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Office of Management and Budget: Open Government

OMB assists the President in overseeing the preparation of the Federal budget and evaluates the effectiveness of agency programs, policies, and procedures, and works to make sure that agency reports, rules, testimony, and proposed legislation are consistent with the President's Budget and with Administration policies. In addition, OMB oversees and coordinates the Administration's regulatory, procurement, financial management, information technology, and information management policies."

In the [Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government](#), issued on January 21, 2009, the President directed the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to issue an Open Government Directive, emphasizing the importance of disclosing information that "the public can readily find and use." Responding to that instruction, on December 8th, 2009, OMB issued the [Open Government Directive](#), which instructed executive departments and agencies to take specific actions to implement the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration, as set forth in the President's Memorandum. This Directive was informed by recommendations from the Federal Chief Technology Officer, who solicited public comment through the White House Open Government Initiative. The Directive set deadlines for both short-term actions to achieve immediate results and long-term goals to institutionalize the principles of openness in Federal agencies.

OMB's main role has been drafting, issuing, and helping to implement this Directive. OMB is also fully complying with the mandates in the Directive.

On Tuesday, February 16th, OMB launched the [OIRA dashboard](#), an easy-to-use website that will allow people to track the progress of Federal rules and regulations that have been submitted for interagency review and find other relevant information about the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA).

An Enabling Policy Framework for Open Government

The Open Government Directive asked the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), in consultation with the Chief Information and Technology Officers, to review existing OMB guidance by April 7, 2010. Specifically, Section 4 asked the OIRA Administrator to "review existing OMB policies, such as Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) guidance and privacy guidance, to identify impediments to open government and to the use of new technologies and, where necessary, issue clarifying guidance and/or propose revisions to such policies, to promote greater openness in government." In response to this instruction, OMB has issued the following eight guidance memoranda:

1. [PRA "Primer"](#): This memorandum provides a primer to agencies and the public with respect to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), in order to specify its central requirements and to increase transparency and openness. The memorandum answers questions such as: What does and does not count as information under the PRA? What are the public notice and comment requirements for information collection requests? What does OMB evaluate during its review of proposed collections?
2. [Social Media and the PRA](#): To advance the goal of promoting greater openness in government, this memorandum explains that agencies can, consistent with the PRA, use social media and

web-based interactive technologies to engage with the public in multiple ways. Among other things, it explains that the PRA does not apply to general solicitations of public views and feedback; that certain types of contests and prizes are not subject to PRA; and that the PRA does not apply to ratings and rankings of posts and comments by website users. This guidance addresses questions frequently asked both by the public and by agencies seeking to use social media to promote participation and collaboration.

3. [Increasing Openness in the Rulemaking Process – Use of the Regulation Identifier Number \(RIN\)](#): Regulatory information online is currently difficult to access and navigate, in part because several websites publish portions of that information at different stages in the rulemaking process. To promote transparency and to help aggregate information, this memorandum provides that agencies should use the Regulation Identifier Number (RIN) on all relevant documents throughout the entire “lifecycle” of a rule. We expect that this requirement will help members of the public to find regulatory information at each stage of the process and will promote informed participation.
4. [Paperwork Reduction Act - Generic Clearances](#): This memorandum provides guidance to agencies with respect to the use of “generic” clearances, which provide a streamlined process by which agencies may obtain OMB’s approval for particular information collections—usually voluntary, low-burden, and uncontroversial collections. As a way to avoid redundant and lengthy approvals, generic ICRs are a useful way to meet the obligations of the Paperwork Reduction Act while eliminating unnecessary burdens and delays.
5. [Improving Electronic Rulemaking Dockets](#): This memorandum titled “Increasing Openness in the Rulemaking Process – Improving Electronic Dockets” promotes greater openness in the regulatory process. More specifically, this provides guidance to agencies in compiling and maintaining comprehensive electronic regulatory dockets on [Regulations.gov](#), in order to give members of the public improved access to information on which agencies rely in making decisions relevant to rulemaking. This guidance is consistent with the purposes and requirements of the Electronic Government Act of 2002, Section 206.
6. [M-10-22, Guidance for Online Use of Web Measurement and Customization Technologies](#): This memorandum allows agencies to use web measurement and customization technologies to improve the Federal government’s services online while also safeguarding the privacy of the American public visiting government websites. The new policy makes clear that there are only two uses for which agencies may employ these technologies: (1) to conduct measurement and analysis of usage, or (2) to customize the user’s experience. The memorandum allows agencies to collect personally identifiable information during the use of such technologies only when the user “opts in” and provides voluntary consent. Before such consent can be given, however, agencies must undergo a 30-day notice and comment period on their proposed use of the information.
7. [M-10-23, Guidance for Agency Use of Third-Party Websites and Applications](#): This memorandum requires agencies to take specific steps to protect privacy when using third-party websites and applications to engage with the public. These steps include (1) examining the third party’s privacy policies to evaluate the risks and determine whether the website or application is appropriate for the agency’s use; (2) performing a *Privacy Impact Assessment* to evaluate privacy implications and identify appropriate safeguards; and (3) updating the agency’s *Privacy Policy* to inform the public about its practices with respect to any personally identifiable information that will be available to the agency.
8. [Disclosure and Simplification as Regulatory Tools](#): The memorandum provides guidance on the use of disclosure and simplification in the regulatory process. The guidance is meant to assist agencies in their efforts to use information disclosure and simplification to achieve regulatory objectives. It distinguishes between (1) summary disclosure, as (for example) in nutritional and MPG labels, and (2) full disclosure, as in comprehensive website disclosures (which can be adapted and repackaged by those in the private sector). The guidance sets out specific principles to inform disclosure policies and separate principles to inform measures (including default rules and automatic enrollment) designed to reduce complexity, ambiguity, and paperwork burdens.
9. [Fast-Track Service Delivery Feedback FAQ](#): Provides answers to agencies on commonly asked questions on the new fast-track process for collecting service delivery feedback under the Paperwork Reduction Act.
10. [PRA Challenges and Prizes FAQ](#)– Provides answers to agencies on commonly asked questions related to conducting challenges, contests, and competitions under the Paperwork Reduction Act.

The review that led to the issuance of these eight memoranda proved invaluable, resulting in improved understandings, important clarifications, and new policies that will help agencies achieve

greater openness. Over the next year, the OIRA Administrator will continue his collaborative review and consider a number of new steps to protect privacy and promote open government, including issuing appropriate guidance as necessary.

Federal Spending Transparency

The Open Government Directive detailed transparency as a cornerstone of an open government. Full and easy access to information on government spending promotes accountability by allowing detailed tracking and analysis of the deployment of government resources. Such tracking and analysis allow both the public and public officials to gauge the effectiveness of expenditures and to modify spending patterns as necessary to achieve the best possible results. Transparency also gives the public confidence that we are properly managing its funds. In response to this, the Deputy Director for Management at OMB is issuing the following memorandum to increase the culture of transparency in federal spending:

[Open Government Directive - Federal Spending Transparency](#): This memorandum establishes an October 1, 2010, deadline for Federal agencies to initiate sub-award reporting and provides a timeline for additional guidance to assist agencies in meeting these goals, initiates new requirements for Federal agencies to maintain metrics on the quality and completeness of Federal spending data provided, and announces the release of the new [USAspending.gov](#) website.

[Open Government Directive - Federal Spending Transparency through Subaward and Executive Compensation Reporting](#): This memorandum provides Federal agencies with guidance on reporting subaward and compensation data for Federal contracts and grants. As required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act ("Transparency Act" or "FFATA") and subsequent OMB guidance, information on the first-tier subawards related to Federal contracts and grants and the executive compensation of awardees must be made publicly available. This memorandum and accompanying documents provide agencies with guidance to implement these reporting requirements.

Share Your Ideas

Share your ideas for how OMB's open government plan can increase transparency, participation, and collaboration. Email us at opengov@omb.eop.gov to let us know your views about what information we should prioritize for publication and your thoughts on the quality of our published information. Your comments will help OMB in developing a plan to improve accountability and performance, and to provide more useful information to the public.

Datasets

See a [full inventory of OMB high-value datasets](#).

Evaluating Our Progress

The [Open Government Dashboard](#) tracks agency progress on the milestones set out in [the Directive](#). Learn more about our [Dashboard scores](#), the steps we have taken, and how we are [evaluating our progress](#) towards achieving the goals of participation, collaboration, and transparency. OMB has completed a [self-evaluation of our Open Government Plan](#) against the criteria laid out in the Directive.

Open Government Plan

As OMB has helped to guide agency implementation of the December 2009 Open Government Directive, we have also complied with its requirements, including the mandate to issue an Open Government Plan. We invite you to review [OMB's Plan](#), and look forward to hearing your views and ideas at opengov@omb.eop.gov as we work to apply the principles of open government to make OMB more accountable, efficient, and effective.