

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT



Open Government

Version 2.0

May 2012

a New Day for Federal Service

Table 1: Revision History

| Revision Number | Revision Date | Revision Summary |
|------------------------|----------------------|---|
| 1.0 | April 7, 2010 | Approved |
| 1.1 | April 23, 2010 | Provided greater detail regarding records management and added a link to the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council |
| 1.2 | June 25, 2010 | Corrected typographical errors, revised the list of members, and provided greater details on milestones and measures. |
| 2.0 | May 1, 2012 | Provides information on completed open government work. Introduces five new initiatives, including a new flagship initiative. |

Message from the Director

Thank you in advance for taking the time to review and provide feedback on Version 2 of the United States Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Open Government Plan.

We released Version 1 of this plan in April 2010. Since then, we have learned a lot about what openness means to us and our stakeholders. The definition "transparency, collaboration, and participation" is just the beginning. As we learned, openness is much more than providing data or standing up new tools.

Innovation is closely linked with openness, and we explored the intersection of people, processes, and technology in the context of innovation. We know people are our greatest asset. Supporting learning is the best way to make the most of that asset – always in a fair and inclusive manner. We are therefore committed to developing a cadre of knowledge workers and better preparing our employees, individually and collectively, for future changes and challenges.

We look forward to implementing the strategies we discuss in this document, but mostly we are excited to collaborate with you, our external stakeholders, including other agencies and the public. As we leverage the power of social media and economies of scale from centralized call centers, we will be better able to provide the services you expect. We have performance standards in place to measure our progress toward providing superior customer service. Together we can find new solutions to age old problems using communities of practice as open forums for transparency in our processes and public participation.

I appreciate your support as we move forward with implementation. Please continue to share your ideas with us and be involved in the conversation. Please interact with us further at <http://www.opm.gov/open/> by posting comments to our blog.

John Berry

DIRECTOR



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Executive Summary

In 2010, we released Version 1.0 of our Open Government Plan. Since then, we have focused on strategy by examining up close many of the ideas expressed in our original Open Government Plan. We found some of those ideas to be impractical and new ones that have emerged more in line with our – and the public’s – needs.

Now we are releasing Version 2.0. This document moves us from strategy to implementation of ideas that remain from the original plan and presents ideas that have emerged since 2010.. This version draws on our previous work, but we tried to avoid excessive repetition. Therefore, except where we specifically note that something has changed, the text in Version 1 remains in effect.

We have implemented:

- A redesign of our [open government site](#).
- A refresh of OPM.gov, set to go live later this fiscal year.
- Searchable frequently asked questions ([FAQs](#)).
- Greater sharing of data and information via [Data.gov](#).
- Collaborations with other federal agencies and nonprofits.

Our new initiatives cover the calendar years 2012-2014. They are:

- Enhancing OPM’s performance management culture.
- Establishing communities of practice (CoPs) and other networks for innovation.
- Centralizing our call centers and help desks.
- Enabling widespread and uniform use of social media.
- Promoting proactive disclosure of information via OPM.gov.

Centralizing our call centers and help desks is our new flagship initiative. We aim to improve operations by providing seamless, accurate, and timely customer service while reducing costly duplication in operational functions. Through this initiative, we will support transparency by providing the public with more logical, less frustrating access to our services and strengthen a culture of collaboration by encouraging employees to work together to speak in one voice.

Introduction

About Open Government

“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. Openness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government.

- Government should be transparent.
- Government should be participatory.
- Government should be collaborative.”

President Barack Obama, Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies on Transparency and Open Government, 1/21/09

The Open Government Memorandum (M-10-06) of December 8, 2009, commonly known as the Open Government Directive, sets an unprecedented standard for a more transparent, participatory, and collaborative form of government. The President’s strategy identifies this type of public sector innovation as critical to creating a national environment that is ripe for entrepreneurship and participation of citizens in their government.

When we are open, we increase our own accountability and build trust with the American people by sharing information, hearing and implementing ideas, and engaging in ongoing conversation with employees and the public. The free exchange of ideas helps us learn, innovate, and grow more effective and efficient.

About This Plan

This document updates our [2010 Open Government Plan](#). Internal and external collaboration were essential to this version of our Open Government Plan. Previously, we collaborated internally and sought input from others via the Web, but for this version, we worked closely with external stakeholders over a period of two years. We did this not by repeatedly convening groups to work on Version 2, but rather by basing Version 2 on the work our Core and Component Teams performed over those two years to implement Version 1. These teams, discussed in detail below, had members from throughout OPM, our union, other agencies, academia, and nonprofit groups. Starting in 2011, we met with other agencies on the various initiatives described below. We also recently convened a group of team members to discuss ideas for Version 2.

In Version 2, after providing information on our approach to openness, we describe some of the highlights of our work since we first published our Open Government Plan and introduce five initiatives that will further our current work of moving from strategic thinking to action. We also explain the changes we are making to our governance structure to facilitate this move.

Our Commitment to Openness

We are committed to providing information that increases opportunities for the public to participate in and give feedback on the delivery and quality of our core mission activities. We are equally committed to working together – across our organizational silos and with members of the public – to improve everything from work processes to customer service. In the [OPM Strategic Plan for 2010-2015](#), our values are clearly stated:

Service: We pledge through our oath to encourage and support those who serve the wider public or community through their work as Federal employees.

Respect: We extend consideration and appreciation to employees, customers and stakeholders fostering a fair, open and honest workplace environment. We listen to the ideas and opinions expressed by others. We treat others as we would wish to be treated.

Integrity: We uphold a standard of transparency, accountability, and reliability. We conscientiously perform our operations to promote a Federal workforce that is worthy of the public trust.

Diversity: We honor our employees and customers through inclusiveness and respect for the various perspectives and backgrounds that each brings to the workforce.

Enthusiasm: We embrace our work and the challenges of the future with excitement, energy, and optimism. We are open to the myriad possibilities of change and eagerly unite in the spirit of “yes we can.”

Excellence: We fulfill our mission by providing relevant and timely products and superior customer service that reflects our commitment to collaboration and the highest standards of quality.

Innovation: We constantly seek new ways to accomplish our work and to generate extraordinary results. We are dedicated to delivering creative and forward-looking solutions and advancing the modernization of human resources management.

All of these values incorporate openness, implicitly or explicitly.

Policy Statement

We are committed to fostering an environment that values openness, and our organizational values and strategic plan reflect this commitment. Together we will be better able to reach our goals – hire the best, respect the workforce, expect the best, and honor service – in support of our mission: “Recruit, Retain and Honor a World-Class Workforce to Serve the American People.”

We know the importance of equipping the workforce with the proper tools, training, and development to fulfill this mission. Furthermore, our commitment to integrity mirrors the Open Government Directive. This commitment is likewise evident in our strategic goal “Expect the Best,” which aims to provide the necessary tools and resources for employees to engage and perform at the highest levels, while holding us accountable to the American people.

In our [Strategic Plan for 2010-2015](#), we explain how “OPM will help agencies hire the best, respect the workforce, expect the best, and honor service.” Some of these methods include:

- Partnering with our stakeholders – Congress, unions and management groups, agencies, and the public – to develop and implement effective and relevant human resources policies and solutions to build a high-performing workforce.
- Advising and assisting agencies on strategic human resources management.
- Working with Congress and other stakeholders on developing effective compensation, work/life, and benefits policies and packages.
- Promoting effective and efficient human resources policies, programs, and practices across Government through reform, interaction with stakeholders, and other forums.
- Leading by example by becoming the change we want to see.

It is our policy to integrate transparency, collaboration, and participation into each of the abovementioned methods for improving federal service, from hiring through employment to retirement.

Governance

In preparing Version 1, we crafted a governance structure focused on maximizing strategic thinking and deliberation with a single formal champion, our Chief Information Officer (CIO). Along the way, we gained many informal champions who are ready to take on a more formal role as we move from strategy to implementation. We recognized that to make openness real and sustainable at OPM, we needed more champions to lead the way in implementation of our open government strategies. And so we are transforming our Open Government governance structure into a forum that oversees a group of communities of practice (CoPs) and openness projects. The new group of champions will explicitly bring openness to the agencywide and

governmentwide work they perform. By spreading ownership of the ideas and strategies, we are fulfilling our initiative of fostering an innovative environment at OPM through learning, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. Below we describe our initial structure and how it will change.

To create our initial governance structure, we brought together representatives of our senior leaders and union. They formed our Open Government Core Team, which wrote Version 1 and our Open Government Forum Charter, which established five component teams: Management, Policy, and Sustainability; Flagship Initiative; Data, Information, and Privacy; Communication, Collaboration, and Education; and Evaluation:

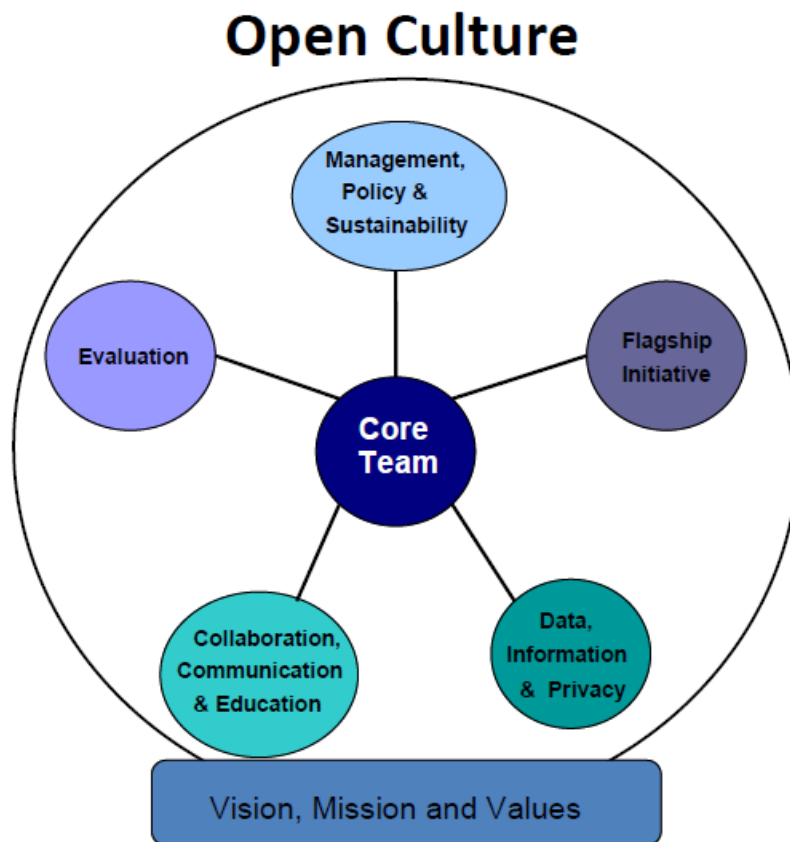


Figure 1: Open Government Forum

Each component team had members from organizations throughout OPM, the union, other agencies, academia, and nonprofit groups. These teams worked on strategies to help OPM become more open and prepare us to implement our first flagship initiative, a knowledge management system coupled with collaboration tools in the context of a learning organization that values the exchange of information and diverse perspectives. These strategies helped

make several smaller accomplishments possible by providing roadmaps for employee engagement.

The component teams:

1. Used Action Learning techniques in meetings, asked deep questions about OPM's challenges to find the root causes of problems.
2. After redefining problems based on this deeper understanding, conducted a gap analysis.
3. Through a Core Team representative, sent ideas about how to bridge the gaps to the Core Team's next meeting.

The Core Team:

1. Deliberated on the ideas from each of the component teams and discussed their own ideas. Like the other teams, the Core Team used Action Learning.
2. Formed recommendations based on those deliberations.
3. Sent the recommendations to an Executive Board comprising senior leaders for approval.

For planning purposes, this process was ideal because it encouraged participants to surface new ideas and then allowed all involved adequate time to consider and reflect on those ideas. We will now move toward strategic implementation of recommendations provided by the Open Government Team. For implementation, multiple senior-level executive champions will take responsibility for ensuring we act on those plans.

We will transition from the current Forum to a cross functional Openness Implementation Forum (OIF). Openness is about much more than data or technology; the executive champions are responsible for the many strategic areas from which we will effect change. This move to multiple champions reflects the need for strategic placement of our openness initiatives and planning for maximum effectiveness and long range sustainability. Furthermore, the OIF will collaborate with program offices and external stakeholders as needed to carry out the initiatives described below and other, related openness projects.

The OIF will be led by the CIO along with the Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO), union leadership from Locals 32 and 2450, Chief Learning Officer (CLO), Performance Improvement Officer (PIO), Chief Operating Officer (COO), and head of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I). The Core Team will remain in an advisory capacity, and Communication, Education, Projects Oversight, and Long Term Strategy Teams will support the Executive Team. All supporting teams except the Core will include external stakeholders to ensure we continue to include a broad range of perspectives.

Together, these teams, in consultation with the Office of General Counsel (OGC), will ensure OPM implements existing and future action plans and strategies. They will also:

- Monitor emerging trends through participation in networks with external partners and edit or create strategies and action plans accordingly.
- Create and support CoPs.
- In consultation with their supervisors, ensure employees are trained as necessary (e.g., on effective collaboration techniques).
- Coordinate and communicate internally and externally about openness in general and our plans and strategies in particular.

We must remain strategic in our decision making and continue long-range planning. Unlike the graphic for the **Error! Reference source not found.**, the one depicting the five teams that comprise the OIF (Figure 2) does not explicitly mention an open culture or vision, mission, and values. Nonetheless, all four remain vital to our success:

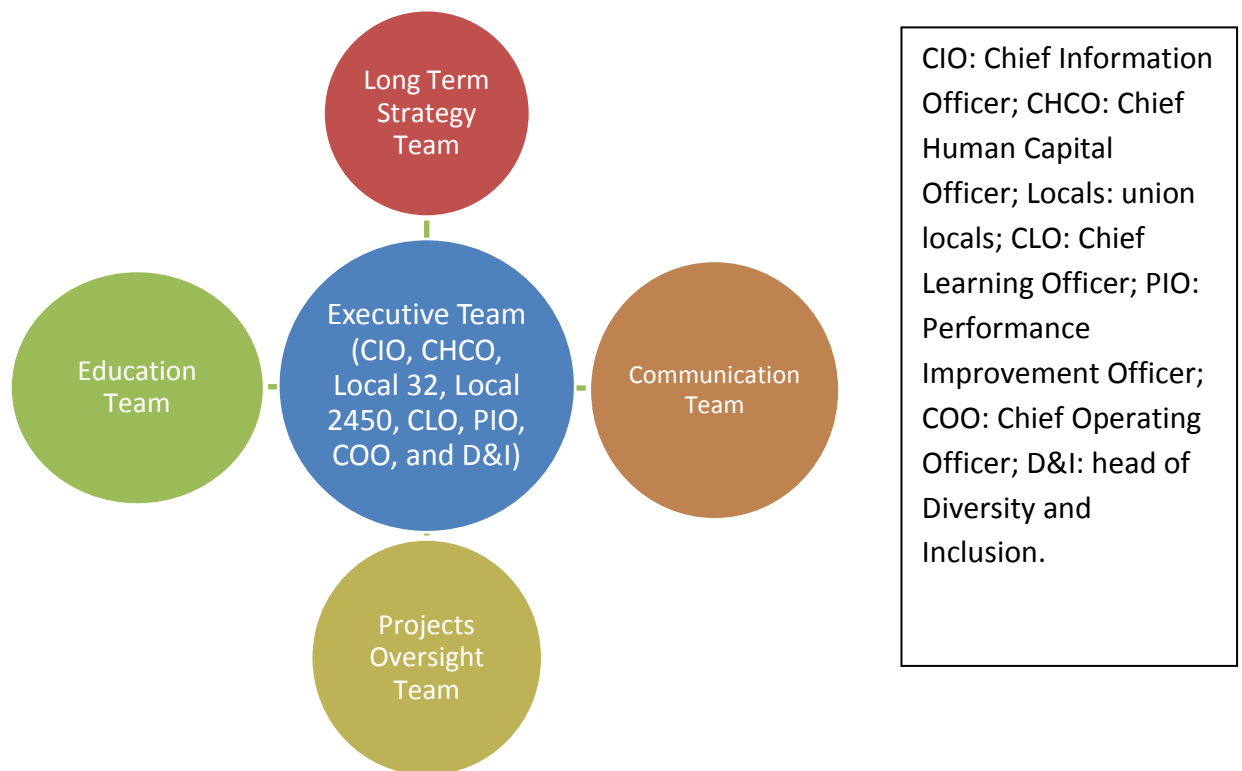


Figure 2: The Five Teams that Comprise the OIF

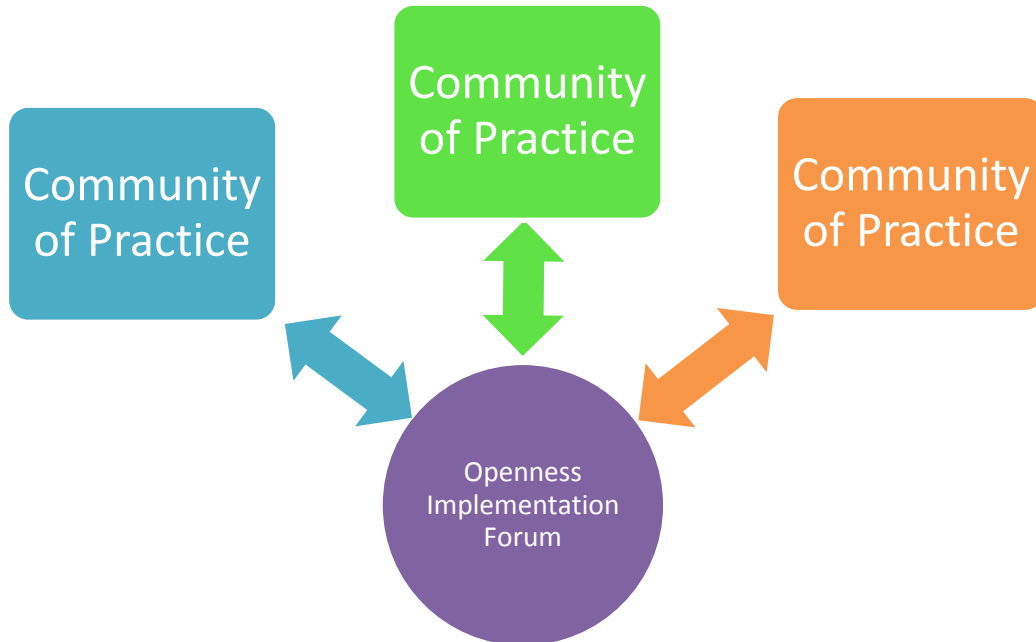


Figure 3: The OIF and CoPs

The OIF, in consultation with OGC and other appropriate OPM offices, will work with a growing number of CoPs to implement and coordinate strategies and related action plans. Creating and supporting these CoPs is one of our initiatives for 2012-2013. Each community will focus on learning with the goal of developing a body of knowledge and best practices. Some will include external stakeholders, while others will be purely internal, at least initially. Some of these CoPs will be:

- **Big Data CoP:** this group will draw heavily on internal and external stakeholders, many of whom served on component teams. We will also work closely with other agencies. The CoP will focus on sharing ideas for releasing, managing, displaying, and using structured and unstructured data to improve the usability of publicly available information.
- **Knowledge Workers CoP:** this CoP's focus will be helping OPM develop and reward employees as knowledge workers.¹ The Knowledge Workers CoP will also look into ways to change OPM's culture to maximize the motivating factors for knowledge workers: autonomy, mastery, and purpose (Pink, 2009).
- **Collaborative Leadership CoP:** this group will help OPM's leaders develop as collaborative leaders.

¹ A knowledge worker "[has] a high degree of expertise, education, or experience, and the primary purpose of their job involves the creation, distribution, or application of knowledge" (Davenport, 2005, p. 10).

- **High Performance Teams CoP:** members will help develop high performance teams within and across program offices. Their focus will be on developing capacities for collaboration, team leadership, team followership, and Action Learning.
- **Project Management CoP:** initially, members of this informal network for learning will be from the office of the CIO with a focus on information technology (IT) project management. After this first phase, the CoP will be opened to larger OPM membership (project management portfolio managers, among others) and will broaden its focus to general project management principles and practices.

What We've Done and Are Doing to Improve Transparency, Collaboration, and Participation

We laid the groundwork for the upcoming initiatives discussed in the section called “How We Will Further Improve Transparency, Collaboration, and Participation.” We have:

- Developed strategies and guides for CoPs, learning and knowledge sharing, communication, and related areas for a strategic approach to implementation.
- Collaborated with other agencies, nonprofit good government groups, and academia to gain new perspectives and make the best possible use of our scarce resources.
- Provided new tools and data to employees and the public to improve customer service and increase transparency.
- Taken steps to integrate the principles of openness into our daily work to make openness sustainable. We are starting a culture shift by engaging and empowering employees more and will use performance networks to continue this transformation.
- Taken specific actions to start moving from strategy to implementation.

In the rest of this section, we describe some of the efforts we completed plus outline our ongoing engagement in many of them. We have long participated in various interagency councils and working groups; this section focuses on newer efforts.

Becoming a Learning Organization: Strategies, Plans, and Guides

After completing our initial Open Government Plan and the charter for the Open Government Forum, we set out to understand what openness would look like at OPM and if we could become more open. We concluded that we could further institutionalize openness into the OPM culture. Transparency involves sharing information, collaboration brings exposure to new ideas and different perspectives, and participation entails a “feedback loop” – all concepts that are fundamentally about learning. Without trust, none of this is possible. So, we wrote a culture plan designed to build trust. We followed that plan with strategies, plans, and guides to help bring about the culture shift we need to achieve openness. We took an adaptive approach, modifying our objectives as we learned more about ourselves and about openness. Below is a selected list of strategies, plans, and guides that we produced and will make publicly available by the end of the 2012 fiscal year:

Culture Plan: this was one of our initial documents, and it set the stage for the other strategies. We did a gap analysis whereby we looked at the current culture of OPM and compared it to the desired end state, a culture of greater openness. The results of the analysis led us to provide recommendations aimed at making OPM more open. We elaborated on them in the following documents.

Communication and Collaboration Strategy: this document details how we will communicate the value of openness within and outside OPM. It also describes how CoPs and dialogue will improve OPM's ability to work across programmatic silos and enhance openness. The Communication, Collaboration, and Education Team worked on ideas presented in this strategy.

Data Strategy: this strategy was necessary to establish a process for inventorying, categorizing, and controlling access to OPM's structured and unstructured data and information. Once the foundation for working with OPM's data was established, we could work on implementing the flagship initiative. The Data, Information, and Privacy Team collaborated and shared ideas with the Core team for this strategy.

Knowledge Management System (KMS) Requirements: with the help of the Flagship Team and the goal of developing the KMS pilot, we first gathered all of the requirements for OPM's existing KMS. After analyzing these requirements, we developed this document to ensure the flagship initiative will fully meet the needs of OPM's employees and other stakeholders.

Learning and Knowledge Sharing Strategy (LKSS): we realized in the process of developing the KMS requirements that just having a tool was inadequate. We recommended that OPM employees be trained in Action Learning (established as best practice for problem solving, learning, and innovation by the open government effort), knowledge sharing, and collaboration to fully realize the benefits of the KMS. From the LKSS we developed a **Communities of Practice Handbook** to describe best practices in creating and managing CoPs.

Networks Strategy: this strategy helps OPM employees learn more about openness. We suggested establishing informal networks throughout OPM for employee development and knowledge sharing. Informal networks are also an integral part of sustaining openness at OPM.

Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) and Action Plans: these documents guide implementation and make the strategies sustainable. The WBS lists all of the suggested next steps of the strategy documents so the Executive Team of the OIF can manage and the larger OIF can coordinate the many actions necessary to implement openness at OPM. From the WBS, we create action plans that detail how we will implement the actions. We work with offices throughout OPM to develop these action plans so they can "own" the activities to implement the strategies. By sharing pieces of the strategies with different offices, we will help make openness a sustainable part of the culture. The four existing action plans are described below, in the section called "Work Breakdown Structure and Action Plans."

Openness and employee development are closely linked: internal transparency and collaboration facilitate learning, and the competence and improvement in skills that result from learning facilitate openness. In 2011, we added a Chief Learning Officer (CLO) to OPM. The CLO's team – including union partners -is establishing a learning and career center for our

employees. The center is a collaborative effort with universities to integrate curriculum that will provide college credit. The CLO will be vital to the continued implementation of the recommendations we made and actions we committed to in the abovementioned documents.

Collaboration Efforts

Of the three tenets of openness – transparency, collaboration, and participation – we have focused our attention most heavily on collaboration because working together makes the other aspects of openness possible. We have focused our collaboration activities on three main goals:

Sharing ideas and resources across OPM, with other agencies, and with the public: sharing opens our eyes to new solutions to our problems, helps us avoid unnecessary duplication, and allows us to take advantage of economies of scale:

- Through the Core and Component Teams, we surfaced new ideas on making OPM more open and responsive to stakeholders. We will continue this work through existing and future CoPs and similar networks.
- Through collaboration with the National Institutes of Health (NIH), we were able to bring expertise to the Open Government Forum that made it possible to produce the strategies and other documents discussed above. Sharing between the two agencies provided OPM with plain language training to meet a requirement of the Plain Writing Act of 2010 and code for a mentoring program.
- Through a wide range of governmentwide networks, we are sharing ideas about using open source code and implementation experiences. For example, thanks to our collaboration with GovLoop, we learned that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) was pursuing a project similar to OPM’s KMS. We met with the FCC and its staff offered valuable guidance along with FCC software to help us with our KMS. We developed a prototype based on the code shared by the FCC. In turn, we shared our work on integrating an open source document management system into the KMS. We also participate in governmentwide networks that focus on the kinds of soft skills we need to support these technologies, for example, communication and knowledge management.
- We work with external stakeholders, individually or through networks, to share ideas. One example is the [Open Forum Foundation](#); we hosted an “unconference” at which government employees, representatives of nonprofit groups with a focus on government operations, and graduate students exchanged ideas about transparency in government. The outcome of this unconference was [A Guide to Owning Transparency](#) documenting ideas shared by the 75 participants who attended the event.

Changing our culture and acting as one OPM – and even as one government: it is natural for people to concern themselves with their own offices or agencies. However, to the public, we are “the government.” If we work together, we can save resources. We can also provide consistent information to the public, manage performance effectively within and among agencies, and ensure that employees have the right, transferable skills for current and future jobs throughout their careers and as the government’s needs change:

- Internally, through our Labor-Management Transformation Forum and Diversity and Inclusion Council, among others, we are working to act and speak as one OPM by coming to shared understandings of openness, performance management, diversity, and inclusion.
- Other agencies also have equivalent Forums and Councils. Through our governmentwide performance management, diversity, and inclusion efforts, we are helping to act and speak as one Executive.
- We are conducting a governmentwide skills gap analysis to ensure all agencies have employees with mission critical skills such as cybersecurity.
- By working with more than two dozen other agencies and emphasizing open and honest dialogue, we quickly developed a template for a [new performance appraisal system](#) for members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) that has been widely acclaimed.

Improving responsiveness and customer service: customer service is closely linked to acting as one OPM and speaking in one voice:

- In Version 1 of our Open Government Plan, we stated we would pilot a searchable frequently asked questions (FAQs) engine and database so members of the public, and even OPM employees, would have a single place to go to find answers about OPM’s services and policies. The pilot was a success, and visitors to our site can now ask any program office a question through our searchable [FAQs site](#).
- One of our new initiatives, proactive disclosure, will build on the transparency and collaboration of the FAQs.

The above examples are just a sampling of our collaborations. Please see Appendix A: Collaboration Efforts for a list of open government collaborations we have begun or planned.

Knowledge Management System (KMS) and Collaborative Tools

A description of the original flagship initiative in an earlier version states:

Our Office of the Chief Information Officer will introduce innovative technologies to enable employees, the public and other agencies to access centralized

documentation (including information regarding functional processes, policies, and procedures) and to collaborate with one another.

These technologies will empower federal employees and the public to explore information that promotes the creation of rich dialogue and diverse ideas. Through this collaboration, parties will learn from each other, share information, and generate creative thinking to help make a better OPM by increasing morale, improving customer service and internal processes, and enhancing the image of the agency. OPM will be seen as a more transparent, participatory, and collaborative agency.

Overall, these tools will support OPM in creating a learning culture that enables: (1) our employees to continuously enhance the knowledge necessary to be competitive and perform at high levels, (2) better management of workforce talent so the Agency can plan for the future, and (3) sustainable knowledge documentation, sharing, and collaboration with various partners for many Flagship initiatives to come. Also, these tools will better support employees who telework, since much of the information they will need to do their jobs well will be right at hand.

We have begun do demonstrations (demos) of that prototype with other agencies and will share it widely over the months to come. While we will offer the demo to any agency with an interest in seeing it, we will work particularly closely with the other members of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Open Government and Innovation Team (a subgroup of the OMB Open Government Working Group)² to leverage our work for governmentwide use.

Internally, we have been using the crowdsourcing tool IdeaFactory to bring to light employees' ideas for improving OPM and saving money. While the ideas we have implemented may seem small, some have saved money and helped reduce our impact on the environment, while others have made work more pleasant and healthier for employees. For example, one suggestion led to a one-page reduction in the size of a report, but that report is printed frequently. The cumulative savings in paper and ink from this one small change shows the potential of crowdsourcing.

² The team consists of representatives from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), General Services Administration (GSA), National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Science Foundation (NSF), and OPM.

Data.gov

We have provided more than 50 individual raw datasets to [Data.gov](#), and we were one of the first agencies to provide an automated tool for the use, access, and manipulation of data in real time. At a June 10, 2011, White House Champions of Change event, which included a second anniversary celebration for Data.gov, our [Combined Federal Campaign \(CFC\) Detailed Results by Local Campaign](#) dataset received the Highest Rated Dataset Award from the Federal Chief Information Officer and the Data.gov team. That dataset received 1,460 5-star ratings (the highest in the Data Dot Gov schema) from customers, more than 10 times more 5-star ratings than the next highest rated dataset.

Searchable Frequently Asked Questions

In Version 1, we committed to piloting a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs) engine that would allow stakeholders to search for answers to common questions on their own rather than call or email OPM and wait for an answer. Besides providing stakeholders with answers to general questions about OPM's services and functions, this tool also enables collaboration among offices to answer complex questions.

The experiment was a success, and the FAQs engine is now an integral part of the work processes of a growing number of offices. For example, through its use of the FAQs, one office has seen an 80% decrease in email traffic containing inquiries on human resource policy from federal agencies and the public.

When a user views an answer in the FAQs, he or she asked, "did this answer your question?" The answers are "this was not my question" and numbers ranging from 0% to 100% in increments of 25. We use the results to guide our decisions to add new FAQs and rewrite answers in plainer language.

Work Breakdown Structure and Action Plans

We developed a work breakdown structure (WBS) to put our strategic thinking into action. The WBS is a living document that breaks the larger project of making OPM more open down into actionable components. We have developed and begun to implement the following action plans:

Searchable Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): by implementing this action plan, we will better maintain FAQs in plain language in a database to provide easily accessible, consistent, and accurate information to stakeholders. Future knowledge management efforts will be based in large part on this database as a centralized source of information about OPM's operations for both internal and external stakeholders.

Problem Solving Networks: members of problem solving networks will think strategically as they collaborate to review, analyze, and develop creative and cost saving strategies for addressing complex problems at OPM. We will both leverage and build employees' knowledge and skills to solve these problems.

Standard Operating Procedures Library: a standard operating procedure (SOP) document provides a complete set of instructions to perform a certain task and a description of the procedure. Organizations will select, document in a central location, and share internal and external business processes that are needed for succession planning and daily operations. In so doing, they will improve daily operations, close skill gaps, and prepare for workforce changes by making SOPs more easily available to employees.

Electronic File Management 101: organizations will choose one or several projects for which to organize their electronic files, especially but not exclusively email messages and attachments. Electronically filing documents pertaining to specific team and individual projects will make finding and managing project documents quicker and less burdensome. Furthermore, managers and other employees will become more comfortable with electronic records management processes so OPM can more efficiently comply with legal electronic records management requirements.

These action plans are designed to enable OPM to begin implementing some of the recommendations from the Open Government Team's strategies. Specifically, these and future action plans will focus on integrating the principles of openness into our daily work in a very real and concrete way. By taking incremental steps to improve agency operations and customer service, we will put ourselves on the path toward an end state in which we will be widely regarded as responsive to our various stakeholder groups.

Implementing the action plans will help us meet current and future legislative, regulatory, and presidential requirements while we remain focused on our mission, vision, and strategic goals – many without needing additional funding resources.

Plain Language

Our Open Government Forum helped develop OPM's Plain Writing Plan and [website](#). In that plan, we committed to issuing challenges to OPM employees and the public to help us identify and improve documents that are difficult to understand. We are updating [opm.gov](#) and reducing the size of the site by more than 80%, from more than 38,000 pages to fewer than 7,000. The result will be a more usable site with the pages people actually use. Once we launch the new site, we will be ready to issue the challenges. Approximately one month after the updated site goes live later this fiscal year, we will issue the challenges identified in the plan.

The Challenges We've Faced

Any worthwhile endeavor will have its challenges. When it comes to thinking differently and innovatively, the challenges can be daunting. In this section, we discuss one new challenge (working with social media) and two perennial ones (funding and confronting risk).

Social Media

For government, grappling with social media means paying close consideration to:

- The need to ensure that whatever policy is adopted does not abridge the constitutional right to freedom of speech, as interpreted by the courts, and as applied to particular various groups (e.g., Government employees versus members of the general public).
- Expectations by the general public that we will respond all day, every day.
- Guidance from OMB on policy and precedent of usage set by other agencies.
- The Paperwork Reduction Act and the Federal Records Act, as well as related laws and regulations regarding how we interact with and provide information to the public.
- Human resources law and policy, along with funding constraints that limit the number of hours employees can devote to work related social media.
- Program offices' business needs to deliver core mission activities.

Within OPM, we have encountered difficulty in coming to a consensus, not on whether we should engage stakeholders via social media, but on how we should do so:

- Freedom of speech is essential. What does this mean for moderating online discussions?
- How can we provide terms of use that preserve freedom of speech yet still provide optimal user experiences when these are sometimes at odds?
- Spam makes a blog virtually unusable. How should we treat spam once we identify it?
- We have limited resources and the obligation to use funds in the best interest of the American people:
 - When is expending resources on social media staffing a good way of providing service to the American people, and when is it wasteful to do so?
 - Can we shut down operations in the evening and still meet reasonable public expectations?
 - How do we balance responsiveness via social media with budgetary restraints?
 - What internal procedures should we use to deliver this service?
 - How can we best protect personally identifiable information (PII) in this new context?

Because of fundamental questions like these, we have not yet come to a consensus on an agencywide social media policy.

Funding

Funding is always a top concern for agencies, and OPM, like most agencies, has recently experienced budget cuts. We successfully produced strategies for implementing many of the initiatives found in Version 1 of our Open Government Plan, but we have not generally been successful in securing the necessary funds for execution. For example, our flagship initiative will eventually save us money, but the costs of startup and temporarily running parallel systems means we need an influx of funds at a time when budgets are shrinking.

In recent months, we have shifted our attention to pooling our resources with those of other agencies to find ways to develop and share tools by moving to open source solutions. We chose to use open source solutions because many of our external partners are actively developing open sources solutions and because this decision supports the best practices and vision of the Federal CIO. Much like the FCC, the Department of Education, and the General Services Administration (GSA), we adopted a platform approach in choosing open source software components.

The Challenge of Innovation

While budgets affect our ability to implement innovative ideas, culture affects our ability to generate and accept them. Innovative ideas will have fatal flaws. Projects will fail. People will experience disappointment. These are all natural parts of trying something new. We need to weigh the risks of failure with the potential benefits of success – and the risks of continuing practices that are suboptimal.

Another challenge is to break down organizational silos that prevent best practices from being implemented across the organization. OPM has many areas of excellence and innovation and that is why the Open Government Team developed the KMS requirements and Learning and Knowledge Sharing Strategy. Sharing across silos will enable us to change our culture and will help pave the way to successful future initiatives.

How We Will Further Improve Transparency, Collaboration, and Participation

Our new initiatives are designed for us to (1) further our work in collaboration and culture change, then (2) improve customer service and transparency through changes made possible by the culture change and through collaboration, and finally (3) learn from our new experience and innovative thinking.

Leveraging Resources across Government through Collaboration

As we implement the new initiatives described in this section, we will continue our existing work in collaborating with other agencies to learn from one another and leverage participating agencies' resources to meet governmentwide needs and solve governmentwide problems.

Primary among this work will be continuing to collaborate with the OMB Open Government and Innovation Team on developing and sharing the code for open source solutions to managing data, information, and knowledge. We will share these solutions more widely in the federal space. We are also forming a data CoP to work with members of the OMB Open Government and Innovation Team, along with representatives of academia and nonprofit groups, to explore ideas for better access to government data.

We will collaborate with federal, state, and local government employees through a group of developers who use similar open source tools in the government context, to promote coding events ("code-a-thons") as a means to solve problems. The group is planning an event for May 18, 2012. We are planning an OPM specific code-a-thon for June or July in OPM's Innovation Lab; this event will be a blend of a virtual code-a-thon and an onsite visit to demonstrate applications (apps) in a challenge. We will start the code-a-thon with an online announcement of KMS features we need developed. Developers will register on the site and spend the next two weeks working on the apps while sharing ideas on online forums. On the last day of the code-a-thon, we will invite the developers to OPM's Innovation Lab, where they will demonstrate their apps to a judging panel. The winners will be honored by the Director in a ceremony later that day.

New Initiatives for 2012-2013

In 2012 and 2013, we will focus on two areas for which we have recently done significant groundwork and have momentum: (1) moving to a more open performance management culture and (2) establishing collaborative networks, including CoPs, to make innovating easier, more common, and more sustainable.

Enhancing OPM's Performance Management Culture

OPM is one of several pilot agencies working to move to a GEAR (goals, engagement, accountability, results) framework for performance management. We based our GEAR implementation on the results of a study of OPM's culture conducted by our Open Government Component and Core Teams. The focus of the GEAR plan is improving transparency, collaboration, and participation to create an environment that expects, measures, supports, and recognizes high levels of performance. The Open Government Forum contributed to the GEAR effort by sharing the strategies and the process for creating a WBS and Action Plans.

Establishing Communities of Practice (CoPs) and Other Networks for Innovation

We have developed a process for establishing and supporting networks to improve problem solving, information sharing, and collaboration within OPM and with external stakeholders. We will now put this strategic thinking into practice through CoPs focused on data and analytics, diversity and inclusion, project management, and employees' and program offices' gaps in skills. These are only some examples of the networks we will form. Some CoPs (e.g., the one focusing on skills gaps) will be governmentwide, while others (e.g., the project management one) will, at least initially, be more focused on OPM. Yet others (e.g., the data CoP) will involve frequent participation by stakeholders from inside and outside the federal government. Following internal clearance, and assuming it is appropriate, we will share our Communities of Practice Handbook, Networks Strategy, and any new handbooks and strategic documents with other agencies and the public. We will also share lessons learned and best practices internally and externally.

New Initiatives for 2013-2014

For 2013-2014, we have chosen initiatives that will allow us to draw on the work we have already done but that require additional time and planning to complete.

Our new flagship initiative, which entails centralizing our call centers and help desks, surfaced as an idea for our first Open Government Plan, but we quickly learned we needed to lay the infrastructural and cultural groundwork before we could proceed with centralizing them. In particular, we needed a more collaborative culture to reduce the prevalence of organizational silos. We have discussed ways to bring about culture change within OPM at length and are designing the performance management initiative to help in this regard.

Developing and implementing a social media strategy will require offices to abide by agencywide rules. These changes will not always come easily. Proactive disclosure is similarly complex, since it goes beyond responding to FOIA requests to new ways of looking at the public's access to the information we create and will likewise require new processes. Proactive

disclosure may also require new resources (for example, additional web design), and it will undoubtedly require looking differently at how we use resources.

Flagship Initiative: Centralizing Call Centers and Help Desks

We will centralize OPM's call centers and help desks in a logical and orderly fashion. The goal is to provide more logical, less frustrating access to our services through a tiered approach that starts with self-help via our website and goes up to consultation with an expert or the ombudsman's office, as appropriate. To maintain the independence of the ombudsman's office, that office will remain capable of receiving complaints from outside the call center process, but in general, offices will share a single entry point into OPM.

This flagship initiative addresses transparency by making it easier for members of the public to get answers from OPM, where appropriate, and it addresses collaboration by encouraging employees to work together to speak in one voice. It aims to improve operations by providing seamless, accurate, and timely customer service. Finally, it addresses the current federal context by providing cost savings over the medium and long terms by reducing duplication in operational functions.

Enabling Widespread and Uniform Use of Social Media

At this point we are in the final stages of implementing a policy and strategy to reflect the fact that we value openness. We plan to implement this strategy in a manner that will increase responsiveness, improve customer service, and support collaboration with external stakeholders.

Proactively Disclosing Information via OPM.gov

To the extent consistent with applicable law, we will develop and implement a strategy to make more of our information available more quickly without the need for FOIA requests. Along with increasing how much information we release, we will focus on making it easier for stakeholders to find and understand the information we post by providing context and organizing the information in useful ways. Through this initiative, we will better fulfill the requirements of the 1996 amendments to the [Freedom of Information Act](#) and the White House's evolving expectations around transparency. At the same time we will be mindful of the requirements of the Privacy Act, regulations concerning competitive examination material, and other law that governs what may properly be released.

Continuing to Foster an Environment that Embraces Innovation

While we initially listed this as an initiative in Version 1 of our plan, we found that all of our efforts helped to foster an innovative environment. Through collaboration, Action Learning, and making data available in more user friendly formats, we fostered an environment that

appreciates creative thinking, encourages calculated risk taking to solve complex problems with innovative solutions, and values new ways of learning. We will continue in this vein both internally and with external stakeholders.

Conclusion

We learned three important lessons from implementing Version 1 of the Open Government Plan:

- 1) **Collaboration and learning are essential:** like other federal agencies, OPM contributed a number of datasets to Data.gov. But we also realized that openness is more than just providing data to the public. To better serve the public, we need to have a culture of internal openness. Internal openness is achieved when employees build trust through learning together and collaborating with one other, for example, to provide the data in a useful context to the public.
- 2) **Lack of resources does not stop innovation:** whenever we faced a budget or resource challenge, the Open Government Forum was able to find creative ways to continue its work.
- 3) **Sharing knowledge brings in even more knowledge:** we initiated collaborations to share our knowledge but quickly learned that we benefited even more. For example, when we gave a demonstration of the KMS to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), we came away with invaluable guidance on implementing a social media policy and best practices for establishing an employee intranet.

These lessons shaped Version 2 of our Open Government Plan and influenced the selection of our future initiatives. Learning, collaboration, and knowledge sharing are instrumental in creating openness at OPM and for the federal government.

References

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Appendix A: Collaboration Efforts

Table 2: Collaboration Efforts

| Name | Description |
|---|--|
| Big Data Community of Practice (CoP) | OPM CoP that has many external members such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), General Services Administration (GSA), and National Science Foundation (NSF). The purpose is to share best practices for dealing with big data |
| Core and Component Teams | The Open Government Forum operated primarily through these teams. They created all the strategies and related documents by using Action Learning |
| Data Analysis Working Group | The Open Government Forum is participating in this effort by sharing the Data Strategy and CoP Handbook |
| Department of Education | Shared best practices for working with one open source solution |
| Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) | HHS shared their mentoring match software with OPM |
| Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Council | Worked with OPM's D&I program office to bring a broad understanding of diversity to federal employment practices. This model will be implemented throughout the federal sector |
| Federal Knowledge Management (KM) CoP | The KM programs in various agencies are all in different stages of maturation, so they will all benefit from collaborating and sharing experiences and experiments for future KM efforts |
| Federal Communications Commission (FCC) | Shared code and best practices for developing the KMS as an open source platform built around two open source solutions |
| Federal Communicators Network (FCN) | A member from FCN served on the Communication and Collaboration Component Team and helped shape the implementation of the Communication and Collaboration Strategy |

| Name | Description |
|---|--|
| GovLoop | Helped us connect with the broader open government community; shared lots of good information |
| Innovation Lab | An internal, agencywide resource at OPM that will be used by the Open Government Forum to host code-a-thons and CoP meetings. Other agencies and external groups will use the Innovation Lab for similar purposes |
| Labor Management Transformation Forum | Helped make OPM's culture more open, especially regarding performance management. Conduit to collaborating with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) |
| National Institutes of Health (NIH) | Shared their resources on the Plain Language Act |
| Netherlands Research | This collaboration resulted from working with our academic team member from the Center for Technology and Government of the University at Albany to TNO Research Institute in the Netherlands. This was a study commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations on Open Government policy. The aim of the study was to map the context, policy instruments, progress, effects and future plans of Open Government policy in the US, Australia, UK, Spain, Denmark and Estonia |
| OMB Open Government and Innovation Team | OPM, NASA, NARA, NSF, GSA, and the EEOC are working to share best practices on collaboration and learning. We did a demonstration of the KMS to NARA and have met with NSF several times on big data issues. We attended a presentation at NASA on how to host code-a-thons and are working with GSA on Data.gov |
| Open Forum Foundation | OPM hosted an Open Forum Foundation unconference that led to the writing of <i>A Guide to Owning Transparency</i> |
| Performance management and appraisal | GEAR (goals, engagement, accountability, results), a pilot program among five federal agencies to improve performance management, was helped by the Open Government Forum's sharing of strategies and process for creating Action Plans. We also worked with a wide range of other agencies to design a template for a new performance appraisal system for the Senior Executive Service (SES). |

| Name | Description |
|------------------------|--|
| Project Management CoP | OPM internal CoP to share project management best practices among OPM project managers |

Appendix B: Timeline and Measures for New Initiatives

Table 3: New Initiatives for 2012-2013

| Initiative | End Date | Measure | Target |
|---|------------|--|-------------------------|
| Enhancing OPM's Performance Management Culture | 12/31/2014 | "Openness index" using Employee Viewpoint Survey data. Baseline: 59% | 3% improvement per year |
| Establishing Communities of Practice (CoPs) and Other Networks for Innovation | Ongoing | Number of networks per year | 3/year |

Table 4: New Initiatives for 2013-2014

| Initiative | End Date | Measure | Target |
|--|------------|--|--------|
| <i>Flagship Initiative:</i> Centralizing Call Centers and Help Desks | 12/31/2014 | Centralize functionality to the CIO in a phased approach by division | 100% |
| Enabling Widespread and Uniform Use of Social Media | 1/31/2013 | Agencywide social media policy and communication about that policy to the user community | 100% |
| Proactively Disclosing Information via OPM.gov | 12/31/2014 | Quarterly event to demonstrate collaboration based on input from the general public | 3/year |

Table 5: Other New Commitments

| Commitment | End Date | Measure | Target |
|--|---|--|---|
| Share our strategies and KMS requirements with other agencies | 05/30/2012, then as requested or offered | Percentage of strategies and requirements existing as of 04/09/2012 shared with other agencies | 100% |
| Collaborate with federal, state, and local government employees | 5/18/2012 | Attendance at events | 2 employees associated with open government |
| Implement plain language challenges | Approximately one month after relaunch of opm.gov, then quarterly | Completed challenges to both internal and external stakeholders | 100% |
| Replace the Open Government Forum with the OIF led by the Executive Team (CIO, CHCO, locals, CLO, PIO, COO, D&I) | 7/1/2012 | Approval of an OIF charter; completed transition to the OIF by standing up all new teams and CoPs and dissolving all original teams except the Core Team | 100% |
| Make our open government strategies publicly available | 9/30/2012 | Percentage of strategies existing as of 04/09/2012 posted to the Web | 100% |
| Share the KMS demo with a wide range of other agencies | KMS external launch date | Number of interested agencies with which we share the demo | Up to 2 demos per month |

Appendix C: Version 1 Initiatives

With the exception of the flagship initiative, we did not write Version 1 with specific, discrete initiatives. The following table lists ideas we had for fostering openness as we were still learning about the intersection of OPM with open government. As a result, many are no longer pertinent in the form we originally described them.

Table 6: Version 1 Initiatives Other than the Flagship

| Initiative | Status | Notes |
|---|---------------------|---|
| Campaign to reach all of the agency's users, town hall meetings, videoconferences, and webcasts | Ongoing | Mainly through active participation on the Open Government Teams and through OPM's informational fairs |
| Central inquiry location and methodology to enhance responsiveness | Changed | We closely investigated what it would take to create this central location and the result was the flagship initiative for 2013-2014 |
| Competitions | Planned | Will leverage NASA's handbook on conducting challenges |
| Consistent information-sharing on mission-related efforts | Completed | Accomplished through the strategies, the WBS, and the Action Plans |
| New feedback mechanisms | Completed | Open Government Teams, technical demonstrations, and the WBS |
| New methods of increasing collaboration | Ongoing | Open Government Teams, external collaborations, and knowledge-sharing with other agencies and nonprofits |
| Open.gov channel | No longer pertinent | The Web and how it is managed at the federal level have made this idea no longer necessary |
| OpenOPM site redesign | Completed | This was an interim redesign as we awaited the larger opm.gov redesign |

| Initiative | Status | Notes |
|--|-----------|--|
| Refresh of opm.gov | Ongoing | The refresh is nearly complete but will not be made public before this plan is |
| Searchable Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) | Completed | The FAQs were one of our biggest open government “wins” |

The following table provides a list of specific commitments we made for the flagship initiative in Version 1. We have completed the planning stages and are seeking funds and alternative methods to develop the knowledge management system (KMS).

Table 7: Version 1 Flagship Commitments

| Commitment | Status | End Date if Not Completed | Notes |
|---|---------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Solicit ideas for implementing the flagship | Completed | | Component teams, blog |
| Solicit ideas regarding openness more generally from the public | Completed | | Component teams, blog |
| Use Action Learning (AL) | Completed | | The Core Team and component teams all used AL |
| Establish and support communities of practice (CoPs) | Ongoing | N/A; designed not to end | We wrote a Communities of Practice Handbook and have started some CoPs. This effort has been so successful that we are elevating it to an initiative for 2012-2013. |
| Partner with stakeholders | Ongoing | N/A; designed not to end | Component teams, collaboration with other agencies |
| Provide a central database to employees | Not completed | 6/29/2012 | KMS launch as beta |
| Provide collaborative technologies to employees and the public | Not completed | 9/29/2012 | Full KMS launch |
| Run a competition for submitting high-quality content | Not completed | 9/29/2012 | CoP activity |
| Establish an award for innovative ideas | Not completed | 9/29/2012 | CoP activity |

| Commitment | Status | End Date if Not Completed | Notes |
|--|---------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Develop criteria, establish a baseline, and track the success of the initiative on a dashboard | Not completed | 12/14/2012 | Using 6 months of data |

Table 8: Version 1 Five-Year Goals and Actions

| Year(s) | Goal | Action(s) | Status |
|---------|--|--|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Implement the plan to include measures of successful public involvement in creation of OPM policy. The Core Team will develop policy justification standards to create fair access to decision making. The baseline will be created during this year with the tracking tool and responses to citizens' ideas | Implement a tracking tool and create an ideas baseline | Completed |
| 1 | Implement the plan to include measures of successful public involvement in creation of OPM policy. The Core Team will develop policy justification standards to create fair access to decision making. The baseline will be created during this year with the tracking tool and responses to citizens' ideas | Develop standard operating procedures for open government | Completed |
| 1 | Implement the plan to include measures of successful public involvement in creation of OPM policy. The Core Team will develop policy justification standards to create fair access to decision making. The baseline will be created during this year with the tracking tool and responses to citizens' ideas | Post data to the website monthly | Ongoing (designed not to end) |
| 3&4 | Recognize the successes of the current flagship initiative, then determine a new goal (flagship) by using results from a citizen-based survey on the effectiveness of OPM programs | Create an online survey posted to website on initial effectiveness | Ongoing |
| 3&4 | Recognize the successes of the current flagship Initiative, then determine a new goal (flagship) by using results from a citizen-based survey on the effectiveness of OPM programs | Analyze ideas data to determine new flagship and post results | Ongoing |

| Year(s) | Goal | Action(s) | Status |
|---------|---|---|--|
| 5 | Measure the effectiveness of the Directive using citizen-based surveys to determine if in fact the public sees OPM's openness as part of Agency Culture | Create an online survey posted to the website on the existence of an open culture at OPM: April 2014 through April 2015 | Not completed; scheduled for 2014-2015 |

Table 9: Version 1 Performance Measures for Datasets and Survey Results

| Measure | Status | Target | Notes |
|---|---------------------|---|--|
| New datasets submitted to OMB for dissemination to the public | Ongoing | 12 datasets per year | We have been meeting the target. |
| Favorable survey responses regarding OPM's Open Government Flagship Initiative | Developing flagship | Year 1: 33% Year 2: 50% Year 3: 60% | |
| Favorable responses to survey questions regarding whether citizens believe OPM's culture to be open | Developing survey | Year 1: 33% Year 2: 50% Year 3: 60% | Clearance will take 6-18 months (possible option to fast track this) |

Appendix D: Leadership and Contributors

How to Contact the Open Government Team

Please visit our website at <http://www.opm.gov/open/>.

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