

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

OPEN GOVERNMENT PLANS AND ACTIVITIES

Updated February 15, 2012

Implementing and Enhancing Transparency, Participation, and Collaboration.

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1. Executive Summary

This document discusses the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Open Government Plans and Activities under the auspices of the Department of the Interior Open Government Plan. This is a "living document" and its primary purpose is to foster awareness of ongoing activities and plans relating to open government principles, to facilitate ideas, and explore opportunities to provide greater openness to the public.

2. Background

On January 21, 2009, the President issued a memorandum entitled, "Transparency and Open Government," which sets forth expectations for Federal agencies to be transparent, participatory, and collaborative.¹ The memorandum directed the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to issue an Open Government Directive, which was promulgated on December 8, 2009.²

The OMB Open Government Directive instructs executive departments to execute specific steps in order to implement transparency, participation, and collaboration principles. Those steps include: (1) Publishing government information online; (2) Improving the quality of government information; (3) Creating and institutionalizing a culture of open government; and, (4) Creating a policy framework that enables open government. All of the immediately required steps were completed at the department level, with bureau and office participation. One key deliverable was the development and promulgation of the DOI Open Government Plan (OGP).³

3. Department of the Interior Open Government Plan

The Department released version 1.1 of its OGP on June 25, 2010. The plan discusses the formulation methodology including the solicitation of public comments, alignment with the strategic plan and core mission areas, and specific elements of open government at DOI. The elements are:

- A. Existing DOI Open Government Efforts
- B. Policy modifications to improve transparency, participation, and collaboration
- C. Role of public feedback, participation, and collaboration in key mission areas
- D. External and internal collaboration with innovative methods
- E. Strategic action plan for data transparency and the DOI data inventory
- F. Financial transparency

¹ Presidential Memorandum, "Transparency and Open Government." <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-1777.pdf>.

² OMB Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, M-10-06. http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/memoranda_2010/m10-06.pdf.

³ Available at: <http://www.doi.gov/open/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=28151>. And <http://www.interior.gov/open/index.cfm>

G. Flagship initiative

4. The BLM's Focus

At the bureau level, it is important that all affected staff review the DOI OGP and incorporate the transparency, participation, and collaboration principles into their strategic, tactical, and operational activities. It is also important that the various affected program areas incorporate the DOI Open Government Plan expectations into their program planning and execution to ensure timely compliance. The following tactical plan for the BLM is organized by elements provided in the DOI OGP.

5. Open Government Plans and Activities

a. Data.gov

The BLM Data.gov Working Group was established by the Information Resources Management Staff Directorate to promote and coordinate data and metadata activities within the BLM community in support of the Open Government Directive (OGD). The Working Group consists of representatives from all BLM mission areas and data management staff. This group's activities include the following

- i. Coordination of the BLM Data.gov Team with specific roles and responsibilities.
- ii. Submission of approved/certified data.
- iii. Communication of policy and procedures for the submission, receipt, evaluation, and acceptance or rejection of BLM information for publishing on Data.gov.
- iv. Provision of a forum for reviewing suggestions submitted to Data.gov.
- v. Collaboration with BLM Data Stewards.
- vi. Adherence to BLM Data Quality and Certification guidelines
- vii. Support to the Federal and DOI Open Government initiatives.

b. Recovery.gov and USASpending.gov

The BLM financial and program offices will continue to provide and maintain the most high-quality financial data that is reported on these websites. No specific tactical activity is planned other than the ongoing operational reporting.

c. Information Technology (IT) Dashboard

The IT Investment Management Division staff will continue to work closely with the Department to ensure the highest quality of IT investment information is provided and reported on the website. No specific tactical activity is planned other than the ongoing operational reporting.

d. Records Management Program

- i. The BLM records retention policy and agency-specific Records Management Program ensures public access to BLM records through the creation and maintenance of records schedules. Records schedules are currently available on our Intranet website for easy employee access. BLM records schedules are available to the public at The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) publicly posts BLM's agency-specific records schedules. They are available at: <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/rcs/schedules/index.html?dir=/departments/department-of-the-interior/rg-0049>. And http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/regulations/combined_record_schedules.html.
- ii. General Records Schedules (GRS) and NARA policy are also available for public access at: <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/grs>. The BLM is working to improve the management of electronic records through the implementation of an effective Records Disposition Program per 36 CFR 1224.10. The BLM initiates appropriate measures to improve the management of all electronic records, including web records, as directed by Section 207(e) of the E-Government Act of 2002 [44 U.S.C. 3601]. BLM reports progress in its records management responsibilities to OMB in the Annual E-Gov Act Report through the DOI's Departmental Records Officer.
- iii. The BLM also ensures accessibility of electronic records by: (a) maintaining NARA-approved retention schedules for all federal records in electronic information systems and that records management, (b) incorporating archival functions into the design, development, and implementation of all new information systems; and (c) requiring information technology specialists to complete an "Electronic Recordkeeping Technical Questionnaire" and submit it to the Bureau Records Administrator for review.
- iv. Conduct an annual inventory of records to ensure current and pertinent records retention guidelines are available for access. These guidelines help to determine appropriate NARA-approved records retention and disposal criteria for all records created, and in use, for agency business purposes. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, the BLM performed an inventory (a detailed listing of the volume, scope, and complexity of records) of agency-specific records. The BLM then performs all necessary updates upon completion of the inventory.

- v. The BLM Records Program ensures that knowledgeable staff are available to assist the public by providing training and guidance to staff. The BLM uses a blended approach to providing training and guidance to all employees on agency records disposition requirements, procedures, and other significant aspects of the records disposition program. Upon issuance of a new or revised records schedule, we provide specific guidance to employees responsible for applying the schedule. We have monthly conference calls, individual training sessions, and annual conferences to disseminate pertinent records management information.

Future Internal Records Management Openness & Transparency Tools/Tactics include the following methods:

1. Electronic Records Management System (ERMS)
2. Video teleconferences
3. Webinars/webcasts
4. Training
5. Presentations and workshops for upper management
6. Presentations for the State & Center offices
7. Town hall meetings with employees
8. Employee newsletters
9. Focus groups
10. Surveys

- vi. The role of public feedback, participation, and collaboration in key mission areas:

Testimonies presented by BLM/DOI witnesses are available on the Division of Legislative Affairs' website at:

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/newsroom/newsroom_2.html.

- vii. External and internal collaboration with innovative methods:

Contact information for the Division of Legislative Affairs, including a staff directory with telephone numbers and email addresses, is available at: http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/directory/WO-620_dir.html.

In FY 2012:

The Records Administration and Records Management Programs will be assessed by the WO Records Administrator to assure compliance with directives, policy and guidance, improve the program and provide guidance to BLM Field Offices with the following goals designed to promote openness and transparency.

1. Make records training available to BLM staffs.
2. Evaluate and promote NARA sponsored records training.

3. Update current records policy.
4. Increase and improve communications with the BLM National Operations Center, NARA, DOI and others to provide program support in records management and share information that will facilitate and improve information accessibility to the field and to the public.

e. The Directives Program

Directives is working to ensure that BLM policies and procedures are accessible to the public. “[A] system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration,” begins with the public’s ability to locate and understand current BLM policies and procedures. This requires BLM directives to be clear, current, and readily accessible. To this end, directives are posted to the internet for public viewing. New training is also being designed by Directives to teach BLM employees how to write more clearly, as required by the Plain Writing Act of 2010. Additionally, the Directives Program is working to keep policy current by requiring permanent directives to be updated rather than indefinitely renewed. Updating directives guarantees that accurate and timely information is available to the public.

In fiscal year 2012, Washington Office Directives will work with state and center offices to develop bureau wide training opportunities to ensure that all directives are easy to understand, accessible to the public, and compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. All organizational units will provide input into directives training and inform Washington Office of any issue preventing the dissemination of directives to the public. The success of the Directives Program’s Open Government efforts will be measured by the improved quality of directives, their timely delivery to the public via the internet, and accessibility to individuals with disabilities. Washington Office Directives will assist in determining the level of Section 508 compliance by testing directives posted on the national BLM website as well as state websites.

f. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Program

The BLM FOIA website links the public to the BLM electronic reading room which provides the public easy access to some of the Bureau’s most frequently requested records. The E-reading room website provides the public with access to categories of agencies’ records such as:

1. Final opinions and orders rendered by the adjudication of administrative cases by DOI’s Office of Solicitor.
2. Bureau’s Policy Statements and Directives including National Instruction Memoranda, National Information Bulletins, the Director’s Office Instruction Memoranda and the Director’s Office Information Bulletins. Included within this category are links to the BLM’s publicly released

Manuals and Handbooks. This page covers two categories under the Department of Justice (DOJ) guidelines, which are described as specific agency policy statements and certain administrative staff manuals "that affect a member of the public."

3. Links to the State and Center FOIA office reading rooms, government purchase card holder information, and the DOI FOIA annual reports.

The BLM's main FOIA page also provides links to some of the Bureau's most frequently requested information such as the Interior Board of Land Appeals decisions, statistics on the adoption, gathers and sales of the Wild Horse and Burros, and reports on allotments and permit holders from the BLM's Range Administration System. All of the information aforementioned is available on the Bureau's Frequently Requested Items and "What's New" page.

Furthermore the BLM's main FOIA page provides links to all of the State's and Center's FOIA coordinators' point of contact (POC) information and instructions on how to submit a FOIA request to any of the BLM State and Center Offices on the FOIA coordinator's page. The FOIA "Questions and Answers" page provides the public with answers to some of the procedures on how FOIA requests are processed by the Bureau.

The Bureau FOIA officer is working with State FOIA Officers to reduce the backlog. Some State FOIA Officers are part of a Virtual FOIA Team, where experienced team members provide assistance remotely. For example a Virtual FOIA team member may provide assistance to a backlogged State FOIA Officer by reviewing digitized responsive records and developing correspondence to the FOIA requester.

The BLM is also posting more information to the web via the automated FOIA Reading Room. The Bureau FOIA Officer and other State FOIA coordinators are posting "Frequently Requested Information" to the main FOIA reading room and to State FOIA webpages. Examples of "Frequently Requested Information" includes "FOIA logs" showing requesters and records requested and responsive records which have been requested by three or more requesters.

For action in FY12:

The FOIA team will be continuing program improvements with the following activities:

1. Washington Office Program Offices will be invited to participate in Brown Bags, an Open House and a Bureau-wide FOIA Awareness Week in FY 12. During the bureau-wide FOIA Awareness Week, the State Offices will be holding various related activities which will assist the

State FOIA Specialists to train on policy related to the program. Other events during this week consist of the launching of a few new State FOIA Web pages and educational opportunities. These events will focus on training requirements for the program staff to bring more awareness of policy changes and basic FOIA procedures. Feedback sheets and evaluation forms will be available for the participants.

2. State FOIA Specialists and the Bureau FOIA Officer will conduct reviews of information on the FOIA Intranet/Internet pages to determine currency and accuracy. In particular, the review focus evaluates the information quality of questions on the “FOIA Questions and Answers” page at http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/res/FOIA/questions_answers.html and other information which requires updates to changes in policy. The BLM procedures and the DOI policy guidance section of the Intranet will be the focus for the State Offices. Feedback on these pages is invited through BLM_WO_FOIA@blm.gov as well as from the “Contact us” capability of the BLM Internet site. Internal feedback on these pages may also be sent to the Bureau FOIA officer, Laura F. Bell via lfbell@blm.gov.
3. The “Frequently Requested Records” page will be updated as new records requests are recorded. The Bureau FOIA Officer and the State Offices are encouraging program offices to record and nominate records which are popular or included in the “hot topics” category for posting. The Bureau FOIA officer is also conducting reviews of requests by running reports utilizing the Electronic FOIA Tracking System and by observing other Federal Executive agency practices on their public web sites. Program office and solicitor review must be completed prior to some postings.

g. Congressional Requests for Information

The BLM’s Division of Legislative Affairs reports directly to the Assistant Director, Communications, and is the BLM’s primary POC with Congress. The Division works closely with DOI’s Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs to ensure the congressional communications of DOI and the BLM are coordinated.

Congressional requests for information include requests to present BLM/Administration testimony at Committee hearings on proposed legislation or oversight topics, brief congressional staff on BLM resource management issues, and respond to congressional document requests, informal telephone calls, or emails from staff asking for constituent assistance. The Division prepares appropriate responses, including testimony and briefing materials, and investigates and responds to congressional staff requests.

h. Information Quality

The Information Resources Governance Management, Washington Office Staff will continue its information quality program management duties in accordance with OMB, Departmental, and Bureau established guidelines. Any challenges to the quality of BLM information will be processed expeditiously in accordance with the guidelines. The program staff will promote the importance of information quality—utility, objectivity, and integrity—by conducting presentations to the Washington Office and field staff via conferences and publications.

For action in FY12:

Program Offices, State Offices, and Centers (organizational units) should review and be familiar with the updated BLM Information Quality Guidelines (dated February 9, 2012), and information fact sheet located at:

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/National_Page/Notices_used_in_Footer/data_quality.html.

In accordance with the Guidelines, all organizational units must ensure the quality (objectivity, integrity, and utility) of influential information disseminated. Each unit will designate an information quality advisor who: (1) works with the organizational unit to ensure quality standards are implemented; and (2) facilitate information quality act information correction requests—ensuring timely processing and coordination with the WO information quality program officers.

Periodic reviews will be conducted by the WO using the following metrics to assist in determining the level of awareness, implementation, and execution of information quality practices:

1. Whether or not the organizational unit has identified an information quality advisor who performs the aforementioned duties.
2. To what degree the organizational unit is applying information quality standards (as detailed in the aforementioned guidelines) to influential information disseminated.
3. To what degree the organizational unit is proactively using existing review and comment processes (and any additional processes) to maximize Public input and participation in influential information prior to dissemination.
4. The degree of compliance regarding processing time of information correction requests in accordance with the aforementioned guidelines.
5. The level of organizational unit awareness and implementation of any necessary corrective actions regarding lessons learned from information correction requests.

6. Appendix

January 21, 2009 Presidential Memorandum:

Government should be transparent. Transparency promotes accountability and provides information for citizens about what their Government is doing. Information maintained by the Federal Government is a national asset. My Administration will take appropriate action, consistent with law and policy, to disclose information rapidly in forms that the public can readily find and use. Executive departments and agencies should harness new technologies to put information about their operations and decisions online and readily available to the public. Executive departments and agencies should also solicit public feedback to identify information of greatest use to the public.

Government should be participatory. Public engagement enhances the Government's effectiveness and improves the quality of its decisions. Knowledge is widely dispersed in society, and public officials benefit from having access to that dispersed knowledge. Executive departments and agencies should offer Americans increased opportunities to participate in policymaking and to provide their Government with the benefits of their collective expertise and information. Executive departments and agencies should also solicit public input on how we can increase and improve opportunities for public participation in Government.

Government should be collaborative. Collaboration actively engages Americans in the work of their Government. Executive departments and agencies should use innovative tools, methods, and systems to cooperate among themselves, across all levels of Government, and with nonprofit organizations, businesses, and individuals in the private sector. Executive departments and agencies should solicit public feedback to assess and improve their level of collaboration and to identify new opportunities for cooperation.