Many federal agencies have developed useful—even innovative—open government practices. This report does not purport to cover all such practices in government, but intends to highlight some models that could be replicated and improved upon by agencies. The highlighted examples also are not necessarily representative of the open government reforms we seek and have recommended in other policy documents relating to the Open Government Directive and Open Government Partnership, for example (see “Resources for Best Practices” on page 12-13). Yet, the practices we highlight here have noteworthy elements of openness.

Our organizations provided and reviewed examples of federal government transparency and accountability practices that we felt should be shared with other agencies. The examples are divided into eight topics. In most cases, the examples could be improved upon by the agency. Accordingly, we established “Key Criteria for Successful Practices” for each topical area that we believe agencies should strive for. We hope this will serve as a guide to the Administration and individual agencies as they further develop their “Best Practices for Openness and Accountability.”

SUMMARY

I. PROACTIVE RELEASE OF AGENCY OPERATIONS

Key Criteria for Successful Practices Include:

- Content should be accurate and timely (e.g., calendars and directories should be kept up to date)
- Content should be complete (e.g., for an employee directory it should include name, title, phone number, email address, mail address, etc.)
- The content should be searchable, not simply a printable list of items, and machine readable (e.g., not simply a PDF directory of employees)
- The public should be able to search by multiple criteria (e.g., by date of a meeting or by name of meeting participants)

The highlighted activities for proactive release of agency operations are from 11 departments and agencies—including two from Department of State, one from Department of Commerce, one from Food and Drug Administration, one from Department of Health and Human Services, five from General Services Administration, three from the Environmental
Protection Agency, one from Office of Management and Budget, one from Department of Agriculture, two from the White House, one from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and two from the Securities and Exchange Commission.

II. PROACTIVE RELEASE OF CONSUMER INFORMATION

Key Criteria for Successful Practices Include:

- Sites should have a user-friendly interface with easy-to-understand graphics
- Content and data should be easily searchable
- Sites should provide access to the full data set in addition to the application interface
- Agencies should seek user feedback to improve utility of the site and the data

The highlighted activities for proactive release of consumer information are from eight departments and agencies—including one from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, one from Department of Health and Human Services, one from the Census Bureau, one from Department of Labor, one from the Environmental Protection Agency, one from the Federal Geographic Data Committee, one from the National Geospatial Agency, and one from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

III. ENGAGING THE PUBLIC IN POLICYMAKING

Key Criteria for Successful Practices Include:

- Make public participation as simple as possible (e.g., by embedding forms into the website for feedback or using pop-up satisfaction surveys)
- Agencies' actions should be moderated to insure the process is inclusive and stays on track
- Timelines should be clear to all participants
- Results of the process should be readily available to the public

The highlighted activities for engaging the public in policymaking are from a number of departments and agencies—including one from the Environmental Protection Agency, one from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, two from the Department of Education, one from the Department of Interior, one from the Department of Labor, two from the Department of Justice, one from the Department of Veterans Affairs, two from the Department of Transportation, one from the Department of Energy, one from the Department of State, three from the Department of Health and Human Services, one from the Office of Personnel Management, one from the National Science Foundation, two from the Department of Homeland Security, one from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, one from the Consumer Product Safety Commission, two from the National Archives and Records Administration, two from the Public Interest Declassification Board, two from the White House, and one multi-agency initiative.

IV. SHINING A LIGHT ON HOW TAX DOLLARS ARE SPENT

Key Criteria for Successful Practices Include:
● Websites should be fully searchable and underlying data should be available to the public
● Maps should augment data presentation on the website
● Data must be timely and accurate
● Data should be linked so that the public can easily aggregate information about a company or a federal agency, for example
● Information about recipients and sub-recipients of federal funds should be readily available

The highlighted activities for shining a light on how tax dollars are spent are from four departments and agencies—including one from the Department of Defense and three multi-agency/government-wide initiatives.

V. BRINGING FOIA INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

**Key Criteria for Successful Practices Include:**

- Sites should allow the public easy to use methods to file and track FOIA requests without extensive knowledge about agencies’ records systems
- FOIA logs and any records released in an electronic format, along with agency procedures, should be easily available on agency websites
- Information about agency compliance with FOIA should be easily accessible to the public

The highlighted activities for bringing FOIA into the 21st century are from a number of departments and agencies—including one from the Department of Homeland Security, one multi-agency initiative, two from the Office of Inspector General for the Department of Commerce, two from Office of Inspector General for the Securities and Exchange Commission, two from the Office of Inspector General for the Department of State, and two from the Office of Inspector General for the Department of Justice.

VI. MOVING TOWARDS A CULTURE OF OPENNESS

**Key Criteria for Successful Practices Include:**

- Create “infrastructure for openness”—or permanent bodies, offices, and leadership positions for open government including personnel evaluations
- Create and build upon existing multi-agency platforms for the proactive release of certain “baskets” of information
- Foster collaboration on openness across agencies, between a variety of relevant offices and positions within agencies, as well as with non-governmental organizations, business, media, and the public

The highlighted activities for moving towards a culture of openness are from a number of departments and agencies—including one from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and three multi-agency/government-wide initiatives.
VII. PRIORITIZING OPENNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

**Key Criteria for Successful Practices Include:**

- Make agency performance reports easily accessible on agency websites
- Link performance reports to underlying data
- Each agency website project should provide information about high risk projects, along with a link to GAO for further information
- In describing high risk activities, agencies should include a timeline and steps they are taking to mitigate risk

The highlighted activities for prioritizing openness and accountability are from 10 departments and agencies—including one from the Department of Agriculture, two from the Department of Education, one from the Department of Energy, one from the Department of Homeland Security, one from the Department of Justice, two from the Department of Labor, one from the Department of State, one from the Department of Transportation, two from the Department of Treasury, and two from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

VIII. PROMOTING RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CLASSIFICATION OF NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

**Key Criteria for Successful Practices Include:**

- Agencies should implement mechanisms, such as spot audits of randomly selected classifiers, to identify and hold accountable officials who persistently overclassify
- Classifiers should be required to provide more specific justifications for their classification decisions
- Classifiers should receive rigorous training, including a full unit on avoiding overclassification, and should be required to pass a performance-based test
- Agencies should examine their classification guidance and eliminate any vague or overbroad categories that would require derivative classifiers to exercise original judgments about national security risks

The Department of Energy's activities for promoting responsibility in the classification of national security information are highlighted.
I. PROACTIVE RELEASE OF AGENCY OPERATIONS

- The Department of State, Department of Commerce, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), General Services Administration, and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have made their staff directories easily accessible online. None of these sites would be considered ideal as each has at least one element missing from our “Key Criteria” list. For example, the State Department has no email addresses and is only available in PDF. EPA only provides information for upper-level directors of each branch and office. HHS data has multiple paths to information about employees; some paths produced information that is out of date while other paths produce accurate information.

- Through its open government page the General Services Administration (GSA) has made information such as annual reports, budget justifications and ethics reports available. Many agencies release their annual reports and budget justifications. Also, budget justifications (the appendix) seem to be available from the Office of Management and Budget here.) Another notable effort by GSA is that it has made available the logs of visitors signing in and out of GSA’s headquarters buildings. Many agencies keep visitor logs and could easily post these online. GSA’s visitor logs are kept up to date, but are only available through PDF making searches difficult. It would also be helpful to have information about the subject matter of the meeting and which staff participated.

- The Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service offers a calendar (current only to May 2012) of official meetings, including the date, site, topic/subject, and all personnel that will be present at each meeting. We hope, given the quality of this calendar, that the agency will begin again to update it more regularly.

- The Department of State also made its public schedule readily available on their website. This provides the public with important access to daily activities and historically exclusive interagency information.

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a calendar that lists senior manager schedules, and includes the option to subscribe to RSS feeds. The schedules are supposed to be updated by 10 am each day, and we hope that EPA will strive to update the schedules in a timely manner. Additionally, EPA should provide a definition of “public meetings” as these are the only meetings listed on the calendar. The White House also lists daily schedules, and includes the option to subscribe as well.

- The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) offers a Leadership Calendar that details the everyday schedule of Richard Cordray, the Director of the CFPB, and Raj Date, the Deputy Director of CFPB. It includes dates and times of meetings, travel, and work periods, and is accessible in multiple formats. It also sometimes includes the people with whom they are meeting; being more thorough about listing individuals Cordray and Date are meeting with would be helpful.
The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) disclosed more information about meetings with outside parties to discuss the implementation of Dodd-Frank. Under the new policy, the agency asks meeting participants to provide an agenda of proposed discussion topics to be made part of the public record. The SEC has also been disclosing its meetings with outside parties to discuss the Jumpstart Our Business Startups (JOBS) Act. However, these records could be more specific regarding the arguments advanced by industry representatives at the meetings. Live webcast of the meetings would be a best practice.

When the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) litigates a case in federal court or imposes a penalty that must be approved by a federal judge, the public can typically review the case documents and identify the members of the litigation team—including attorneys who end up going through the revolving door. Unfortunately, the same level of transparency is not provided in SEC enforcement actions that are brought before an administrative law judge.

II. PROACTIVE RELEASE OF CONSUMER INFORMATION

- The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) has created the credit card complaint database, which provides complaints and criticisms of credit card customers. This complaint database allows for credit card users to gain insight into the experiences of other credit card users, which in turn allows them to make better informed and responsible financial decisions. This website is still a beta version and needs some improvements, but there are useful built-in data visualization tools so the public can map the data by geography, issues, volume, or other criteria. The website also lets developers extract data through an API, empowering others to use the CFPB data to build more robust websites.

- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has released hospital compare data, which allows users to compare the quality of different hospitals. This is part of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Hospital Quality Initiative. The hospital compare data makes the information available online and allows for people to make better decisions when choosing health care facilities and aids improvements for the quality of care of hospitals. Like the CFPB complaint database, this could be replicated where agencies have information that would help consumers make good decisions. The user interface is very easy to use.

- The Census Bureau launched an app for iPhone and Android called “America’s Economy.” It provides updated statistics—including 16 monthly economic indicators, such as house sales, personal income, international trade, Gross Domestic Product and the unemployment rate—from the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Economic Analysis and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It also makes the data available through an API.

- The Department of Labor provides extensive access to safety, health, and labor compliance information through their enforcement data site. The site combines five different datasets from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Mining Safety and Health Administration. The data is accessible through a mapping interface, standard search form, or through an innovative visual search feature that allows users to progressively filter data. The search results and entire datasets can also be downloaded in various formats for greater analysis offline. The site also offers several interactive graphs that allow users to explore data visually. However, it could be improved by allowing a user to pull all industries
in a particular geographic location, compare two or more geographic locations, and search by parent company.

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is leveraging technology to provide the public with EPA mobile applications (apps), empowering citizens with usable, readily accessible information to inform choices about health, safety, and the environment. EPA has a cross-agency initiative to push human health advisories via mobile phone apps, providing the public with location-based information. Examples being developed include the EPA Saves Your Skin app, which will give users ZIP code-based UV index information and the Air Quality Index (AQI) which feeds air quality information based on zip code. EPA is also considering future projects to deliver green product information to consumers through mobile channels to help them consider the environmental impacts of products when making purchases, either by providing EPA data or incorporate into apps, or a direct EPA effort such as text messages or Smartphone apps.

- The Federal Geographic Data Committee launched www.geoplatform.gov, a Geospatial Platform that provides federal agencies, their partners, and the public access to federally maintained geospatial data, services, and applications. Federal agencies and their partners collect and manage large amounts of geospatial data—but these data are often not easily found when needed or accessible in useful forms. The ability to display information through interactive maps helps to communicate complex ideas more clearly and supports informed decision making. The Platform provides: a “one-stop shop” to deliver trusted, nationally consistent data and services; tools for the centralized discovery, access, and use of data and services managed and maintained in multiple agencies, locations, and levels of government; tools that enable data to be displayed in a visual context—a fundamental way in which humans process information; problem-solving applications that are built once and reused many times across multiple Federal agencies and other organizations.

- The National Geospatial Agency (NGA) is cleaning up and organizing data so it enables consumers to be producers. Toward this goal, the agency has not only inventoried all of its data stores, but is also metatagging data (which allows searchers to find it) and cataloging it in accordance with open geospatial consortium standards. The metatagging and cataloging make a geospatial resource more widely discoverable, assessable and useful by providing descriptive metadata that can be read and understood by a broad audience. Without such metadata, people would neither be able to find the resource using search engines nor will they be able to evaluate if the discovered resource satisfies their current information need. The NGA has also built 150 apps and is continuing to work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to create disaster-response apps. (See the article in Fierce Government IT)

- The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) partnered with Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team and Communaute OpenStreetMap Haiti to provide post-earthquake Haiti with basic maps of streets, key infrastructure, and public service facilities in St. Marc. USAID engaged local youth trained in basic community mapping skills for the program. This information is now available to mappers throughout Haiti, the international community, Government of Haiti counterparts, entrepreneurs, and citizens around the world. With a clear visual representation of the St. Marc community, donors can better plan and deliver assistance, and government officials can better plan infrastructure projects and service delivery.
III. ENGAGING THE PUBLIC IN POLICYMAKING

- Without being required to do so, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Departments of Education, Interior, Labor, Justice, and Veterans Affairs all requested public comment to help create their scientific integrity plans. The executive branch agencies’ scientific integrity plans outline standards for government-funded science, including conflict-of-interest, procedural, and transparency rules, responsive to President Obama’s 2009 Memorandum on Scientific Integrity.

- The Departments of Education, Transportation, Energy, State, and Health and Human Services invite public feedback on their updated Open Government plans, prompting readers to comment and email the agencies with their thoughts. The Department of State also requests public feedback on general agency operations and public engagement.

- The Office of Personnel Management, the National Science Foundation, Department of Homeland Security, and Department of Justice set up meetings with open government advocates and their stakeholders to discuss the content of Version 2 of their Open Government plans.

- The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) is working collaboratively with the Cornell e-Rulemaking Initiative to establish a Regulation Room that gives the public an opportunity to comment on the CFPB’s nine mortgage servicing proposals in an accessible and easy-to-understand format, including blog discussions and overviews of the proposals. The proposed rules would change practices by mortgage companies that have resulted in mistaken or unnecessary foreclosures and would help consumers receive accurate, timely information about the status of their home mortgages.

- The Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Homeland Security invite public feedback on the quality of their websites in the form of 1-2 minute surveys, asking for suggestions that will “improve our service.” Also, HHS provides the option for the public to comment on each of its regulations and rules.

- The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has a consumer product complaint database that includes reports from consumers about products that might be hazardous. Through SaferProducts.gov, consumers, child service providers, health care professionals, government officials and public safety entities can submit reports of harm (Reports) involving consumer products. Manufacturers (including importers) and private labelers identified in Reports will receive a copy of the Report, and have the opportunity to comment on them. Completed Reports and manufacturer comments are published online at www.SaferProducts.gov for anyone to search. CPSC was required to create a public portal and a publicly accessible, searchable database of consumer product incident reports by the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA), which became law on August 14, 2008.

- The Department of Transportation (DOT) through the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs’ website has set up a regulatory data review database that includes specific information on regulatory actions, the names of the specific agencies within DOT that filed the actions, the titles of regulatory actions, current stages of review, the received dates, identification numbers for tracking progress, indications of actions’ economic significance,
legal deadlines, and comment periods. The website is interactive and engaging; it incorporates multiple data points into each graphic to help users understand the data.

- The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) sought comment from the public on proposed language it created with the Department of Justice as a model for routine use. The model language was posted on NARA’s FOIA Ombudsman blog, and heavily promoted through the agency’s social media. (See the FOIA Ombudsman Blog)

- The Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO) within the National Archives and Records Administration engaged in extensive consultations with open government advocates and stakeholders regarding a draft directive on Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI). Based on feedback from consulted parties, ISOO made significant changes to the directive that were responsive to those parties’ concerns.

- In developing recommendations to transform the classification system, the Public Interest Declassification Board (PIDB) established a blog on which it posted white papers outlining specific reforms that were under consideration, solicited public feedback on those white papers, and called on members of the public to submit their own white papers and recommendations. The PIDB has also held public meetings and has engaged in an ongoing dialogue with open government advocates, in which it has proactively shared its current thinking at each stage of the process.

- Fulfilling an Open Government Partnership U.S. National Action Plan commitment on promoting public participation in government, the White House launched the “We the People” platform to give Americans a direct line to voice their concerns to the Administration via online petitions. The White House also published the source code of “We the People,” making it available to any government around the world that seeks to solicit and respond to the concerns of the public.

- The Obama Administration created Regulations.gov, an online portal for the public to view and comment on pending regulations in “an open format that can be easily searched and downloaded.” Hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency, the site allows citizens to review proposed rules, read studies, and comment on proposed regulations. On October 1st, 2012, Regulations.gov added enhanced searchability and organizing tools to the site. The public commenting mechanisms, search functions, and user interfaces are being revamped to help the public more easily find, follow, and participate in federal rulemaking. The eRulemaking Management Office is bringing a new public-user perspective to the Regulations.gov public participation interface, and has reached out to stakeholders for proposals and reactions as the redesign goes forward. Questions still remain whether EPA is the appropriate agency to house a government-wide service such as Regulations.gov.

### IV. Shining a Light on How Tax Dollars Are Spent

- The Recovery, Accountability, and Transparency Board is the current overseer of tracking stimulus spending and allows the public to do so as well on Recovery.gov. But the board and its website are set to expire in 2013, as the stimulus spending ends. However, the successor, the Government Accountability and Transparency Board should continue to update the site as a resource and expand its uniform standards for reporting and increase
accountability for all federal spending. The best practices from Recovery.gov should be applied to USAspending.gov, or a next-generation site for all federal spending.

- According to DOJ’s [Summary of Agency Chief FOIA Officer Reports for 2012](#), the Department of Defense’s Defense Logistics Agency and TRICARE Management Activity have improved their process for reviewing contracts by adopting a number of procedures which allow them to more readily post redacted contracts on their websites.

- [USAspending.gov](#) is a website that allows users to see and download federal spending data. Although the quality of the data received from agencies needs improvement, USAspending.gov is a standout example of a user-friendly website that allows users to search multiple federal spending databases and view the data in various forms. No other government website provides this level of ease of use in accessing federal spending information.

- The [IT Dashboard](#) allows users to view and analyze the performance of federal information technology projects. The IT Dashboard is exemplary because it combines performance information with spending information, enhancing the public’s ability to assess how well federal IT contracts are performing. It is also noteworthy because it brings together in a single location all government contracts and projects in a given area. The website provides a variety of metrics for assessing progress and is a model tool for project performance and oversight.

V. **BRINGING FOIA INTO THE 21ST CENTURY**

- The Department of Homeland Security has developed an [Electronic library](#), which populates Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) information into an electronic ready room. This effort makes information more freely available. The electronic library has allowed for requested records, administration staff manuals, staff instructions, final opinions, orders of cases, statements of policy, and many other agency documents to be made available to the public. This electronic database allows for users to obtain information easily without the need to file FOIA requests.

- The new multi-agency portal [FOIAonline](#) allows requesters to submit and track Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, receive responses, and search others’ requests through a single website. The portal also allows agencies to instantly create FOIA reports and correspond with requesters. It has the potential to speed processing of requests and release more information to the public. The system provides agencies new features to assist with processing requests, which could improve timeliness and reduce backlogs. Furthermore, agencies can use the system to publish their responses to FOIA requests, which would make this information more widely accessible. The portal launched October 1, 2012 with the participation of the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Commerce, the National Archives, the Merit Systems Protection Board, and Federal Labor Relations Authority. The Department of Treasury will join the portal over the course of 2013.

- Inspectors General are required to post their audits, but not all OIGs post their investigations or inspection reports on their websites. The OIG of the Department of Commerce website lists both [audits](#) and [investigations](#) online, starting with records from 1997 and continuing up to the present. The OIG of the Securities and Exchange Commission
lists investigative reports from 2009-2011, along with audit reports from 1994-2012 on its website. The OIG of the Department of State also offers several inspection reports and audit reports. Similarly, the OIG of the Department of Justice (DoJ) publishes Investigations Press Releases for 2008-2012 online, along with audit reports by component on the DoJ and external organizations.

VI. MOVING TOWARDS A CULTURE OF OPENNESS

- The Office of Personal Management (OPM) has undergone a change with a culture first approach to open government with its communities of practice. Communities of Practice (CoPs) are groups of people bound by a shared interest, purpose, or practice who often collaborate via established websites. These community web spaces are designed to allow community members to share ideas and knowledge in several ways. OPM’s culture first approach model has allowed for input and improvements from within the agency and from its stakeholders.

- The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is one of a few federal agencies that has a presence on GitHub, a site that promotes collaboration among developers, so that its software source code for open government products is shared with other agencies and organizations.

- The Obama Administration created the Data.gov platform to increase the public’s ability to easily find, download, and use federal government datasets. Data.gov also encourages the public to use this data in creative ways, spurring innovators to leverage government datasets for new web applications. In December, the White House released the Data.gov source code for use in other nations around the world. The number of communities on Data.gov has expanded to about a dozen, and these communities focus on a range of issues including education, safety, energy, and ethics. Jeanne Holm was hired as the Data.gov Evangelist, tasked with providing expertise in knowledge dissemination and the development and use of Data.gov, gaining greater involvement of agencies to expose high value datasets and increasing the involvement of other stakeholders such as the open government community and the mash-up programmer communities.

- The Library of Congress, House and Senate, and Government Printing Office launched the new beta Congress.gov. This revamped version of THOMAS has several new features, including the homepage’s “Current Legislative Activities” feature which provides a snapshot of all that is happening in the House and Senate. A step up from THOMAS, the new site also gives users the ability to simultaneously search all content across all available years. (See the Washington Blawg)

VII. PRIORITIZING OPENNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- The Department of Agriculture, Department of Education, Department of Energy, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice, Department of Labor, Department of State, Department of Transportation, Department of Treasury, and Department of Veterans Affairs have made their Performance and Accountability Reports easily available under their “About” pages. These reports measure actual progress against agencies’ target goals. Other agencies have Performance and Accountability Reports on their websites, but they are not as easily located.
On the Department of Education website, under the subcategory of “Budget and Performance” under their “About” page, there is a link to High Risk Improvement Plans with status of Implementations, which provides updates on the High Risk Series. The High Risk Series is the Government Accountability Office’s program that highlights “major problems that are at high risk for waste, fraud, abuse mismanagement, or in need of broad reform. The page discusses each high-risk area, including information from GAO’s February 2011 high-risk update as well as the results of work completed since then. The Department of Veterans Affairs also has an updated GAO High Risk Improvement Plan tracking its milestones in 2011 and planning objectives for 2012. The Department of the Treasury links visitors to the GAO page on the High Risk project, but also includes the projects and some detail about Treasury-specific high risk activities and plans for addressing these risks.

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration launched an alternative dispute resolution program in its Chicago and San Francisco offices for complaints filed with its Whistleblower Protection Program. (See the article in Business Insurance)

VIII. PROMOTING RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CLASSIFICATION OF NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

The Department of Energy does not permit everyone with a security clearance to engage in the derivative classification of information. Instead, individuals must attend a multi-week course and pass a performance-based test in order to be certified as a derivative classifier, and must be re-certified at regular intervals. Employees with security clearances who are not certified must obtain the assistance of certified classifiers to classify information.

The Department of Energy (DOE) also has taken several positive steps relating to its classification guidance. DOE’s Office of Classification writes all classification guides to ensure quality and uniformity. Its report on its Fundamental Classification Guidance Review (FCGR) stands in stark contrast to those submitted by other departments and agencies and should serve as a model for future reviews. DOE did not limit itself to eliminating obsolete categories, but instead eliminated or rewrote categories that were vague or overbroad. It is implementing a system in which it will identify a limited set of “keystones” (specific classes of information requiring protection) underlying guide categories; the keystones can be used as metadata to help track, manage, and improve classification and declassification decisions. If the keystones are identified with sufficient specificity, this system holds great promise.

RESOURCES FOR BEST PRACTICES

- Openness Floor, Comments Submitted on the Development of the U.S. Action Plan for the Open Government Partnership by OpenTheGovernment.org:

- POGO Suggestions for How to Make the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau a Prototype for a More Open, Effective, and Accountable Government:
• This document by Union of Concerned Scientists identifies the best practices of specific federal agencies as they pertain to scientific integrity. However, the policies this document examines also reflect how well an agency encourages a culture of openness and accountability: http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/scientific_integrity/SI-policy-best-practices.pdf

• Sunlight Foundation Survey of Congressional Committee websites: http://www.opencongress.org/wiki/Tracking_Committee_Website_Transparency

• Sunlight Foundation Survey of House of Representatives Webcasts: http://sunlightfoundation.com/blog/2012/04/17/committees-make-leap-to-online-video-but-approps-doesn%E2%80%99t-get-the-picture/

• Sunlight Foundation Sources for Executive Branch Information on Ethics: http://www.opencongress.org/wiki/Executive_Branch_Ethics_Information_Sources


• Sunlight Foundation State-by-State Lobbying Registration Requirements: http://www.opencongress.org/wiki/State_Lobbying_Disclosure_Requirements


• OpentheGovernment.org Review of Agencies Use of Social Media: http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/3549

• OpentheGovernment.org Audit of Agencies – 2011 Sunshine Week Commitments: http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/3351

• Sunlight Foundation Open Data guidelines: http://sunlightfoundation.com/policy/opendata/

• OpentheGovernment.org Open Government Plans Version 1 Audit: https://sites.google.com/site/opengovtplans/

• Brennan Center for Justice report, Reducing Overclassification Through Accountability: http://brennan.3cdn.net/3cb5dc88d210b8558b_38m6b0ag0.pdf