



Open Government Plan

November 1, 2016

Executive Summary

In January 2009 President Obama released an executive memorandum that called on federal agencies to be more transparent, to encourage more participation, and to enhance collaboration. As part of the Administration's Open Government Initiative – formally articulated in the Open Government Directive published by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in December 2009 – federal agencies were asked to prepare an Open Government Plan to document current and future open government efforts aimed at increasing public trust and improving efficiency and effectiveness. In a 2009 Memorandum to Heads of Departments and Agencies, the President outlined his policy for federal agencies. The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) created a comprehensive Open Government Plan in 2010 that described how the agency worked to address the challenges and opportunities presented by this policy. In December 2013, the Obama Administration released the second "Open Government National Action Plan for the United States of America," which included 23 new or expanded open government commitments.

The OMB released updated guidance in July 2016 that details how federal agencies should develop their new plans. NCPC has taken this framework to create an updated Open Government Plan, which serves as the agency's blueprint for integrating the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration into its work.

NCPC is committed to the principles of transparency and open government and works to make all of its activities and information accessible to the public whenever possible. NCPC encourages public comment, collaborates with key stakeholders, and regularly disseminates information about its activities as part of the agency's core mission. However, NCPC recognizes that more can be done to expand opportunities for participation and collaboration, and provide easier access to information.

The previous Open Government Plan established goals and various initiatives that have made the agency more open and more effective in its core work. These initiatives have caused the agency to think differently about how we manage and store information. Many of the previously published goals have been achieved: create system for publishing public notices; improve early posting; transition to fully electronic archives; and provide a consolidated, visible website location for agency compliance policies.

The updated 2016 plan includes new and expanded commitments to make the agency even more transparent, participatory and collaborative. We will complete a comprehensive update to the agency's website to improve performance, organization, and security, and provide users with clear, accessible and engaging content. NCPC will also update its Submission Guidelines, implement online platform for agencies to submit their projects for review, and develop a Public Participation Plan. We will complete work on our updated privacy policies and we have prepared a digital strategy. NCPC will leverage new and emerging technologies to assist with implementing the initiatives. We will expand on the successes from previous efforts by employing new methods of public engagement, enhance access to the agency's records and data within the limits prescribed by law, and foster an environment of sharing and cooperation.

NCPC will publish an annual status report regarding its open government efforts, and update the plan on a biannual basis. In addition, NCPC will post available metrics regarding its ongoing open government activities. Ultimately, NCPC expects its open government activities to create greater public awareness and accountability around the proposed plans and development projects within its jurisdiction, making it easier for core constituencies and all Americans to learn about and participate in the development of the nation's capital.

Introduction

The Open Government Directive

As the first order of business of his new Administration, President Obama released an executive memorandum on January 21, 2009 that called on federal agencies to embrace a new era of openness and adopt new practices aimed at making the U.S. Government more transparent, participatory and collaborative. As part of the Administration's Open Government Initiative – formally articulated in the Open Government Directive published by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in December 2009 – federal agencies were asked to prepare an Open Government Plan to document current and future open government efforts aimed at increasing public trust and improving efficiency and effectiveness. In December 2013, the Obama Administration released the second "Open Government National Action Plan for the United States of America," which included 23 new or expanded open government commitments. The OMB released updated guidance in July 2016 that details how federal agencies should develop their new plans.

The National Capital Planning Commission

The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) is the central planning agency for the federal government in the National Capital Region. Established in 1924, NCPC is charged by Congress to protect and enhance the natural, historic, and cultural resources of the region. The 12-member Commission meets 11 times each year to adopt, approve, or provide advice on plans and projects that impact the region. The Commission, and is supported by a staff of planners, architects, urban designers, and other professionals.

The National Capital Region

The National Capital Region (NCR) encompasses the District of Columbia; Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties in Virginia; and the incorporated cities of Alexandria, Falls Church, Fairfax, and Manassas. The approximately 2,500 square mile (6,475 sq. km) region is home to over 4.6 million people. As the nation's capital and the seat of the federal government, the region has a significant concentration of federal assets and operations, a large federal workforce, and is home to national institutions and cultural, historic and natural resources attracting visitors from around the world.

Overview of NCPC Activities

For the purpose of assessing and improving public awareness and understanding NCPC, its activities may be broken down into the following categories:

Commission Meetings — regular business meetings at which the Commission takes action on plans and projects submitted to NCPC for review. The Commission also adopts plans and studies as policy that guides subsequent review of plans and projects.

Plan and Project Review—the process by which the agency's staff formulates the recommendations presented to the Commission at its regular meetings regarding federal development proposals and master plans across the NCR, and certain other projects within the District of Columbia.

Comprehensive Planning—preparation of the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital* which address matters related to federal properties and federal and national interests in the NCR, such as federal workplaces, foreign missions, and the environment. The agency also reviews and approves the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan which are prepared by the District of Columbia Office of Planning and provide guidance for local development in the District of Columbia. Together, the Federal and District Elements establish planning policies that address federal and local interests in the region's development.

Plans and Studies—NCPC-led initiatives with various scopes and time frames for completion that advance the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. This work may result in the issuance of broad or detailed design and development guidelines, strategies for implementation and interagency cooperation, feasibility assessments for specific projects, reports for public distribution, or planning policies related to federal interests in the capital city and surrounding environs.

Capital Improvements Planning—annual review of the federal and local capital improvements plans that provide a link between longer-range comprehensive planning goals for the region and annual capital budgets. With the Federal Capital Improvements Program, NCPC compiles and evaluates proposals from Federal agencies that identify capital projects and provide corresponding budget estimates. NCPC also has specific review authority over the annual District of Columbia multi-year capital improvements plan, and evaluates the capital improvements programs of other local jurisdictions within the region to determine their effect on federal interests.

Locality Plan Review—the review of draft plans prepared by cities and counties within the NCR to determine if there is a federal interest at stake and to help local agencies coordinate with affected federal entities. Types of plans include comprehensive, area, transportation, open space, historic preservation, and other similar plans.

Plan Overview

The President's call for more open government fits squarely within NCPC's existing goals and objectives. As the federal agency responsible for guiding planning and development within the nation's capital, NCPC collaborates and consults with various stakeholders throughout the region – including other federal agencies, state and local governments, Congress, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and the general public. To ensure that its plans, policies, and actions reflect the interests of regional stakeholders and the general public, NCPC regularly disseminates information about its activities and frequently solicits input from the public regarding its planning efforts.

Through the preparation and implementation of this Open Government Plan, NCPC seeks to cultivate a strong culture of open government organized around the principles of transparency, participation and collaboration. This is critical to ensure that the agency can leverage the benefits of open government to increase public participation and stakeholder collaboration, while creating greater accountability in regards to the agency's plans and projects.

NCPC prepared an updated draft Open Government plan in 2016. Staff from all of the agency's functional units were consulted regarding potential agency actions related to open government. The agency will publish a status report evaluating its open government efforts each March, and will continue to update the plan on a biannual basis. NCPC posts its open government plans, status reports, guidance documents, and measurement data at www.ncpc.gov/open.

Plan Components

Transparency

NCPC is committed to transparency with the public on all Commission activities. Commission meetings are open to the public, live-streamed online, and video proceedings and meeting materials are publically available following the meeting on the agency website. NCPC welcomes comments from stakeholders at Commission meetings and other events, and seeks to make commenting in-person or online easy and accessible for the public by providing and publicizing the online platforms available on our website. The Commission agenda and project materials for Commission items are available for public review in person at NCPC's offices and online, and staff recommendations are posted electronically before meetings. Notices about the agency's periodic public meetings and events related to important projects and plans are provided electronically through e-newsletters, social media and the agency's website, and are included in press advisories sent to print and online media outlets. NCPC archives Commission actions and staff reports (since 2003) and Commission meeting videos (since 2012) online. The public also has access to other archived agency publications and documents.

NCPC is committed to conducting its work more openly and making information about its activities more easily available to stakeholders and regional and national audiences. NCPC strives to provide the public with complete information about its activities, and complies with all legal information dissemination obligations as defined in the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. § 3506(d) and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552 (as amended). However, the agency also recognizes that providing additional information about its actions beyond what is currently mandated can help improve the public's understanding of NCPC's work, and foster constructive analysis that will help improve the agency's performance.

Open Data

NCPC complies with the July 14, 2016 Open Data Memorandum (OMB M-16-16) by publishing all non-restricted datasets that are shared with other federal agencies. As a small agency with a planning-focused mission, NCPC develops a limited, discrete amount of data. Broadly, this includes: Commission actions and staff reports, Commission meeting videos, submission information for reviewing development projects and plans and agency reports; regional federal capital improvement projects; comprehensive plan policies, including research data; agency plans and reports related to capital city interests, such as small area plans, viewshed models, and studies on commemoration, parks, and infrastructure; and agency reporting documents. The following high value data sets, developed since 2012 and providing information about the agency's core activities, are available on the agency website: The Commemorative Works Catalog, Central Files Information System, Meeting Transcripts, and Library Contents. Once the website redesign has been completed, more datasets will be developed.

NCPC provides easy access to public reports, project materials, public comments, studies, draft reports and other resources online. Since 2014, NCPC has moved all of its publically available information to digital formats. Hard copy versions are available at NCPC's offices or the National Archives. NCPC has internal guidance for handling 'for official use only' materials. NCPC utilizes outreach tools like social media services, the monthly e-Newsletter, and easily accessible notices on the website to alert the public and key stakeholders to available information resources, particularly during the development of agency products.

NCPC has reposted and updated datasets provided to Data.gov in machine readable formats consistent with new reporting technologies. NCPC will continue to review new datasets developed across the agency for posting in machine readable formats on the agency's website and Data.gov.

Proactive Disclosures

NCPC provides tentative and final agendas, project materials and staff recommendations in advance of Commission meetings. Access to this information gives the public review opportunity. NCPC has continuously posted this information electronically since the 2014 Open Government Plan.

Privacy

NCPC is committed to appropriately using and protecting information collected from the public in accordance with applicable laws. We acknowledge the dual interests in transparency and privacy that are both important components of NCPC's commitment to engage the public. NCPC relies on information, opinions and comments from the public as part of its analysis of projects and studies. Public opinion helps the agency make more informed decisions about these endeavors. NCPC collects no personally identifiable information other than what is needed to document comment submissions, sign up for newsletters or initiative announcements, sign up to speak at a Commission meeting or other public event, or enable staff to reply to public inquiries. Every effort is made to safeguard this information using current technologies, including data encryption. Occasionally, NCPC will request voluntary information when asking for public feedback on a project or study, such as names and emails or neighborhoods. NCPC has updated its privacy policy to comply with the requirements of the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. § 552a as amended) regarding how data is collected, maintained and disclosed.

NCPC's current privacy regulations were adopted in 1977, and other than publication of amendment to NCPC's then-current System of Records in 1992, there have been no changes. NCPC has recently drafted updated Privacy Act regulations as the first step in updating its privacy policies and expects to issue a notice of proposed rulemaking in the near future to solicit public comment.

Whistleblower Protection

NCPC has a Whistleblower Protection policy in place that complies with 5 U.S.C. § 2302(c) to ensure, in consultation with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC), that employees are informed of their rights and remedies under the prohibited personnel practices and whistleblower retaliation protection provisions of Title 5.

Websites/Digital Strategy

NCPC moved forward with the review and full update of the agency website, with a new website scheduled for release by the end of calendar year 2016. NCPC solicited information from the public and key internal and external stakeholders through interviews, presentations, and online comment in order to create the most useful product for the public. NCPC is also developing a formal digital governance plan as required by the 2016 Open Government Guidelines. Currently, NCPC is not participating in analytic.gsa.gov because we have our own analytics, but we plan to join the analytics program in the near future.

Open Innovation Methods

NCPC is committed to new and innovative methods to increasing public participation and ideas-sharing. The Memorials for the Future ideas competition, in partnership with the National Park Service and the Van Alen Institute and listed on challenge.gov, explored new approaches to commemoration and embodied future NCPC innovation pursuits. The competition called upon the public to propose ideas to innovate memorials across the nation's capital and used prizes and public events to further the discussion.

NCPC aims to expand on innovative techniques to further engage the public in agency activities. Currently, in-

person and online participation is done through charrettes, public meetings, workshops and open houses, online comment boards, videos, and infographics. Additional competitions and hackathons are new and exciting methods NCPC might use in the next two years.

Access to Scientific Data and Publications

NCPC publishes all reports and scientific data online for public access. NCPC develops only a limited amount of scientific data, but often serves to provide externally produced studies, such as regional flooding studies, for use by the public and interested stakeholders. NCPC is a small federal agency, does not meet the threshold of \$100 million per year on research and development, and therefore is not required to meet policies set forth in the 2013 Office of Science and Technology Policy (OTSP) directive.

Open Source Software

NCPC uses and contributes to open source software to increase innovation potential, in line with the agency's mission. Usage and contribution is consistent with the Federal Source Code Policy and includes:

- PHP
- Drupal
- jQuery
- Google
- Bootstrap

Participation in Transparency Initiatives

NCPC is committed to participating in federal transparency initiatives where relevant and pursuant to the agency's mission, objective and scope. NCPC uses SAM.gov and IT Dashboard, but has traditionally not been required to participate in federal initiatives such as eRulemaking (e.g. Regulations.gov), Recovery.gov, Grants.gov. NCPC does not make any federal awards or grants. Therefore, it has not participated in Recovery.gov or USASpending.gov.

NCPC has uploaded its datasets to Data.gov in machine readable formats and will continue to do so as new datasets are developed. The agency does report financial information in accordance to the 2014 DATA Act and will continue to do so for the 2017 fiscal year. NCPC will also continue to provide datasets to Data.gov in machine readable formats consistent with the new reporting technologies.

Public Notice

NCPC provides early public notification for agency activities and public meetings. The agency uses social media, website postings, stakeholder meetings and workshops, public meetings and published notices to engage and inform the public of agency activities. NCPC has a well-established system for public notification of all items subject to Commission review that includes electronic notifications, website listings, and media releases. An outreach strategy tailored to its topic area and likely stakeholders is prepared for each major agency planning initiative.

Records Management

NCPC's records management program complies with federal law under 36 CFR Subchapter B) including such activities as identifying and scheduling all electronic records (E-Government Act of 2002, Pub L. No. 107- 347, section 207(e). The agency conducts an inventory of its printed and electronic records on an annual basis and follows the disposition schedule for transfer of records to the National Archives. NCPC has completed its process of moving to a fully electronic records management system defined in the 2014 Open Government

Plan. NCPC adopted procedures for handling classified materials in 2013, pursuant to Executive Order 12958, Classified National Security Information. As NCPC does not maintain any classified records, the agency has no need for an information declassification program. All information regarding the agency's management of paper and electronic records may be found in the NCPC Records Management Handbook, updated in October 2009.

Requests for Information

NCPC welcomes requests for information from members of the public, which may be general, related to items on the Commission meeting agenda, or regarding an agency planning initiative. NCPC receives a small number of requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act each year (approximately 10-12). The agency has no backlog of requests to address.

NCPC updated its FOIA regulations in 2014. Formal requests under FOIA are accepted via mail, fax, or email. Incoming requests are handled by the agency's designated Chief FOIA Officer, who typically responds in a matter of days. Every year, NCPC prepares a summary of the FOIA requests it receives and their disposition. This information is available in the annual FOIA Report, which is published on the NCPC website.

Congressional requests for information are handled in the same manner as FOIA, with staff striving to fully respond to requests within 3 business days. While it receives very few formal requests for information under FOIA or from Congress, the agency responds on a weekly basis to several informal public requests for information.

Full details regarding the NCPC's records management program and process for responding to FOIA and Congressional requests for information are available on the NCPC website at www.ncpc.gov.

Public Participation

NCPC actively and continuously encourages public participation in its activities and processes. Members of the public are welcome to participate in Commission meetings through a variety of mediums. NCPC uses social media services, a monthly e-Newsletter, electronic event notifications, and regular website updates to notify the public of meetings, special events, and Commission activities. Deadlines for public participation registrations are regularly posted and updated on the website's home page. NCPC has tested commercial, online public participation tools, but has decided to research and develop public participation applications in-house.

There are many opportunities for participation beyond attending Commission meetings. NCPC provides opportunities for public comment on proposed projects and plans. Comments can be submitted verbally at formal and informal public meetings, using email or via an online form, and by written letter.

NCPC continues to use previously successful techniques to encourage public participation while also trying out and incorporating new practices. In-person and online participation is done through charrettes, public meetings, workshops, open houses, online comment boards, videos, and infographics. The previously noted Memorials for the Future ideas competition was a new approach to engage public participation.

NCPC's website is an important means for notification, engagement, and receiving public comment. Dedicated webpages for major initiatives offer highly visible ways to learn about projects, sign-up for information, and submit formal and informal comments. For example, a page developed for a new urban design policy initiative enabled the public to use maps and images to learn about federal buildings and public spaces in Washington, DC, and provide comments displayed by geographic location. NCPC's website also offers easily accessed information on projects and plans available for public comment, upcoming public meetings and events, and

guidelines for offering testimony at Commission meetings.

NCPC is looking forward to developing a robust Public Participation Plan as its flagship initiative. This plan will be developed in conjunction with a current effort to update NCPC's submission guidelines for projects reviewed by the Commission. NCPC hopes to release its draft Public Participation Plan by July 2017.

Collaboration

NCPC regularly collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders. The agency maintains ongoing working relationships with federal agencies, local governments, and other public and private entities involved in the planning and development of the National Capital Region. NCPC is convening federal and regional agencies to learn about technical climate studies and resources. Relevant examples include NCPC's collaborative efforts in response to President Obama's Executive Order 13690 on improvement to federal buildings in the face of flooding and storm water with numerous federal and local government agencies and the DC Silver Jackets. The Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative also works with federal and District agency stakeholders with regulatory and management responsibilities within this area on long-range urban design goals, and is also holding public meetings throughout the process at key decision points.

NCPC provides information regarding its activities and actions to stakeholders on a regular basis. NCPC coordinates monthly meetings with federal and District stakeholders on projects schedules for Commission review. All collaborative project and initiatives are posted on the agency's website. Examples of these partnership initiatives include the SW Ecodistrict, the Monumental Core Climate Adaptation working group, and the previously mentioned Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative (www.ncpc.gov, [/swecodistrict](http://swecodistrict); [/climate](http://climate); [/pennavenue](http://pennavenue)) In addition, several members of NCPC's senior staff serve on regional boards and councils, helping to enhance coordination and collaboration between the agency and other governmental bodies.

New and Expanded Initiatives

Expand Use of JSON Files

JSON is a type of format that is readable by machines and contain data that can be used for automation. NCPC already has many JSON type files that are used by the website to populate certain areas with data. By creating more JSON files, they can be published for public use and therefore improve posting of agency information.

Target date for completion: February 2017

Review Procedures for Safeguarding Privacy

NCPC gathers information, opinions and comments from the public as part of its analysis of projects and studies. NCPC is committed to appropriately using and protecting information collected from the public on its website. NCPC has developed new privacy policies, pursuant to the Privacy Act, for how data is collected, when it is collected, why It is collected, and what is collected to ensure compliance with requirements for protecting personally identifiable information. Once the new website has been completed, NCPC will review and confirm that our online processes comply with privacy policies.

Target date for completion: March 2017

Create System to Make the Website Search Feature Smarter and Easier

NCPC currently has a standard search using keywords to populate a results page. In order to make using the website easier and more convenient a smarter search feature will include an auto generated list of suggestions based on the typed keyword. Also, a listing on the results page of the most popular search terms, last search terms used and a direct link to key resource pages.

Target date for completion: June 2017

Create New Datasets for data.gov

NCPC has four datasets listed on data.gov, but these are static files and need to be updated. Also, new datasets listing videos, public events, news, and press releases will be created and posted on data.gov for the public.

Target date for completion: March 2017

Create a System to Deliver Meeting Materials

NCPC currently delivers hard copies of meeting materials via the postal service to Commission and Coordinating Committee members. These materials can and should be delivered electronically. A secure, password-protected area will be created to list all materials for download and viewing.

Target date for completion: April 2017

Review Digital Strategy

NCPC will review our digital strategy, pursuant to the executive memorandum “Building a 21st Century Digital Government,” that will drive all of our digital datasets, assets, and footprint. This review will ensure our strategy is working properly to determine which datasets will be archived, how NCPC will use our digital assets, what its digital footprint will look like, and how the agency can best use them for collaboration and public participation.

Target Date of completion: January 2017

Expand Social Media and Create Policies for Internal and External Use

NCPC already uses social media to enhance its outreach program. We will encourage more participation by creating Facebook apps, using social media plug-ins and cross-promoting all of the social media platforms. NCPC is continually researching other platforms for possible inclusion in its social media efforts.

Target Date of Completion: December 2017

Research Online Platforms for Stakeholder Collaboration

NCPC will research options for an online platform to facilitate regular communication and collaboration with its various public sector stakeholders. In addition to contacts management, information sharing, and messaging tools, the platform will support online meetings.

Target date for completion: May 2017

Previous Flagship Initiative

Web Site Update

NCPC's agency website redesign is approximately 70% completed, with an internal review and user testing still to do. The new website is estimated to be completed by the end of 2016. The web site will provide more than just a new look; it has a new structure, new navigation system, enhanced security, and new interactive content. NCPC leveraged the latest tools, plug-ins and platforms to make the user experience more modern and more engaging. At the project start, NCPC solicited comments from internal and external website users and the general public regarding the existing website's strengths and weakness, and ideas for the new website to improve access, ease of use, and improved content.

Current Flagship Initiatives

NCPC is planning three flagship initiatives to strengthen its efforts to be more transparent, participatory and collaborative.

Submission Guidelines

NCPC will update its submission guidelines for projects the Commission receives for review. The Guidelines tell applicants the kinds of information we want, but just as importantly, they feed into staff analyses and recommendations and support the Commission's decision-making. The guidelines set up how and when we engage applicants on a range of planning topics, and how projects are prepared for Commission review. The Guidelines are fundamentally important to achieving good planning outcomes for federal development in the region. The Guidelines will provide opportunities for earlier input on project design, clarify the various review stages and help the public better understand the questions that the Commission and staff will ask at each review stage. The update will also help the Commission, applicant agencies, and the public better understand how NCPC's project review occurs in the context of other agency reviews and federal requirements for historic preservation and environmental protection.

Target date for completion: May 2017

Develop Public Participation Plan

NCPC will develop a public participation plan that will guide how and when the agency informs and engages the public, and receives formal and informal comment. The Plan will consider the agency's primary activities: comprehensive plan and policy development; review of federal master plans and development projects; and signature planning initiatives; the role and interests of the Commission, staff, federal and regional agencies, and the general public; and the various tools used by the agency, including digital and social media, Commission meetings, public and stakeholder meetings, educational events and workshops, printed materials, and media. The plan will set goals, standards, and responsibilities for how we conduct public outreach. It will help guide us when planning activities and provide tools for assessing public interest.

Target date for completion: September 2017

Online Platform for Project Submissions

Currently there is no way to submit projects to NCPC in an online platform. Projects are delivered by courier, the postal service, or in person. An online submission platform will greatly increase the efficiency and convenience of this process. This would also enable NCPC to provide the public staff analysis, access to submission materials, and opportunities to comment sooner and with more accuracy.

Target date for completion: July 2017