and the people of other countries. See State @ Work." A "How We Are Doing" link is also present.

www.state.gov/open

Letter from the Under Secretary of State for Management Patrick F. Kennedy



The Department of State has a longstanding history and commitment to sharing information with the public about the diplomatic work that we conduct domestically and overseas. The ways in which we communicate internally, with other agencies and organizations, and to the public have changed significantly with the development of new technologies and social media, and they will undoubtedly continue to change as further advances in communication are discovered.

The several components of the Open Government Initiative have brought further momentum to the Department's ongoing efforts to increase transparency and provide information to the public. This initiative has allowed us to review how we can improve access to our information. Our Open Government website (<http://www.state.gov/open/>) provides a central location where you can follow the Department's efforts on key initiatives including the release of datasets at www.data.gov and the use of funding from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. Additionally, the Open Government Initiative is raising awareness of the various other ways that you can receive information from us through Facebook and Twitter or share your thoughts and ideas with Secretary Clinton through "Text the Secretary." This kind of collaboration, which was once unimaginable, allows you to take a more active role in providing feedback to the Department.

This plan was developed by a team of employees led by the Department's Chief Information Officer. The Open Government team is composed of employees from throughout the Department who are working vigorously and enthusiastically to provide an unprecedented level of access to operations within and information generated by the Department. We welcome your feedback on how we can improve this plan, which is a living document that will continue to change and evolve as your ideas are shared and incorporated. We look forward to hearing from you.

Patrick F. Kennedy
Under Secretary for Management
U.S. Department of State

Executive Summary

The Department of State is pleased to issue this Open Government Plan. The plan reflects the personal commitment of the Secretary of State as well as that of the entire Department to the principles and practices of Open Government. The plan focuses on the three imperatives of Open Government:

- Transparency – providing information to enable the American people to view the Department’s activities and products, and ensure accountability for results;
- Participation – enabling the public to engage on issues of importance and make their voices heard; and
- Collaboration – sharing information and ideas, and working cooperatively with partners around the world to promote the foreign policy interests of the United States.

The Department is responsible for carrying out the nation’s foreign policy and representing the United States abroad. It is essential that that we take every opportunity to engage the American people as we do this vital work on their behalf. Our era is one in which news from around the world is accessible to everyone on a moment-by-moment basis.

Reflecting this new era, the Department has invested heavily in the use of social media tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and wikis for internal collaboration and external engagement. In the days following the disastrous earthquake in Haiti, US citizens rushed to our blog site, <http://blogs.state.gov>, to pose questions and, more importantly, to offer assistance.

We must continually be prepared to engage the public in our work, which is why the Department’s web site presents up-to-date information on the issues of the day in foreign affairs and development assistance. Our Open Government plan invites your feedback and comment. The principal focus of this plan is to build on the work currently underway and expand our engagement with all of our stakeholders. The plan describes the work we are doing in the three areas noted above, and also presents two flagship initiatives that we will be rolling out over the next few months:

- ***The Virtual Student Foreign Service***, a priority of Secretary Clinton, establishes internships at US colleges and universities to engage in digital diplomacy with our embassies around the world. This initiative leverages the power of technology and extends the reach of our efforts, while also engaging American students in the active conduct of diplomacy.
- ***HumanRights.gov***, a State Department web site, is another priority of the Secretary and an integral element of US foreign policy devoted to exchanging information to promote human rights around the world.

Introduction

This Open Government Plan is a living document and will be updated on a regular basis as new initiatives are included and existing ones are expanded and revised. It emphasizes our commitment to providing information to the public through discussion of our flagship initiatives and the efforts underway to ensure better transparency, participation and collaboration. The plan concludes with a “next steps” section describing how it will be updated.

Department Mission

The Department of State is the cabinet agency with lead responsibility for formulating and carrying out the nation’s foreign policy. The Department operates in Washington, DC and in nearly 200 countries, with over 285 locations world-wide. State’s major program areas include diplomacy, border security, US citizen’s services, and foreign assistance.

State Department Mission Statement:

Advance freedom for the benefit of the American people and the international community by helping to build and sustain a more democratic, secure, and prosperous world composed of well-governed states that respond to the needs of their people, reduce widespread poverty, and act responsibly within the international system.

The Department, being the diplomatic arm of the US Government, generates mostly narrative documents, treaties, and inter-governmental agreements. The fundamental activities of diplomacy are based on human contact, generation of trust, and the establishment of common dialogue to both further ties, as well as resolve conflict in a peaceful manner between nations. Most of these activities involve nuance of language in creating a shared understanding. Unlike regulatory agencies, the State Department does not generate a significant amount of structured data. Many of the databases are also sensitive in nature, such as the Passport databases which are the private records of Citizen’s travel.

The Diplomatic record is published in [The Foreign Relations of the United States](#) and has been since the eighteenth century. Much of this information is now available electronically at: <http://www.data.gov/raw/1431>.

In recent years the Department’s mission has become broader, as global issues have become more complex and interconnected. Today, offices in the Department focus on a wide spectrum of issues beyond traditional bilateral diplomacy, including counterterrorism, nuclear arms proliferation, climate change, human rights, institution building, and international trade and finance. The complexity of these issues requires extensive collaboration with other US Government agencies at overseas posts and in Washington, as well as with foreign governments, Non-Governmental Organizations, and other partners. Further information on the Department’s goals, objectives, strategy, and budget can be found at: <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/c6113.htm>

Commitment to Open Government

The Department recognizes that a key part of its mission is to engage the American public on the nation’s foreign policy. The explosive growth in the Internet and social media tools has enabled much greater citizen participation than was ever before possible. These abilities create great opportunities to

engage the public and harness the energy and innovativeness of US citizens to promote our foreign policy interests around the world.

State has been actively engaging American citizens and businesses for many years, making available valuable and practical information about traveling to foreign countries, studying abroad, educational exchange opportunities, citizen services, conducting business overseas, and trade and exports. In addition, the Department maintains an active program to declassify and release a broad range of historical information concerning foreign policy and international affairs.

Through the Bureaus of Public Affairs, International Information Programs, Educational and Cultural Affairs, and numerous overseas posts, the Department has been active in social media, enabling collaboration with US and foreign publics through Facebook, Twitter, and blogs.

In the past decade, major events have greatly increased the prominence of foreign affairs with the US public. Since September 11, 2001, Americans have become much more focused on issues such as counterterrorism, promotion of democracy and human rights, international law enforcement, and international finance and trade.

The Department's leadership, beginning with Secretary Clinton, is excited about the opportunities presented by the Open Government Initiative. We all recognize the importance of collaboration, engagement, partnerships, and accountability. Even as this plan is being finalized, State has taken the first steps to implement the Open Government Initiative. We have created an Open Government web site, linked to the Department's home page. The web site provides access to available data sets and represents a start at efforts to engage the public more dynamically, solicit input, and increase collaboration. The URL for the site is: <http://www.state.gov/open/>.

State's mission also includes making international information available to the public. The Bureau of Consular Affairs provides detailed travel information for all countries, via the Internet on www.travel.state.gov. The first-ever quantitative assessment of online open government efforts recently found this site to be one of the highest ranking in online transparency. State.gov also scored high in this transparency project, which surveyed more than 36,000 citizens who visited 14 federal sites during the fourth quarter of 2009. For more information on the study, see: http://www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20100216_1403.php?oref=topnews

The Department also provides passports to US citizens and visas to citizens of foreign countries seeking temporary or permanent admission to the country. Additionally, we provide services to US citizens overseas, as well as support for US businesses seeking to establish or expand international business.

Leadership and Broad Involvement in Open Government

Secretary Clinton is personally committed to Open Government. She participates regularly in public forums and has been actively engaged with a wide range of stakeholders in pursuing US foreign policy objectives. The Department's Chief Financial Officer has been designated as the senior official accountable for the quality and objectivity of, and internal



Secretary Clinton addresses the current group of State Department interns serving for the spring 2010 session. (State Dept. photo)

controls over the Federal Spending information publically disseminated¹. The Chief Information Officer (CIO) has been designated as the lead State Department official for overall operational implementation of the Open Government initiative. Each bureau, lead by an Assistant Secretary, will be responsible for the information originating in that bureau.

Past efforts and successes will provide a springboard for fulfilling the requirements of the Open Government Directive. Looking forward, the Department's bureaus will participate in Open Government, by contributing data sets for posting for the public and by participating in public events and collaboration opportunities. This approach will provide a rich information exchange with the public and will ensure that all aspects of the Department's broad mission and expertise are reflected in Open Government efforts.

The plan has been developed collaboratively, under the direction of an Open Government Working Group composed of leading bureaus currently active in outreach and engagement. The CIO has taken lead responsibility for drafting the plan with input from all stakeholders. The Open Government Plan is being closely coordinated with other efforts such as the development of a new Information Technology Strategic Plan, ensuring that efforts related to the Open Government Initiative will receive priority for resources.

The Department of State is committed to transparency and excited about further engagement and collaboration with American citizens.

Our Open Government Plan

This plan is designed to advance the President's Transparency and Open Government initiative and promote the Secretary's priorities in engagement and collaboration. It explains the steps the Department has already taken and presents a plan for broad collaboration and engagement in carrying out its diplomatic mission. The plan begins with a presentation of the two Flagship Initiatives we are pursuing, and continues with our plan for addressing the three guiding principles of Open Government:

- Transparency
- Participation
- Collaboration

Finally, the plan concludes with next steps, including our plans to invite the public to participate by providing feedback on our Open Government Plan and on our specific initiatives.

¹ Per OMB Memorandum M-10-06 of December 8, 2009 the senior official is "accountable for the quality and objectivity of and internal controls over the Federal spending information publicly disseminated through such public venues as USAsending.gov or similar websites. The senior accountable official also participates in the agency's Senior Management Council or similar governance structure for the agency-wide internal control assessment pursuant to the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act."

Flagship Initiatives

To promote transparency, participation and collaboration with the public, the Department is currently undertaking two new initiatives, Virtual Student Foreign Service and HumanRights.gov. Both initiatives are priorities of Secretary Clinton and represent innovative ways of engaging the US public and other stakeholders to further the US diplomatic mission. In addition to providing direct results, these two initiatives will also serve as demonstration projects. We will assess their effectiveness and seek to generalize lessons learned for applicability to future Open Government initiatives.

1. Virtual Student Foreign Service

The Department of State has designated the Virtual Student Foreign Service (VSFS) Program as a flagship initiative. The VSFS was announced by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on May 13, 2009 at New York University's commencement. As Secretary Clinton said:

"...over the next year the State Department will be creating Virtual Student Foreign Service Internships to harness the energy of a rising generation of citizen diplomats. Working from college and university campuses, American students will partner with our embassies abroad to conduct digital diplomacy that reflects the realities of the networked world."

The VSFS Program was established on a pilot basis during the summer of 2009 and now includes 37 diplomatic posts and approximately 40 students. Objectives related to analyzing the pilot and instituting the program more broadly are:

- Significantly expand the VSFS level of participation to include domestic offices as well as additional overseas posts;
- Establish processes to actively reach out to college audiences in order to recruit additional highly qualified and motivated students;
- Establish tiered participation opportunities for students involved in the VSFS program, e.g., full participants will be paired and work extensively with specific State Department offices / posts, while associate participants may only work as part of a "crowd sourcing" approach on individual issues, or on elements of larger, on-going efforts; and
- Develop and aggressively track both qualitative and quantitative diplomatic and management results achieved via the student and post collaboration projects.



VSFS: <http://www.state.gov/vsfs/>

2. HumanRights.gov

The Secretary's speech on December 14, 2009 strongly affirmed our nation's view that human rights, democracy, and development go hand-in-hand, as she outlined our approach to "making human rights a human reality."

The Secretary emphasized that "we support change driven by citizens and their communities. The project of making human rights a human reality cannot be just one for governments. It requires cooperation among individuals and organizations within communities and across borders. It means that we work with others who share our commitment to securing lives of dignity for all who share the bonds of humanity."



Secretary Clinton with members of Menteng Elementary School #1 Children's Choir waving to the crowd in Jakarta, Indonesia. (State Dept. photo)

To further this vital human rights agenda, the Department of State is leading a new US Government initiative to establish a HumanRights.gov website on the Internet. This new site will serve as the Federal Government's focal point for information sharing and collaboration with external partners on human rights issues.

This effort was initiated by the Administration and the White House's National Security Council in order to improve the quality and availability of human rights information, and to help strengthen outreach and engagement on human rights matters. Currently a great deal of human rights information is scattered among the web sites and databases of numerous Federal agencies, making it difficult to find and obtain. There is no central repository or web site, and no central US Government Internet presence for engagement on human rights issues. This new HumanRights.gov web site will provide such a central repository and enhanced engagement platform.

Transparency

This section identifies concrete steps to be taken to increase visibility into State's historical records and operations. As indicated below, the Department has made much progress in providing easy public access to important data sets. This plan builds on our past successes to ensure even greater openness and transparency.

1. Data Sets

The Department creates and disseminates data sets about US foreign policy, international diplomacy, and global issues. The data supports analysis of US foreign policy initiatives and trends and is used by experts in specific issue areas as well as experts in the process of diplomacy. It is also used by the general public to explore the history of US international relations.

The Open Government initiative provides an opportunity to increase access to and use of the data sets available to the public. Data sets that are currently available are located on the Data.gov website, and new data sets will be published there as they are made available. These data sets may be found either by doing a search for all Department of State data sets; or by directly accessing the following URL: <http://www.data.gov/catalog/raw/category/0/agency/56/filter//type//sort//page/1/count/25>. The data sets can also be accessed through the Department's Open Government page at www.state.gov/open

Among the data sets published are one from developed by the Office of the Historian, and one from Interagency Working Group (IAWG).

Bibliographical Metadata of the Foreign Relations of the United States Series

The Office of the Historian is responsible, under law, for the preparation and publication of the official historical documentary record of U.S. foreign policy in the [Foreign Relations of the United States](#) series. This dataset is the raw bibliographical metadata for the nearly 500 volumes in the series published since 1861. Each record in the dataset contains a volume's title, year of publication, years covered by the volume, summary, and links to sources for these volumes online or in print, among other metadata items.

<http://www.history.state.gov/open/frus-metadata>

FY2008 U.S. Government-Sponsored International Exchanges and Training Regional statistical reports - East Asia and Pacific region

Agency: Department of State

Sub-Agency:

Category: International Statistics

Date Released: 12-Jan-2009

Date Updated: 15-Jan-2010

Time Period: years

Frequency: years

Description: The Interagency Working Group (IAWG) on U.S. Government-Sponsored International Exchanges and Training was created in 1998 to make recommendations to the President for improving the coordination, efficiency, and effectiveness of United States Government-sponsored international exchanges and training. IAWG Annual Reports review the IAWG's activities over a given fiscal year. For more information go to: <http://www.data.gov/raw/1433/#description>

The Department enables the public to download its raw data sets in multiple formats depending on the nature of the data. We include geographic data, spreadsheet data, images, and text, in the following formats:

- XML
- CSV/Text
- Excel
- Shapefile
- Maps
- KML/KMZ

Additional information about the Department is available at the following URL:

<http://www.state.gov/open/>

Strategic Action Plan for Data Set Publication

The Bureau of Information Resource Management (IRM) has the lead responsibility for coordinating the publication of data sets under this initiative. IRM, working with a number of key bureaus, is conducting an inventory over the next 90 days to identify data sets of interest to the public. All of the Department of State bureaus are asked to contribute data sets. Using IdeaScale² the public will be able to provide input as to level of interest and priority to guide the publication schedule for <http://data.gov>. When these data sets are identified, the Department will issue a publication schedule. IRM will monitor public use and perceived value of each data set and provide feedback to bureaus.

² General Services Administration (GSA) provided feedback tool to gather input from the public.
<http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/open/engagementtool.shtml>

2. Transparency Initiatives

The Department of State is committed to improved transparency and the benefits it provides to the public. The following table indicates the extent to which the Department is currently engaged with various transparency initiatives and directives.

Transparency Initiative/Guidance	Status of State Activity
Data.gov: http://www.data.gov/catalog/raw/category/0/agency/56/filter/type//sort/page/1/count/25	State has posted numerous high value data sets
eRulemaking (Regulations.gov): (use keyword: “Agency: DOS” in the search box to find all Department activities) http://www.regulations.gov/search/Regs/home.html#home	State provides funding to EPA in support of the Federal Docket Management System (FDMS). State provided an open comment period to the public on regulations.gov for a new proposed rule to change the schedule of fees for consular services
IT Dashboard: http://it.usaspending.gov/?q=node%2F359&calctype=sa&agency_id=014&Submit=Go&calctype=sa	State posts monthly IT project data as part of USASpending.gov
Recovery.gov: http://www.recovery.gov/Transparency/agency/reporting/agency_reporting1.aspx?agency_code=19	State reports regular ARRA expenditures
USAspending.gov: http://www.usaspending.gov/fpds/fpds.php??reptype=a&database=fpds&mod_agency=M19&program_source_agency_code=&program_source_account_code=&program_source_desc=&mod_fund_agency=&PIID=&psc_cat=&psc_sub=&contractor_type=&descriptionOfContractRequirement=&competecat=&typeOfContractPricing=&dollar_tot=&fiscal_year=&first_year_range=&last_year_range=&detail=-1&datatype=T&email=&busn_indctr=	State reported assistance and grants figures in Feb 2010
GovBenefits.gov: http://www.govbenefits.gov/govbenefits_en.portal?nfpb=true&pageLabel=gbc_page_locate_federal&nfls=false&code=10	State provides funding to Dept. of Labor to support this site, and provides information re State Department managed benefit programs for U.S. citizens.

Table of Transparency Initiatives

3. Informing the Public

Engagement with the public is crucial to ensuring an informed citizenry regarding the foreign policy issues and priorities of the US Government. The State Department offers various opportunities for public participation in virtual events conducted over the Internet as well as physical events, such as public meetings, briefings, and press conferences.

Secretary Clinton and other senior Department officials participate in these forums regularly and are eager to engage with US citizens and other stakeholders. On March 31, the Secretary addressed a Haiti Donor's Conference to express her appreciation and gratitude for the outpouring of generosity that followed the earthquake. The response to the Haiti crisis is illustrative of the Department's work in informing the public, providing opportunities for US citizens and others to engage, and promoting collaborative efforts to help Haiti respond and rebuild.



Secretary Clinton, third from right, meets with Haiti's President Rene Preval, third from left, to discuss conditions in the country following Tuesday's deadly earthquake in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Jan. 16, 2010.
© AP Images

Planned Event	Description and Purpose	Planned Date
Daily Press Briefing	To inform the press on daily developments in foreign policy. Not open to public, but both text and video of the briefing are made available within hours of event via http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/index.htm	Daily, M-F.
Special briefings, including teleconferences	To inform the press on specific foreign policy initiatives. Not open to public, but both text and video of most are made available within hours of event via http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/index.htm	Several times per week, M-F
Historical meetings	To discuss foreign policy in a historical context. Not open to general public, but proceedings are made available via www.state.gov/r/pa/ho soon after the events.	Several times a year.
NGO Conferences	To brief and create dialogue opportunities with specific organizations and audiences on topics that they have expressed an interest in. Events not open to general public, though membership through NGOs and other organizations is open to public. See www.state.gov/r/pa/pl to get involved.	Several times a year.

Upcoming State Public Events

The Department's web site provides a mechanism to obtain information about US citizens in Haiti, including the people-finder shown below:

Person Finder: Haiti Earthquake

English | [Français](#) | [Kreyòl](#) | [Español](#)

What is your situation?

[I'm looking for someone](#) | [I have information about someone](#)

Currently tracking about 55100 records.

PLEASE NOTE: All data entered will be available to the public and viewable and usable by anyone. Google does not review or verify the accuracy of this data.

[Embed this tool on your site](#) - [Developers](#) - [Terms of Service](#)

<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/ha/earthquake>

4. Records Management, Declassification, and Processing of FOIA and Congressional Requests

The Department operates an ongoing program to manage its extensive collection of official records. A sizable staff of experts is engaged in reviewing documents, cable traffic, and other information to ensure proper disposition and to release as much information as possible to the public.

The records the Department maintains are of great interest to professional historians and international affairs experts as well as to the general public. Accordingly, our records management activities receive high priority, and will be a key component of our Open Government work.

Records Management Program

The visibility of the Records Management Program in the Department has risen dramatically in recent years. A vibrant Records Liaison Program that includes all bureaus and overseas posts is in place. A dynamic intranet website that is easy to use walks Department personnel through the steps of effective records management. Records Management training courses are now available at the Department's Foreign Service Institute including a new Files and Records Management Distance Learning course in which over 700 Department employees have enrolled to date.

These efforts have dramatically increased records management awareness throughout the Department. In addition, the Department continues to be a leader in the management of electronic records by achieving 100% compliance with the requirement to identify and schedule all electronic records by the end of FY '09 and incorporating records management functionality requirements into its annual CPIC rating process for electronic information systems. Additionally, the Department's new messaging and archiving system, SMART, captures e-mail and other documentation thus enriching the historical record. For more information on the Department's Records Management Program, visit:

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/136600.pdf>

FOIA Request Processing Operations

The Department of State has a centralized FOIA Program, with one office receiving and coordinating the processing of all requests made to the Department. The Department's E-FOIA website (<http://www.state.gov/m/a/ips/>), which includes the FOIA Electronic Reading Room and collections of declassified documents, contains a wealth of information for the public on the Department's information access programs. The Department has proactively released and posted substantive records on topics such as human rights issues in South and Central America and secret or "ghost" detainees. The site also contains FOIA Annual Reports and Chief FOIA Officer's Report.

Not only are the substance of the Department's records of a global nature, but the records themselves are also maintained globally. The Department of State maintains records domestically, and at hundreds of posts located world-wide. FOIA requests made to the Department vary in size from requests for a single document to requests that are both voluminous in size and complex in scope, requiring the review of thousands of documents, frequently retrieved from multiple sources both domestically and overseas. Many of the Department's records contain national security information and are classified pursuant to executive orders. The review of these records often requires coordination not only with other Federal agencies, but with other governments, before an appropriate release determination can be made.

Due to its global structure and the nature of its record holdings, the Department faces great challenges in achieving full compliance with the time limits of the FOIA. The Department remains committed to achieving the fullest possible compliance, with the greatest level of customer service. FOIA requests are processed incrementally, with responses made to requesters as segments are completed, instead of waiting until the conclusion of all processing. For a more in-depth description of the Department's FOIA program staffing, organizational structure, and process for analyzing and responding to FOIA requests, please visit: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/ips/> and review the most recent FOIA Annual Report as well as the Department of State Information Access Guide/Manual.

In the interest of transparency, it should be noted that the Department's backlog of requests is steadily increasing. The backlog at the end of fiscal year 2008 was 4,327, and at the end of fiscal year 2009 the backlog was 8,784. The overall number of requests received by the Department rose from 5,909 in 2008 (consisting of 1,676 consultations and 4,233 direct requests to the Department) to 10,717 in 2009 (consisting of 6,014 consultations and 4,703 direct requests to the Department).

Given this volume of requests, the central FOIA office continuously evaluates the Department's program and FOIA process, and modifies the structure and process to promote increased efficiency. A number of initiatives have been identified that should lead to a more effective system for responding to requests.

Measures taken to increase efficiency include the following:

- Activities related to FOIA requests in litigation are time-consuming, labor-intensive and deadline-driven, and have long placed a heavy strain on FOIA resources. To alleviate this, the Department has realigned resources to pilot a separate litigation team, which will enable the core FOIA workforce to focus on processing cases.
- A Rapid Response Team has also been established to handle the most pressing work, allowing FOIA analysts to maintain focus on processing requests. This group will also be responsible for

processing the thousands of FOIA referrals sent by other agencies to the Department for coordination.

- The Department has established a task force dedicated to the processing of the 250 oldest FOIA cases.
- A team of contractors has been engaged with extremely rigorous production metrics to supplement a shortfall in our FOIA workforce.
- The Department has completed initial recruitment efforts to hire area students, who will be trained in FOIA casework. This program is in its tenth year and has proven to be an investment in building a corps of FOIA experts. Once on board in late May, the students will work full time over the summer, assisting in the backlog reduction effort.

Declassification Programs

Substantial resources have been dedicated to the Systematic Review Program, an initiative to make Department records 25 years and older available to the public. Since the enactment of EO 12958 in 1995, the Department has reviewed 90 million pages of records for declassification and forwarded them to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) where they will be made available to public researchers. This commitment to the declassification of State's historic records has enhanced government transparency and increased the public's understanding of foreign policy. For more information on Department Declassification Programs visit:

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/136600.pdf>

In addition, IdeaScale will be used to solicit input from US citizens that will be helpful in prioritizing the records to be declassified and posted. As permanent record series become 25 years old, they will be reviewed for declassification.

These record series are described in State's Records Disposition Schedules [see link above]. The Department establishes priorities among the eligible series based on guidance from the National Archives and Records Administration and input from the public. Citizens wishing to make recommendations for priorities among the permanent record series can visit State's Open Government site and register their recommendations.



IdeaScale:
<http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/open/engagementtool.shtml>

Congressional Requests

The Bureau of Legislative Affairs (H) coordinates legislative activity for the Department of State and advises the Secretary, the Deputy, as well as the Under Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries on legislative strategy. H facilitates effective communication between State Department officials and the Members of Congress and their staffs. H works closely with authorizing, appropriations, and oversight committees of the House and Senate, as well as with individual Members that have an interest in State Department or foreign policy issues. H manages Department testimony before House and Senate hearings, organizes Member and staff briefings, and facilitates Congressional travel to overseas posts for Members and staff throughout the year. H reviews proposed legislation and coordinates Statements of Administration Policy on legislation affecting the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. The H staff advises individual Bureaus of the Department on legislative and outreach strategies and coordinates those strategies with the Secretary's priorities.

The Secretary of State is the principal Congressional Relations Officer of the Department. H supports the Secretary by ensuring that the administration's foreign policy priorities are reflected throughout the legislative process. H coordinates the annual testimony provided by the Secretary to Congressional committees with jurisdiction over State programs to explain Department priorities and budget requirements. The bureau succeeds in its overall mission by seeking passage of relevant foreign policy legislation and appropriations, obtaining advice and consent to treaties, as well as confirmation of the President's Departmental and Ambassadorial nominees by the Senate.

The Assistant Secretary advises the Secretary of State on legislative matters, directs the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, and acts as the Department's principal liaison with the Congress.

The Bureau of Legislative Affairs is headed by the Office of the Assistant Secretary, and three Deputy Assistant Secretaries. The bureau's organization is designed to work closely with congressional oversight committees and leadership. It consists of four offices: the Office of Senate Affairs; the Office of House Affairs; the Office of Regional, Global, and Functional Affairs; and the Executive Office.

Office of Senate Affairs

The Office of Senate Affairs is responsible for the Department's day-to-day interaction with the U.S. Senate and its principal oversight committee -- Senate Foreign Relations Committee, as well as the several other Senate Committees with interest and jurisdiction over the conduct of foreign affairs. This office tracks and works with Senate members and staff on foreign policy-related legislation, keeping Department officials informed of committee positions, and advancing Administration foreign policy goals on the Hill. The office also carries the responsibility for managing the Department's nominations and confirmation process and the ratification of treaties.

Office of House Affairs

The House Affairs Office is responsible for the Department's liaison with Members and Committees of the U.S. House of Representatives. It facilitates hearings, briefings for Members and staff, outreach to oversight Committees, and communication between the House of Representatives and the Department.

H's "mission" on Capitol Hill is located in B-330 of the Rayburn House Office Building. This liaison office provides a full range of State Department support services to Representatives, Senators, Congressional Committees, and their staffs.

Office of Regional, Global, and Functional Affairs

The Office of Regional, Global, and Functional Affairs tracks the Department's full range of policy issues of interest to the Congress. The office's Legislative Management Officers are the principal substantive liaison officers between Department bureaus and Congressional offices. It works in close cooperation with the Department bureaus in briefings on administration policy and manages Congressional appearances of Department witnesses for foreign policy hearings.

Executive Office

The Executive Office of the Bureau of Legislative Affairs (H/EX) is responsible for Legislative Operations with oversight of Department of State support activities provided to Members of Congress and their staff. It facilitates official foreign travel of Member and staff delegations; responds to written, telephonic and electronic communications by Members of Congress; oversees the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance process for official testimony before Congress; maintains records of all relevant hearings; and provides basic administrative support for the bureau.

The Office annually handles approximately:

- 1,500 pieces of legislation;
- 300 congressional hearings;
- 8,000 pieces of congressional correspondence;
- 500 congressional reports and notifications;
- 18,000 congressional inquires; and
- 2,000 congressional overseas travelers.

Legislative Reference Unit

The Legislative Reference Unit (LRU) oversees the coordination and clearance functions of the Bureau of Legislative Affairs with respect to all Department programs and activities. This office monitors all significant legislation involving the Department and serves as the liaison in the legislative clearance process, coordinating views between OMB, National Security Council, and other executive agencies. Items maintained in this legislative clearance process include: Presidential executive orders, proclamations, Statements of Administration Policy (SAP), enrolled bills, and reports (including testimony) on pending legislation.

The LRU coordinates the review, preparation, and submission of transcripts of Congressional hearings, insuring that appropriate editorial changes are made in accordance with Committee guidelines. The LRU maintains a library of hearings, transcripts and Questions for the Record (QFRs) involving the Secretary, Department principals, and other Department witnesses. In addition, the LRU is responsible for coordinating and maintaining the system that identifies, tasks, and tracks reports to Congress, required by law and by legislative history, which are prepared for signature and submission by the Secretary of State or the President.

Congressional Correspondence Unit

The Congressional Correspondence Unit (CCU) receives and tracks all written correspondence from Members of Congress, including requests for testimony, briefings, documents, and speaking engagements. The CCU also responds to telephone inquiries from congressional offices seeking information related to Department programs, policies and publications.

Congressional Support Unit

The Congressional Support Unit (CSU) helps facilitate official foreign travel for Members of Congress and their Staff. The CSU is responsible for all substantive aspects of Congressional travel including notification to Posts abroad, compilation of itineraries and scheduling. On a policy level, the CSU is responsible for successful coordination of Congressional (CODEL) and Staff (STAFFDEL) delegation travel to foreign posts in support of the President of the United States' foreign policy objectives.

Congressional Travel Office

The Congressional Travel Unit (CTU) facilitates official foreign travel arrangements for Members of Congress and their Staff. The trips are usually identified by one of three categories:

- Congressional Delegation (CODEL): led by a Member of Congress (Senator/Representative)
- Staff Delegation (STAFFDEL): led by a Professional Staff Member
- Non-Delegation (NODEL): led by a Member of Congress (Senator/Representative) in a non-official capacity. (No Congressional funds are expended.)

You can find more information about the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, including a list of its senior officials, at <http://www.state.gov/s/h/index.htm>.

Participation

Participation is a key element to ensure continued transparency in an open government. The Department plans to continue to provide and expand on a range of opportunities for the public to interact with Department officials and offer their opinions, questions, and feedback both in the US and abroad. This is useful in assessing public opinion and tracking reactions to US positions, events and policies. For example, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs manages [ExchangeConnect](#) which is “an International network that highlights first person stories about culture, communities, and exchange program experiences.” US Embassies engage local audiences as well through a variety of on-line means.

As noted above, the Department is active in the social media arena, and has a sizable following among Facebook™, Twitter™, and blog users. In the aftermath of the recent earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, a vast number of compassionate US citizens contacted the Department through social media to seek ways that they could help. The Department’s goal is to provide a variety of forums through which US citizens can participate actively in their government and US foreign policy.

The Department of State amplifies the reach of U.S. foreign policy to domestic and global audiences through new media and web-based communication technology. The Department's three guiding principles for all social media efforts are engagement, transparency, and serving as an alternative to traditional media. These principles guide new expansion efforts and help build lasting relationships with new sectors of the public. The efforts outlined below will support Secretary Clinton’s directive to Implement 21st Century Statecraft and use modern technologies to engage with the public.

Web Video

The U.S. Department of State provides video for video.state.gov, America.gov, U.S. embassy websites, and several blogs. Video is also made widely available on social networking platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Flickr. These video products cover a variety of subjects from senior staff remarks and briefings, to videos that feature elements of U.S. Public Diplomacy. The Department plans to increase the volume and availability of web video products, both live and on-demand, by 25% by 2011.

Blogs

DipNote, the State Department’s official blog at blogs.state.gov, gives the public context, clarity, and behind-the-scenes insights on U.S. foreign policy from State Department employees who are directly engaged in the work of diplomacy. State Department employees post entries daily on critical issues, such as climate change and food security, and share with the public the work they are doing in countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.

DipNote recently passed 15,000,000 page views and 13,000 comments by the public. More than 2,500 individuals and organizations subscribe to DipNote via RSS feeds. DipNote is available for the iPhone and Blackberry. The Department plans to increase active engagement between Department officials and public commentators by 25% by 2011.

Twitter

Twitter is a free “micro-blogging” service that allows for quick, frequent information distribution online. The Department uses Twitter to disseminate information during the Secretary’s travels, highlight key points made during the daily press briefings and high-profile public speeches, and communicate directly with the public by responding to their questions. The Department also corrects misinformation using Twitter.

The Associated Press covered the Department's use of Twitter in March 2009, when rumors and web-postings alleged that Madagascar’s ousted President Ravalomanana had been granted refuge in the U.S. Embassy. Realizing that this might lead to mob action against U.S. personnel and facilities, Department staff used Twitter to “tweet” a rebuttal to the rumors, quickly defusing the situation.

<http://www.twitter.com/StateDept>



Sample of State Department's Twitter Page

The Department plans to increase targeted use of Twitter 30% by 2011.

YouTube

The U.S. Department of State maintains several YouTube video channels featuring public affairs, public diplomacy, and U.S. embassy videos. Videos include remarks by Secretary Clinton, daily press briefings, special video collections based on foreign policy issues and interviews with U.S. diplomats. "Statevideo," the main Department channel, boasts over 1.3 million video views and 3,600 subscribers. The Department plans to increase the volume and availability of YouTube video products by 25% by 2011.

Interactive Travel Map

The Bureau of Public Affairs created an interactive map to track Secretary Clinton’s foreign travel. To date, Secretary Clinton has traveled more than 260,000 miles as Secretary of State. The map enables users to see where the Secretary is at any given time, calculates miles traveled (throughout the trip and cumulatively as Secretary), displays photos from the road (posted on Flickr), and features the Secretary’s remarks and blogs. This program is also integrated with the State Department’s Facebook page. Direct link: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/trvl/map/>. The map has 2,341,594 page views since inception on Feb. 28, 2009.

The Department plans to add greater interactivity and opportunities for users to directly engage with Department officials. The Department will also begin featuring several maps, from which the user will be able to create their own combined maps based on an individual's interests. The Department plans to add greater interactivity and overall map traffic 30% in 2010.

Facebook

The U.S. Department of State maintains a presence on Facebook. Several U.S. embassies and consulates also maintain Facebook pages (e.g. U.S. embassy in Jakarta has 123,000 fans). The Department's public diplomacy efforts are also featured on Facebook (e-Journal on Facebook has 102,000 fans).

The Department plans to increase its active engagement with the public using Facebook by 25% by 2011.

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/usdos?ref=ts>



Text the Secretary

“Text the Secretary” is a mobile and interactive forum in which the public can submit questions to Secretary Clinton. This new program invites people from around the world to send the Secretary questions via text message and the State Department homepage. Anyone can use this program, especially given that text messages are far more popular than email in many locations around the world (Inside U.S.: 90822, Outside U.S.: 202-255-6299). The Secretary has received thousands of text messages. Representative responses are then featured on the state.gov website. This feature is part of Secretary Clinton’s broad message of diplomacy-through-dialogue and a dialogue that is not just government-to-government.

ExchangeConnect

ExchangeConnect is an international social network managed by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs that highlights first-person stories about cultures, commonalities, and exchange program experiences. The social network currently has 24,000 members. The Department plans to continue and expand the ExchangeConnect social network by 2011.

Web Chats

The Department's Bureau of International Information Programs hosts CO.NX!, offering LIVE multimedia events with experts on important topics. The Department plans to implement similar efforts to engage both domestic U.S. and international audiences by 2011.

Podcasts (Audio and Video)

The Department produces podcasts for download on popular platforms such as iTunes. These podcasts include Secretary Clinton's remarks, daily press briefings, and various special features. The Department plans to increase the volume and availability of its podcast products 40% by 2011.

Increase Use of Mobile Technologies

Secretary Clinton announced support from the United States for the first Pakistani mobile phone-based social network, Humari Awaz (“Our Voice”) during her visit to the country October 29, 2009. The Humari Awaz platform leverages SMS technology and enable Pakistanis to build mobile-based

networks around shared interests, themes and subjects. In addition to linking friends and families, the network also helps a range of other users - from farmers and resellers who want to share market prices, to businesses that wish to communicate with their staff on the road, to news outlets that want to share information with targeted groups. U.S. support for the program covers the costs of the first 24 million Humari Awaz messages. The program already surpassed the 24 million message mark and began charging a minimal fee for messages on March 12, 2010. Despite the network being phased into a fee for service model, over 80% of its original participants still actively use the service.

The rampant level of crime in Mexico is fueled by the drug trade. So the Department implemented a program in Mexico to restore anonymity to crime fighting using the tools of technology by allowing people to send free, anonymous text messages to report crimes.

The Department will continue to support similar efforts to use mobile technologies as a means for social engagement in 2011.

Collaboration

One essential element of diplomacy is collaboration. We have done much in recent years to go beyond in-person collaboration and use technology in innovative ways, and we have plans to expand these efforts in new directions. The goal is to create and sustain an environment in which collaboration and cooperation are the norm, and a suite of state-of-the-practice tools are readily available to support collaboration in many different ways.

A challenge we face in this area is that our work often involves classified and other sensitive information. This requires that we have robust risk management programs and appropriate IT security in place to ensure that we can fulfill our mission and share information broadly, while protecting sensitive information assets appropriately.

The Department's effectiveness is highly dependent on its ability to work in partnership with many different kinds of organizations. We collaborate actively with the US public, citizens of other countries, other Federal agencies, non-federal governments (including tribal governments), non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and foreign government agencies.

Examples of current collaboration initiatives include the following:

Collaborating with the Public

- DipNote - The Department's Official Internet Blog. DipNote is a place to share stories, discuss experiences and inspire new ideas on the important foreign policy issues of the day.
- State Department is active in Facebook™, Twitter™ and other social media sites.
- Travel and other information is available to the public via www.state.gov and to other Federal agencies via Open Source Information System (OSIS).

Internal Collaboration at the Department

- Diplopedia – The Department's internal unclassified online encyclopedia. Just as people create and edit articles on public wikis on the Internet, Department personnel are using Diplopedia to create a broad, informative and expanding reference tool for knowledge-sharing about the Department, its programs and offices, and other international affairs subjects.
- Communities @ State - This initiative enables and encourages Department personnel with shared professional interests to form online communities to publish information, connect with others, and discuss issues. Transcending organizational boundaries and geographic constraints, these websites use a simple blogging tool to allow online community members to easily and quickly publish deliberative content. By choice of the community administrators, most of these online communities are available to members of the interagency foreign affairs community.

- The Sounding Board – An collaborative website where all State Department employees can share ideas or participate in ongoing conversations on new, smarter, and more effective ways of enabling our nation’s foreign policy goals.

Improving the speed with which information is shared with other agencies is one of our key goals. This kind of collaboration is especially important when dealing with such vital topics as counterterrorism, international crime, law enforcement, and emergency response. The ambassador at an embassy overseas must be able to collaborate and communicate reliably with all Americans working inside and outside the embassy. A cornerstone of our approach to achieving this goal is the development of a Foreign Affairs Network (FAN). The FAN will provide other US agencies operating at posts overseas with a standard configuration of hardware, software, and telecommunications to enable access to Department IT resources as well as home agency capabilities.

http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/pix/at_work/

The Department welcomes feedback from other agencies and the public. State wants to hear of innovative ideas for enhancing collaboration. The Department will use IdeaScale to solicit feedback on the Department's Open Government Plan. IdeaScale will also be used to continue to solicit feedback on how the Department can enable public dialogue and a more open government.



Sample of State Department's "State @ Work" page

Next Steps

The Open Government Task Force, CFO, and CIO will work together to ensure that this plan is a living document, updated and revised regularly. In the coming weeks, we will develop the following information to continue refining and fleshing out the plan:

- A schedule for data sets, declassified information, and other information to be published for the balance of this fiscal year
- A plan for assessing and incorporating feedback on this initial plan
- A dashboard for ensuring transparency and for keeping the Secretary and other senior officials informed of our progress on a regular basis