



February 24, 2009

M-09-12

MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM: John P. Holdren, Assistant to the President for Science and Technology  
Peter Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Paul F. Prouty, Acting Administrator, General Services Administration

SUBJECT: President's Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government - Interagency Collaboration

On January 21, 2009 President Obama signed the Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government affirming his Administration's commitment to innovation in government (see attached). The President's Memorandum calls for the development of recommendations for a Directive. This Directive will, in turn, instruct departments and agencies on specific actions that implement the principles outlined in the President's memorandum:

- Transparency - “[P]ut information about their operations and decisions online and readily available to the public.”
- Participation - “[O]ffer Americans increased opportunities to participate in policymaking.”
- Collaboration - “[U]se innovative tools, methods, and systems to cooperate ... across all levels of Government and with nonprofit organizations, businesses, and individuals in the private sector.”

The implementation of the Memorandum will be conducted as a collaborative, interagency process. To contribute recommendations for the Directive, federal employees are invited to participate in an online discussion via the MAX Federal Community. OSTP, OMB and GSA will host this discussion through March 6<sup>th</sup> to identify topics for the Directive. This initial online conversation will be followed by an opportunity in March and April for each agency to submit official statements of position, collaborate on drafting the Directive, and review the final draft Directive.

Please invite legal, policy, and programmatic officials and staff throughout your agency to participate before March 6<sup>th</sup> by joining the Open and Innovative Government Community on MAX at: <https://max.omb.gov> (click on Open Government under Government-Wide Communities). Please note that an invitation will also be distributed through the CIO Council. We therefore ask that you invite additional interagency groups to participate.

The online session is intended to be an opportunity to propose topics, strategize alternatives, and make suggestions. As such, participation is not limited to one person per agency nor will contributions be considered an official agency response. Instead, specific recommendations that identify mechanisms, incentives, tools, and opportunities to further transparency, participation, and collaboration are sought as well as identification of potential legal, policy, and programmatic issues that will need to be resolved.

In order to realize the opportunity for transformational, government-wide reform, we will showcase examples of innovations underway and proposed pilot projects that will lead to a more innovative and effective government. The MAX environment will provide a short template for submitting or proposing an agency innovation.

Attachment

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, January 21, 2009**

SUBJECT: Transparency and 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.* 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.

I direct the Chief Technology Officer, in coordination with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Administrator of General Services, to coordinate the development by appropriate executive departments and agencies, within 120 days, of recommendations for an Open Government Directive, to be issued by the Director of OMB, that instructs executive departments and agencies to take specific actions implementing the principles set forth in this memorandum. The independent agencies should comply with the Open Government Directive.

This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

This memorandum shall be published in the *Federal Register*.

BARACK OBAMA