Communication Construct Proposal

Version 1.0

July 2010

a New Day for Federal Service

I. Introduction

On December 8, 2009, the White House issued a memorandum, the Open Government Directive (http://www.whitehouse.gov/open/documents/open-government-directive), requiring federal agencies to take immediate, specific steps to achieve key milestones in transparency, participation, and collaboration.

OPM is committed to being a leader in open government. Employees and the public can follow and participate in our open government efforts through our Web site, OpenOPM, located at http://www.opm.gov/open.On April 7, 2010, we posted our Open Government Plan on OpenOPM and invited both employees and the public to comment on that document. OpenOPM also provides links to Open Government news at the Agency, data sources, and contact information for the Agency Open Government champions, Chief Information Officer Matthew Perry and Associate Chief Financial Officer Rochelle Bayard, among other information.

OPM's open government flagship initiative is the creation of a knowledge management system with collaborative technologies. The purpose of this initiative is to provide the infrastructure and tools to increase transparency, widen participation, and foster collaboration both internally and externally. We also recognize there is a need for change in our own organizational behavior to create a more open culture and to centralize the existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in each outward-facing mission function of the agency.

II. Background

This document recognizes a consensus and overwhelming need to rectify a particular customer service weakness at OPM and perhaps across the Federal Government. Specifically, we need to consolidate our efforts and collaborate internally and communicate with the public to improve customer service and promote transparency in our business processes at OPM. This consolidation and collaboration serves not only the requirement to meet the Open Government Directive's objectives of transparency, participation, and collaboration, but also the Agency's goals of being a model agency, use resources efficiently and effectively, and share the lessons we learn across the Federal Government.

Customers should consistently receive the same answer to their questions, quickly, efficiently, and without frustration; for this to occur, OPM must have the tools to speak in one voice. Our solution to the problem of multiple voices and multiple answers to the same question comes in the form of an improved *information management system*. In this proposal, we recommend that OPM design and develop a communications infrastructure that incorporates planned upgrades in our Enterprise Architecture and that OPM strategically map future application and hardware purchases toward the goal of centralized call centers. Our intent is to provide a construct by which these upgrades may be phased and incorporated into a *master plan*, which will serve to ensure compliance with the Open Government Memorandum and the stated objectives found in the OPM Open Government Forum Charter.

III. Authority

- The Open Government Memorandum (M-10-06), December 8, 2009

- Office of Personnel Management Open Government Plan, May 24, 2010

- Office of Personnel Management Open Gov Forum Charter, May 18, 2010

IV. Tasks

- Consolidate Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) from across OPM and adopt a proposal to automate same into a searchable online format (See proposal for Searchable FAQs)

- Coordinate pending telecommunications upgrades to ensure they are compatible with future consolidation efforts

- Develop requirements for *one* consolidated, *state-of-the-art* OPM call center capable of answering key questions covering each OPM Division and Office within an established criterion *(See attachments 1 and 2)*

- Review the current OPM Enterprise Architecture and its ability to support a state-of-the-art call center operation

- Develop a central database and taxonomy for the storage and organization of documents throughout OPM

- Develop requirements for a collaborative, online application with document storage capability

- Develop requirements and specifications for an OPM-wide knowledge management vehicle

- Develop a project plan that details (at a high level) the tasks to be accomplished with associate timelines and milestones

- Develop metrics and a mechanism to provide progress on the implementation of stated approved tasks and publish these metrics and mechanisms on OpenOPM

- Review current spending and resources expended by each OPM directorate as it relates to public interaction, i.e., answering questions or responding to complaints via email, phone, FAX, letter, and all other sources

- Review feasibility of and develop requirements for a customer relationship management (CRM) tool that will capture customer feedback, provide a viable tracking tool for communications through all sources, and resolve duplications of effort

V. Concept

This initiative should be a phased approach for the complete overhaul of the way business is currently conducted as it relates to interaction with the public. Throughout OPM there should be a standard means and mechanism for capturing several kinds of information that are currently unavailable. These questions and complaints, as well as responses to the public, need to be captured. Additionally a record should be created to document each contact and specific information provided, as well as when and how it was provided and by whom. After all, accountability is critical to transparency. A regular report of contacts and resolutions is an essential and achievable metric for OPM to improve its customer service.
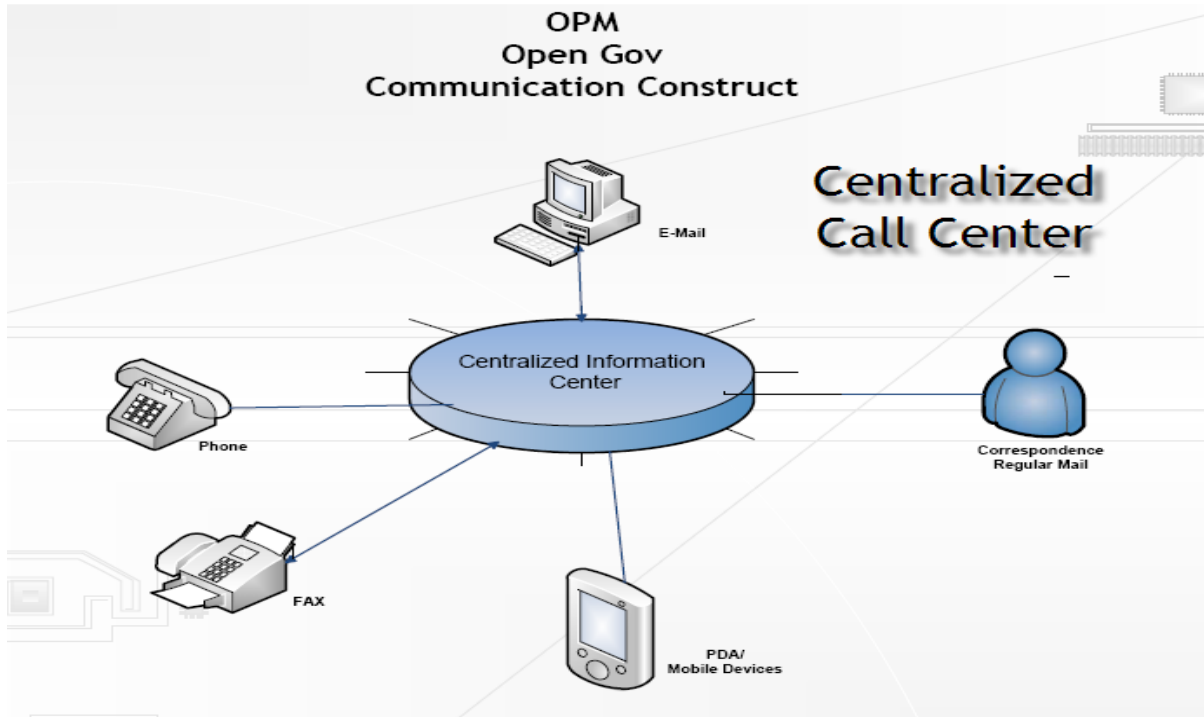
The coordination and tracking of the various tasks listed above should be the responsibility of OPM's Open Government Core Team, which represents the Executive Board. We recommend a Project Manager be assigned to manage the collaboration and cooperation as needed to implement, manage, and report the accomplishment of these tasks in an incremental fashion through the Chief Information Officer.

VI.   Graphics

Graphic 1: Open Government Communication Construct

U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Communication Construct Proposal

Attachment Graphic 2: Centralized Call Center Action Flow (proposed)

	Source	Action	Solution (Time Frame)	Problem	Research / Coordination	Close-out	Follow-up
Tier I	*Internet* Option 1 Option 2 Option 3	Automated FAQs E-mail response Chat	Real-time and immediate	Resolved: go to Close-out Unresolved: Escalation. Go to Research/Coordination	Validate accuracy of response and complete action or determine who should respond and hand-off action.	Action taken, Name of responder; date and time of closure.	Follow-up should occur within 24 hours via whatever means initial contact was made.
Tier II	Email, Phone Calls, FAX or Text	Respond via same means initial contact is made.	<24 hours	Resolved: go to Close-out Unresolved: Escalation. Go to Research/Coordination	Validate accuracy of response and complete action or determine who should respond and hand-off action.	Action taken, Name of responder; date and time of closure.	Follow-up should occur within 24 hours via whatever means initial contact was made.
Tier III	Correspondence & General Inquiries	Respond via Letter	<48 hours	Resolved: go to Close-out Unresolved: Escalation. Go to Research/Coordination	Validate accuracy of response and complete action or determine who should respond and hand-off action.	Action taken, Name of responder; date and time of closure.	Follow-up should occur within 24 hours via whatever means initial contact was made.
Tier IV	Referrals from all Sources	Respond via Letter	5-7 work days	Resolved: go to Close-out Unresolved: Escalation. Go to Research/Coordination	Validate accuracy of response and complete action or determine who should respond and hand-off action.	Action taken, Name of responder; date and time of closure.	Follow-up should occur within 24 hours via whatever means initial contact was made.
					Referral to OPM Ombudsman		Follow-up should occur within 24 hours via whatever means initial contact was made.

VII.   Staffing Paradigm

This construct calls for a five-tiered customer service approach that consolidates existing resources (funding and personnel) found in program offices across OPM, to create economies of scale and maximum efficiency within the agency (see graphic 2). These resources are reallocated from existing call centers to the Office of the Chief Information Officer to address Executive concerns for accountability and sustainability.

There is a staffing paradigm shift which must occur; instead of using entry level FTEs to man tier two (II) inquiries, more seasoned employees will interface with the public and properly redirect calls as needed. Higher graded employees have a much better understanding of Federal policy and OPM procedures, therefore fewer calls or emails are redirected, decreasing stakeholder frustration. Ultimately, tier five (V) responses are the responsibility of the Ombudsman. All responses are tracked for timeliness and accuracy and the results of this analysis are reported to each Associate and Office Director.

VIII. Conclusion

It is widely accepted that the current OPM call center approach has not produced the desired result of reducing stress on program offices in the delivery of customer service. There is even greater agreement that internal resources for the delivery of this service are scarce. By reducing redundancies and eliminating parallel communications projects, OPM can realize improved customer service and serve as the model agency for stakeholder responsiveness using existing resources and strategically planning Enterprise Architecture IT and Communications projects. This change in methodology will free OPM employees to focus on mission critical activities while OPM works "to ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration."[1]

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[1] President Barack Obama, 1/21/2009.

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