



**United States Department of State**

# **Open Government Plan**

**Summer 2014**

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## Executive Summary

The Department of State has a longstanding history of commitment to sharing information publicly, and recognizes the value of making government information readily available and useful to citizens by employing new tools and technologies. Whether it is the use of social media to discuss foreign policy, or the use of information sharing to help citizens prepare for international travel, we understand that an Open Government better serves the public and advances the mission of diplomacy. This updated Open Government Plan focuses on the three principles:

- **Transparency:** Providing information to enable the American people to view the Department's activities and ensure accountability and results;
- **Participation:** Enabling the public to engage on issues of importance and to ensure that their voices are heard; and
- **Collaboration:** Sharing information and ideas and working cooperatively with partners around the world to promote the foreign policy interests of the United States.

The Department is implementing two new flagship Open Government initiatives: Innovating with Geographic Data, which includes the Imagery to the Crowd and MapGive and Department of State by State efforts; and Embracing Technologies and Platforms to Increase Public Access to Information, which includes improving public access to air quality information and creating a new open source platform for the state.gov website. These two new initiatives add to the continued progress of the ongoing Virtual Student Foreign Services and Foreignassistance.gov initiatives. This Plan describes in detail the activities and initiatives that the Department is undertaking, as well as future programs in line with the Open Government foundation of transparency, participation, and collaboration.

The Department's Open Government website (<http://www.state.gov/open/>) is a central repository for reports on progress and actions taken to promote transparency, participation, and collaboration. Specific information such as the release of the Department's data and customer service initiatives can be found on the site.



## Introduction

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued an Open Government Directive (M-10-06) on December 8, 2009, to take specific actions to implement the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration that are the foundation of Open Government. This Open Government Directive applies directly to the Department of State and its mission to “Shape and sustain a peaceful, prosperous, just, and democratic world and foster conditions for stability and progress for the benefit of the American people and people everywhere.”

Transparency promotes accountability by providing the public with information about the Department’s activities. Participation allows members of the public to contribute ideas and expertise so that the Department can develop policies with the benefit of information that is widely dispersed in society. Collaboration improves the effectiveness of the Department by encouraging partnerships and cooperation within the federal government, across additional various levels of government, and between the Department and private institutions. The Department has taken some initial steps to meet the spirit and intent of the Open Government Directive by:

- Publishing government information online (to the extent permitted by law and subject to valid privacy, confidentiality, security, or other restrictions) to increase transparency, promote informed participation by the public, and create economic opportunity;
- Improving the quality of publicly available government information by ensuring that the information conforms to guidance on information quality, and that adequate systems and processes are in place within the agencies to promote such conformity;
- Embracing and creating a knowledge-sharing culture across the Department, shifting from a “need to know” to a “need to share” environment; and
- Implementing tools and technologies to enhance communication between the government and the public.

The scope of the Department’s mission has gradually expanded as global issues have become increasingly complex and interconnected. Today, offices in the Department focus on a wide spectrum of issues beyond traditional bilateral diplomacy; including counterterrorism, nuclear arms proliferation, climate change, human rights, institution building, and international trade and finance. The complexity of these issues requires extensive collaboration with other U.S. government agencies at overseas posts and in Washington, as well as with foreign governments and non-governmental organizations. The Open Government Plan demonstrates ways that the Department engages these parties and its citizens to further align the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration to its mission.

The evolution of social media has created a medium through which the Department can further engage the American public. Through the Bureaus of Public Affairs, International Information Programs, Educational and Cultural Affairs, and numerous overseas posts, the Department has been active in social media; using social networking sites and microblogging to enable collaboration with the public. The Department’s Open Government website also provides access to available datasets and engages the public more dynamically by soliciting input and increasing collaboration. The Open Government Plan provides updates to ongoing, new, and expanded initiatives, and opportunities for the public to provide feedback.



The Department's Open Government Plan supports U.S. participation and leadership in the global Open Government Partnership (OGP). OGP is a unique multi-stakeholder partnership whereby countries advance Open Government by committing to transparency, accountability, citizen engagement, and innovative use of technology. President Obama launched the OGP in 2011 with seven other countries. The Partnership has since grown rapidly, with 64 countries and a wide range of civil society organizations participating. Participating countries develop biannual National Action Plans in consultation with civil society in order to identify commitments in the above core areas. Each country's performance is subject to self-assessment and an Independent Review Mechanism progress report on a two-year cycle. The first U.S. National Action Plan, published September 20, 2011, included 26 commitments. The Plan was revised on December 5, 2013, and included 23 commitments. OGP is an exciting, unconventional partnership that has enormous transformational potential to create a race to the top for good governance. The United States has shown its commitment to the OGP by serving on its Steering Committee, by setting a positive example in our own domestic implementation of our OGP National Action Plan, and by deploying the full range of diplomatic and technical assistance tools to help inspire participating countries to strive for excellence in Open Government.

## New and Expanded Initiatives

### *Open Data*

On May 9, 2013, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) set forth an Open Data Policy via [M-13-13](#) that requires all agencies to manage data as an asset. The goal of the Policy is to increase operational efficiencies at reduced costs, improve services, and increase public access to government information. Data must be machine readable using open data standards and licenses and adhere to a government-wide common core metadata standard to be considered open. The five core deliverables of M-13-13 are the following:

- Create and maintain an Enterprise Data Inventory (EDI);
- Create and maintain a Public Data Listing (PDL);
- Create a process to engage with customers to help facilitate and prioritize data release;
- Document if data cannot be released; and
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for promoting efficient and effective data release.

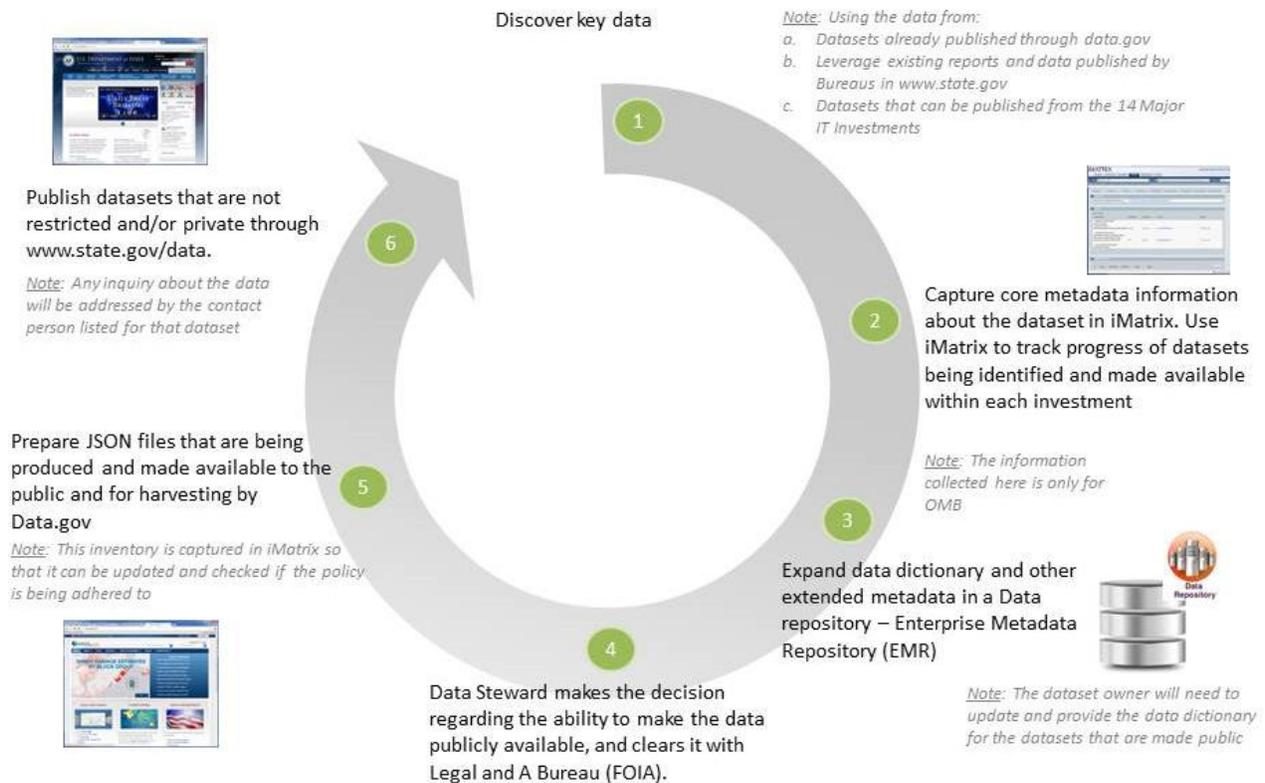
The Department of State will use its Information Technology (IT) portfolio management system, iMatrix, to create and maintain a Department-wide EDI. iMatrix currently provides a single source for Department IT investments (applications, networks and websites) and has been enhanced to include space in the system record for tracking the datasets associated with an IT investment. As part of an ongoing process, the datasets associated with existing systems will be populated as system owners update their entries in iMatrix. System owners will be required to enter the dataset information for the new systems as part of their initial iMatrix system entry. Datasets will belong to one of the three following categories:

- Public: Data asset is or could be made publicly available to all without restrictions;
- Restricted Public: Data asset is available under certain use restrictions; and
- Non-Public: Data asset is not available to members of the public.



Public data in the EDI will be exported to a PDL where anyone can download the index and use it to gain access. The PDL is also used by Data.gov to create a searchable index to all available public data published by the U.S. government. The PDL is located on the [www.state.gov/data](http://www.state.gov/data) page and is contained in a single JSON file. The PDL will be refreshed quarterly. The process of collecting and publishing Open Data is shown in Figure 1: Open Data Concept of Operations.

Figure 1: Open Data Concept of Operations



For more information on Open Data, including a pointer to the Open Data Plan and Inventory Schedule and a copy of the most recent PDL, visit the Open Data page at [www.state.gov/data](http://www.state.gov/data). The Department is also an active participant in [Data.gov](http://Data.gov), which has numerous datasets and two application programming interfaces (APIs) available for public use. Other APIs can be found and utilized at <http://www.state.gov/developer/>. More information on Data.gov is discussed in the Transparency section of this plan.



## *Proactive Disclosures*

The Department has a system in place to identify records for proactive disclosures and has implemented a procedure to identify materials for timely proactive disclosure in conjunction with a redesigned Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) public website. As a result, an increased number of documents have been uploaded onto the FOIA website (<http://foia.state.gov/>) on a quarterly basis. There are currently over 90,000 documents on the website. Various offices in the Department collaborate to identify documents for posting on the FOIA website that have generated significant public interest. The Department also provides datasets in response to the [Open Government Initiative](#) and other requirements.

## *Privacy*

The Privacy Act was passed in 1974 to establish controls over what personal information is collected, maintained, used, and disseminated by agencies in the executive branch of the federal government. The Privacy Act only applies to records that are located in a “system of records.” As defined in the Privacy Act, a system of records is “a group of any records under the control of any agency from which information is retrieved by the name of the individual or by some identifying number, symbol, or other identifying particular assigned to the individual.” The Privacy Act guarantees three primary rights: the right of individuals to see records about oneself, subject to Privacy Act exemptions; the right of individuals to request the amendment of records that are not accurate, timely or complete; and the right of individuals to have protection against unwarranted invasion of their privacy resulting from the collection, maintenance, use, and disclosure of personal information.

The Bureau of Administration (A) houses many complex and diverse activities relating to privacy protection, promoting consistent implementation of privacy policies and legal requirements. The A Bureau coordinates responses to, and implementation of, White House directives, and leads the Department’s responses to OMB and Government Accountability Office (GAO) data calls and inquiries relating to privacy policy. The A Bureau also leads and coordinates multi-functional projects, studies and research activities to identify and address privacy issues, and participates in various inter- and intra-agency boards, committees, and groups. Additionally, the A Bureau reviews legislative and other initiatives proposed by Congress, other agencies, and the public, and formulates Department privacy policy. It provides technical expertise to the Department’s Privacy Protection Governance Board (PPGB) and the PPGB’s personally identifiable information (PII) coordinators.

The A Bureau directs the Core Response Group that addresses data breaches, and conducts reviews of privacy impact assessments (PIAs) to ensure that privacy requirements are fully integrated into the Department’s information technology systems. It supports implementation of the E-Government Act of 2002 and relevant portions of the Federal Information Management Security Act (FISMA). The A Bureau serves as the Department’s technical expert on the Privacy Act and, as such, responds to inquiries concerning privacy issues and concerns by conducting follow-up when necessary. The A Bureau also assists Department business owners with the development or alteration of Systems of Records Notices (SORNs), and coordinates Department responses to affected bureaus or individuals regarding breach notifications. For a complete list of the Department’s records collections systems, go to the [Privacy Impact Assessments \(PIA\)](#) and the [Systems of Records Notices \(SORN\)](#) pages.



## ***Whistleblower Protection***

The Whistleblower Protection Act strengthens protections for Federal employees who believe they have been subjected to unjustified personnel actions in reprisal for their whistleblowing activities. The Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2012 was signed into law in November 2012 and provides that the implementation and enforcement of nondisclosure agreements by the Department shall be consistent with the existing statutory framework for whistleblower protections. The Department is committed to ensuring that all employees understand and are aware of the prohibited personnel practices (PPPs) and whistleblower protections.

PPPs are, by statute, forbidden in the federal government. The Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent agency that investigates and prosecutes allegations of PPPs. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 2302(b), federal employees are prohibited from retaliating against whistleblowers. Whistleblowing involves the act of disclosing information that an employee reasonably believes evidences a violation of any law, rule or regulation; gross mismanagement; a gross waste of funds; an abuse of authority; or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety. Employees who are aware of these protections are encouraged to come forward to report possible violations.

A complete list of PPPs is available on OSC's [website](#), which provides important information about federal employee rights, PPPs, whistleblowing, and disclosure procedures. The Department has communicated to its employees through various channels, including an intranet site and Department Notices on employee rights, how to report complaints alleging PPPs, the role of OSC, and additional information regarding whistleblowing.

Additional information regarding the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2012, including the Department's obligations regarding the implementation and enforcement of nondisclosure agreements consistent with federal whistleblower protections can be found at <http://www.state.gov/s/ocr/205593.htm>.

## ***Websites***

In compliance with the E-Government Act of 2002, the Department is developing and continuing to enhance several website features to improve customer service. On May 23, 2012, the Administration launched a comprehensive Digital Government Strategy to deliver better digital services to the American people. The Department maintains a webpage at [www.state.gov/digitalstrategy](http://www.state.gov/digitalstrategy) that contains the status of the milestones of the Digital Strategy initiatives.

The Department is committed to promoting the innovative application of Department data in the public and private sectors. The Department's Developer Community connects developers with the APIs they need to unlock government data. Their website at <http://www.state.gov/developer/> serves as the main resource for developers seeking Department data and contains mobile applications available for download.



The Department is making its web content more mobile friendly in order to achieve the Digital Government Strategy goals. A mobile solution has been implemented for more than 450 embassy and consulate websites around the world at <http://www.usembassy.gov/>). These sites support visitor access and browsing on feature phones, smart phones, or tablets with the option to view the “desktop” version. The Department’s public website also has a mobile version specifically for mobile platforms.

A faceted search feature on every <http://www.state.gov> page has been deployed to allow users to easily navigate the vast Department site. The “Stay Connected” feature is also accessible on every page of the Department’s public website and provides quick access to all of the Department’s social media platforms. The Department pages also offer customized information dispersal through an e-mail subscription and the “My State Department” interface that can be tailored to subscriber preferences for targeted access to foreign policy topics of interest.

The Department collects feedback on customer satisfaction in a number of ways: through a comments section where users are represented by an e-mail address, through online surveys, and through Google Analytics. Google Analytics is used to collect information on visitor usage, length of time on site, where they entered the site, by what method (social media, e-mail, another website, etc.) along with what page they exited on. Google Analytics is installed on approximately 93 percent of the public-facing websites.

## Ongoing Initiatives

### *Participation in Transparency Initiatives*

The Department of State is committed to transparency and the benefit it provides to the public. Table 1: State Participation in Transparency Initiatives, indicates the extent to which the Department is currently engaged with various transparency initiatives and directives.



**Table 1: State Participation in Transparency Initiatives**

Data.gov: <a href="http://www.data.gov">www.data.gov</a>	State has posted over 100 high value datasets.
eRulemaking (Regulations.gov): (use keyword: “Agency: DOS” in the search box to find all Department of State activities) <a href="http://www.regulations.gov/">http://www.regulations.gov/</a>	State provides funding to EPA in support of the Federal Docket Management System (FDMS). State provided an open comment period to the public on regulations.gov for a new proposed rule to change the schedule of fees for consular services.
Foreign Assistance.gov <a href="http://www.foreignassistance.gov">www.foreignassistance.gov</a>	This website currently contains foreign assistance data from nine agencies including the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The Department of State has released foreign assistance budget, obligation, and disbursement data for a range of activities.
GovBenefits.gov: <a href="http://www.benefits.gov/">http://www.benefits.gov/</a>	State provides funding to Department of Labor to support this site, and provides information re Department of State managed benefit programs for U.S. citizens.
IT Dashboard: <a href="https://www.itdashboard.gov/">https://www.itdashboard.gov/</a>	State posts monthly IT project data as part of USASpending.gov.
Recovery.gov: <a href="http://www.recovery.gov/Pages/default.aspx">http://www.recovery.gov/Pages/default.aspx</a>	State reports regular ARRA expenditures.
Regulatory Plan: <a href="http://www.state.gov/open">http://www.state.gov/open</a>	State has provided a preliminary plan for improving Regulation and Regulatory Review by publishing current and future regulations on the Internet.
USASpending.gov: <a href="http://www.usaspending.gov/">http://www.usaspending.gov/</a>	State reported assistance and grants figures in Feb 2013.

**Public Notice**

**Regulations.gov**

All proposed regulations created by the Department are posted on the <http://www.regulations.gov/> website. This resource serves as an internet portal and document repository, where the public participates in the rulemaking process of the Department. This resource provides the public with a compendium of rules and regulations, while also giving the public an opportunity to provide valuable input into the Department’s rulemaking process.

**Public Engagement**

The Department uses its [public website](#) as a resource to share information with the public, described in detail on page 6 of this Plan in the Websites section. The public often starts at this location to find information on the Department’s initiatives. The Department communicates its proposed actions, activity, and business to the public primarily through three externally focused bureaus: Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), Public Affairs (PA), and International Information Programs (IIP).

ECA works to build friendly, peaceful relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, professional exchanges, and public-private partnerships. ECA programs encourage the involvement of American and international participants from traditionally underrepresented groups, including women, racial and ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities in an effort to reflect the diversity of the United States and global society. Artists, educators, athletes, students, and youth in the United States and in more than 160 countries participate in these academic, cultural, sports, and professional exchanges.



The IIP is the Department's foreign-facing public diplomacy communications bureau. It provides and supports the places, content, and infrastructure needed for sustained conversations with foreign audiences to build America's reputation abroad. The IIP Bureau uses publications, video, and U.S. expert speakers to engage foreign audiences both in person and through virtual programs. IIP manages the infrastructure for all embassy and consulate websites, translations of public remarks by the President and Secretary, and internal websites serving public diplomacy officers in the field.

PA engages domestic and international media outlets to communicate timely and accurate information with the goal of furthering U.S. foreign policy and national security interests. PA employs a wide range of media platforms to provide historical perspective and conduct public outreach in the process of carrying out its mission. PA plans strategic and tactical communications, conducts press briefings, pursues media outreach, and manages the Department website. PA uses social media and other modern technologies to engage the public, and oversees Department's six international Regional Media Hubs that serve as overseas platforms for engagement of foreign audiences via various media outlets. PA arranges town hall meetings and schedules speakers to visit universities, chambers of commerce, and communities to discuss U.S. foreign policy. These resources inform the public, the press, and Department bureaus on United States diplomacy and foreign affairs.

### ***Records Management***

The Department has established a number of records management initiatives that ensure the record of U.S. foreign policy is preserved, protected, and made accessible for current and future generations. They include:

- Active implementation of the President's Managing Government Records Directive (MGRD). The Department met all of its 2013 goals as required by the MGRD, which included identifying its unscheduled and permanent records, more than 30 years old, and providing inventories to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). In addition, the Department established an Electronic Records Management Working Group (ERMWG) to address MGRD Requirements 1.1 and 1.2 and identified executive sponsors and participants.
- A vibrant Records Liaison Program that includes all bureaus and overseas posts is in place.
- A dynamic, easy to use intranet website that provides information to Department personnel relating to the effective implementation of records management.
- Records Management training courses are available through the Department's Foreign Service Institute, including distance learning courses and sections of classroom training. Additionally, numerous records management briefings and training sessions are conducted annually in support of the Department's records management program and reference materials are available to employees online. These efforts have increased records management awareness throughout the Department, both domestically and at overseas posts.
- The Department continues to be a leader in the federal government for electronic records. It is 100 percent compliant with Section 207(e) of the E-Government Act of 2002 [44 U.S.C. 3601], which mandated the Department to identify and schedule all electronic records by the end of fiscal year 2009, as well as incorporate records management requirements into the annual Capital Planning and Investment Control rating process for electronic information systems. Approximately 100 IT investments were reviewed in 2013.



- The Department, in order to better manage retired records, deployed the Retired Records Inventory Management System, which manages all manifests for files retired since 1970. The system is a desktop tool that is particularly valuable for simplifying FOIA searches for older agency records. In 2012, the Department won NARA's prestigious Archivist Achievement Award for this innovation.

### **Records Management Program Measures to Increase Transparency**

In 2013, the Department processed over 200 transfers of permanent paper records to NARA as well as nearly 1,000,000 electronic telegrams and indices from the Central Foreign Policy Files (CFPF). The declassified records from this collection are to be posted on NARA's website.

### ***FOIA Requests***

The Department has a centralized FOIA program. The A Bureau's Office of Information Programs and Services (IPS) processes all external requests for access to records under FOIA, with the exception of requests for records maintained by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), which are handled directly. The Department's FOIA website ([www.foia.state.gov](http://www.foia.state.gov)) includes the FOIA Electronic Reading Room, collections of declassified documents, and other publicly available information on the Department's information access programs.

The Department creates and stores records both domestically and at hundreds of posts globally. FOIA requests made to the Department vary in size and scope, and they can also request Department records that contain classified national security information. Review of these records often requires coordination with other federal agencies and knowledge of declassification reviews before an appropriate release determination can be made. For a more in-depth description of the Department's FOIA program staffing, organizational structure, and process for analyzing and responding to FOIA requests, please visit [www.foia.state.gov](http://www.foia.state.gov) to review the most recent FOIA Annual Report as well as the Department's Information Access Guide/Manual.

In July 2013, the Department launched a new FOIA website in an effort to fulfill its commitment to transparency and openness. The dynamic, user-friendly website makes already-public information easier to find and allows the public to file FOIA requests more easily. The website features robust search functions and more detailed information and guidance on how to access Department records and information. New features allow the public to determine whether the information they seek falls within the Department's mission, including detailed instructions for submitting requests and soliciting comments to assist the Department in making improvements to the site. The Department has been able to create a model website that assists both first-time and experienced requesters by incorporating the feedback from requesters and developing a mutual understanding of best practices among both requesters and agencies.



The website’s Virtual Reading Room contains over 85,000 documents that have already been released to the public and are pursuant to FOIA, mandatory declassification review requests under Executive Order 13526, or other declassification reviews. This number, which includes approximately 9,000 newly-posted documents, is the largest number of Department FOIA documents posted online in a fiscal year to date, and exceeded one of the Department’s milestones under the previous Open Government Plan. The Virtual Reading Room also contains additional links to information resources outside the Department, including the declassified Department records at the National Archives and Records Administration.

The Department’s new website has attracted significant positive attention from other agencies and those in the community that have made FOIA requests. The Department of Justice’s Office of Information Policy recognized the Department’s new website as a model for updating other federal agency websites. The Office of Government Information Services, which serves as the Federal FOIA ombudsman, lauded the Department’s efforts to provide information through user-friendly features. Since its launch in July 2013, the newly improved website has hosted an average of nearly 15,000 visitors each month, and interest continues to remain high. The Department achieved another milestone in fiscal year 2013 by reducing its FOIA request backlog by 16.8 percent and its FOIA appeal backlog by 22.7 percent. Additionally, the Department made over 2,500 more full or partial releases and processed over 5,700 more cases in fiscal year 2013 compared to fiscal year 2012. These accomplishments are especially noteworthy as the Department reallocated FOIA processing resources to address large, complex FOIA litigation cases and to provide assistance to the Department as a whole on significant special document productions.

**Table 2: FOIA Requests**

Agency/Component	Number of Requests Pending as of Start of Fiscal Year 2012	Number of Requests Received in Fiscal Year 2013	Number of Requests Processed in Fiscal Year 2013**	Number of Requests Pending as of End of Fiscal Year 2013
DoS	11,827	18,673	21,018	9,482
OIG	8	80	79	9
Agency Overall	11,835*	18,753	21,097	9,491

\* The Department’s FOIA Annual Report for FY 2012 reported that the number of cases pending at the end of the fiscal year for State was 11,789. As a result of our data reconciliation and validation efforts, we have determined that the number should have been 11,835; that corrected number is reflected here.

\*\* The number of cases received and processed as reported in Section V. includes consultations, based on the manner in which direct requests, referrals and consultations are tracked in the Department’s case management system.

IPS will continue to explore new initiatives to increase transparency and efficiencies in the FOIA process and to provide excellent customer service.



## ***Congressional Requests***

The Bureau of Legislative Affairs (H) coordinates legislative activity for the Department and advises the Secretary, Deputy Secretaries, Under Secretaries, and Assistant Secretaries on legislative strategy. It works closely with committees in Congress and individual members, manages Department testimony during House and Senate hearings, organizes member and staff briefings, and facilitates Congressional overseas travel throughout the year. H reviews proposed legislation and coordinates Statements of Administration Policy on legislation affecting the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. The H staff advises individual bureaus of the Department on legislative and outreach strategies, and aligns those strategies with the Secretary's priorities.

The Secretary is the principal Congressional Relations Officer of the Department. H supports the Secretary by ensuring that the Administration's foreign policy priorities are reflected throughout the legislative process. H coordinates the Secretary's annual testimony on Department priorities and budget requirements to Congressional committees that have jurisdiction over Department programs. H succeeds in its overall mission by seeking passage of relevant foreign policy legislation and appropriations, obtaining advice and consent to treaties, as well as confirmation of the President's Department of State nominees and Senate Ambassadorial nominees. It consists of four offices: the Office of Senate Affairs; the Office of House Affairs; the Office of Regional, Global, and Functional Affairs; and the Executive Office. For more information about H, please visit <http://www.state.gov/s/h/index.htm>.

## ***Declassification***

The Systematic Review Program is an initiative to make Department records that are 25 years old or older available to the public. The Department had already pursued a declassification program before Executive Order 12958 mandated systematic declassification reviews for all federal agencies in 1995. The Department has partnered with NARA to declassify and make historical records available to the public since 1982, making it the oldest and most successful program for inter-agency declassification in the federal government. To date, the Department has reviewed over 90 million pages of records for declassification and transfer to NARA. The electronic Central Foreign Policy File is just one example of a declassified resource on the NARA website. The Department's commitment to the declassification of historic records has enhanced government transparency and increased the public's understanding of U.S. foreign policy.

The Department is an active participant in the National Declassification Center that was established under Executive Order 13526 to expedite the release of NARA's holdings of agency records. The Department has assigned reviewers to other agency facilities to review its equities in their records, and continues the vigorous process of declassifying records and transferring them to NARA.

## ***Participation***

Participation is a key element to ensure continued transparency in an Open Government. The Department plans to continue to provide and expand a range of opportunities for the public to interact with Department officials and offer their opinions, questions, and feedback both in the United States and abroad. This is useful for assessing public opinion and tracking reactions to U.S. positions, events, and policies. U.S. embassies engage local audiences as well through a variety of online platforms.



As noted previously, the Department is active in the social media arena and has a sizable following among social media communities and blog users. The Department's goal is to provide a variety of forums whereby U.S. citizens can participate actively in their government and U.S. foreign policy.

The Department extends the reach of U.S. foreign policy to domestic and global audiences through new media and web-based communication technology. The Department's three guiding principles for all social media efforts are engagement, transparency, and serving as an alternative to traditional media. These principles guide new expansion efforts and help build lasting relationships with new sectors of the public.

### **TechCamps**

One program that the Department utilizes to encourage public participation is called [TechCamps](#), a program that organizes conferences in various locations around the world to increase digital literacy and solicit feedback from civil society organizations (CSOs). These organizations collaborate with their peers to brainstorm solutions to current challenges in their community. After the conference, CSOs are connected to a global network of technologists, sponsors, and digital volunteers to implement solutions. They also build digital literacy by supplying regional technology experts to train and provide solutions. In addition to helping the CSOs, TechCamps advance the Department's diplomatic and development goals in several ways: They form networks and catalyze new partnerships among countries and various communities; they create an educational forum for discussion and collaboration; and they increase the civil society's ability to strengthen their reach and impact in an increasingly competitive global environment. This initiative is critical to the empowerment of a more effective civil society.

### **Diplomacy Lab**

Diplomacy Lab is designed to address two priorities: engaging the American people in the work of diplomacy, and broadening the Department's research base in response to a proliferation of complex global challenges. This initiative enables the Department to partner with students and faculty at universities across the nation. Students explore real-world challenges identified by the Department and contribute directly to the policymaking process, while also allowing the Department to tap into underutilized intellectual capital. Teams that deliver exceptional results are recognized and sometimes invited to brief senior Department officials on their findings. This initiative establishes a mutually beneficial relationship that furthers the cause of diplomacy and development.

### **Video**

The Department of State provides video for [video.state.gov](#), U.S. embassy websites, and several blogs. Video is also made widely available on social networking platforms such as YouTube™, Google+™, and Facebook™. These video products cover a variety of subjects through senior staff remarks and briefings and videos that feature elements of U.S. public diplomacy.

**DipNote**

DipNote, the Department's official blog at [blogs.state.gov](http://blogs.state.gov), gives the public context, clarity, and behind-the-scenes insights on U.S. foreign policy from Department employees who are directly engaged in the work of diplomacy. Department employees post daily entries on critical issues such as climate change and food security, and share the work they are doing in countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe with the public. DipNote has passed 5,000,000 page views this past year alone, and has received 25,000 comments by the public.

**Twitter™**

Twitter™ is a free "micro-blogging" service that allows for quick, frequent information distribution online (<http://www.twitter.com/StateDept>). The Department uses Twitter™ to disseminate information during the Secretary's travels, highlight key points made during the daily press briefings and high-profile public speeches, and communicate directly with the public by responding to their questions. The Department also corrects misinformation using Twitter™.

**YouTube™**

The Department maintains several YouTube™ video channels featuring public affairs, public diplomacy, and U.S. embassy videos. Videos include remarks by the Secretary, daily press briefings, special video collections based on foreign policy issues and interviews with U.S. diplomats. The main Department channel boasts over 6.8 million video views and 22,000 subscribers and can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/user/statevideo>.

**Interactive Travel Map**

PA created an interactive map to track the Secretary's foreign travel. To date, he has traveled more than 400,000 miles as Secretary. The map enables users to see where the Secretary is at any given time, calculates miles traveled (throughout the trip and cumulatively), displays photos from the road (posted on Flickr™), and features the Secretary's remarks and blogs. This program is also integrated with the Department's Facebook™ page. The direct link is <http://www.state.gov/secretary/travel/>.

**Facebook™**

The Department maintains a presence on Facebook™. Several U.S. embassies and consulates also maintain Facebook™ pages. The Department's public diplomacy efforts are also featured on Facebook™.

**Exchanges Website**

The Exchanges website ([exchanges.state.gov](http://exchanges.state.gov)) highlights ECA's exchange programs and better serves foreign and domestic audiences by being fully accessible and addressing top user questions and concerns. It offers clear pathways to access ECA and its exchange opportunities. The site includes participant stories, rich multimedia content, detailed program information, and information on travel and living in the United States.



### **Google+™ Hangouts**

The Department maintains a presence on Google+, which offers Hangouts: an interactive tool the Department uses to hold conversations with the public on issues of critical concern. In May 2013, the Secretary became the first Secretary to participate in a Google+ Hangout when he held a discussion on the foreign affairs budget with the American public. Later in the year, he participated in a Hangout to discuss the crisis in Syria. Other Department Hangouts have focused on international travel safety for U.S. citizens, global youth issues, and efforts to combat trafficking in persons. To date, the Department's Google+ account has 255,000 followers and 6.8 million views.

### **Live Digital Engagement**

The IIP Bureau's Office of Digital has an Interactive Division (formerly known as CO.NX) that produces live stream events with subject matter experts on a variety of topics. Additionally, the ECA Collaboratory hosts live web chats with, and for, educational and cultural exchange programs and participants on various topics related to their exchange experience.

### **Podcasts (Audio and Video)**

The Department produces podcasts for download on popular platforms such as iTunes™. These podcasts include the Secretary's remarks, daily press briefings, and various special features.

### **Increase Use of Mobile Technologies**

The Department will continue to support similar efforts to use mobile technologies as a means for social engagement in 2014.

### ***Collaboration***

Collaboration is one of the essential elements of diplomacy. The Department has done much in recent years to go beyond in-person collaboration and use technology in innovative ways and has plans to expand these efforts in new directions. The goal is to create and sustain an environment in which collaboration and cooperation are the norm, and a suite of state-of-the-art practice tools that are readily available to enhance collaboration in many different ways.

The Department faces a challenge in this area because the work often involves classified and other sensitive information. In order for the Department to fulfill its mission and share information broadly it must have robust risk management programs and appropriate IT security in place to protect sensitive information assets.

The Department's effectiveness is highly dependent on its ability to work in partnership with many different kinds of organizations. The Department collaborates actively with the U.S. public, citizens of other countries, other federal agencies, non-federal governments (including tribal governments), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and foreign government agencies.



### **Public-Private Partnership Programs**

The Department has had to adapt to this changing landscape as the private sector has dramatically increased its share of development aid. The Secretary's Office of Global Partnerships (S/GP) facilitates collaboration between the Department and the public, private, and non-profit sectors, and civil society. The S/GP's mission is to build public-private partnerships that strengthen diplomacy and development outcomes by convening people from across regions and sectors, catalyzing new projects and new solutions by providing training and technical assistance, collaborating closely with partners, and cultivating new partnerships by providing space, access to networks and capital, and mentoring assistance. Since 2009, the S/GP has cooperated with over 1,600 partners from around the world. Specifically, the Department has partnered with the Global Alliance for Clean Cook stoves, LAUNCH, and 100,000 Strong Education Exchange Initiatives to name a few of the many public-private partnerships. For more information, visit <http://www.state.gov/s/partnerships/index.htm>.

### **Advisory Councils, Commissions, Committees, and Boards**

A number of advisory councils, commissions, committees, and boards exist to maintain an open dialogue between the U.S. government and the private sector on various issues. These forums provide the Department with the perspective and expertise of the private sector to inform the formulation, coordination, and oversight of its broad range of functions. The advisory councils are typically comprised of members with a wide range of backgrounds that include past government service, military service, academia, think tanks, politics, and business. These committees report their activities to the Secretary and often hold public meetings. For more information and a complete list of the advisory groups that the Department works with, please visit <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/rls/dos/160060.htm>.

### **Business Information Database System (BIDS)**

The Department's Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs (EB) and Bureau of Information Resource Management have collaborated on a system, BIDS, that serves as an integrated and interactive platform to manage and deliver information on Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) and foreign government procurement opportunities to U.S. businesses. As part of this effort, embassy and consulate officials are able to input into BIDS timely, value-added information on these procurement opportunities. Through an external-facing site (<http://bids.state.gov/index.html>), U.S. businesses can access the BIDS data to help them make more informed and timely decisions on procurement and business opportunities. BIDS directly supports Executive Order 13630, issued December 6, 2012, which, among other things, directs the new Interagency Task Force on Commercial Advocacy to "institute processes to obtain and distribute information about foreign procurement opportunities that may be of interest to U.S. businesses in order to expand awareness of opportunities for U.S. businesses to sell their goods and services to foreign governments."



The BIDS development teams engage with other federal government agencies, such as the Department of Commerce and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, on how the Department can best share data and pull it into the BIDS tool. The intention of this data aggregation process is to make all of the information publicly accessible. The Department will tap into its broad network of over 200 posts abroad, as well as the major MDBs, to ensure data integration. The target consumers of this product are U.S. private-sector businesses that are interested in expanding overseas or are looking for new export markets. These efforts are all aligned to the overall Open Data and Open Government activities, and though they represent diverse areas of concentration and programmatic ownership, they all seek to further engage, educate, and welcome participation from the public.

## Flagship Initiatives

### *New Flagship Initiatives*

The Department of State is committed to advancing a transparent, collaborative, and participatory Open Government and, in doing so, better achieving its mission. In this year's Open Government Plan, the Department has designated two new efforts as Flagship Initiatives, specifically *Innovating with Geographic Data* and *Embracing Technologies and Platforms to Increase Public Access to Information*. Each of these initiatives has the potential to change the way that the Department does business, the way the Department interacts with citizens, how agencies collaborate internally, and how much information is available to the public.

### **Innovating with Geographic Data**

Geographic data can augment and enhance the ability to analyze, communicate, and share relevant information. The Department recognizes the benefits of disseminating this useful information to the public and has undertaken multiple initiatives to provide these services publicly, including *Imagery to the Crowd* and *MapGive*, and *Department of State by State*.

### **Imagery to the Crowd and MapGive**

A lack of quality geographic data handicaps local governments and organizations attempting to respond to humanitarian and development needs in many places. To address this problem, the Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) began a project in collaboration with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team ([HOT](#)) that relies on crowdsourcing to create better map data.

The INR Office of the Geographer's Humanitarian Information Unit (HIU) created the [Imagery to the Crowd](#) (IttC) initiative to help support the use of [OpenStreetMap](#) (OSM) for humanitarian response, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable development. IttC addresses significant data gaps for humanitarian and development needs by publishing high-resolution commercial satellite imagery purchased by the United States government in a format that public volunteers ("the crowd") can easily map into OSM. To date, mapping projects have been completed in support of disaster risk reduction in Nepal, disaster response in the Philippines, community resilience projects in Uganda, humanitarian logistics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and refugee camp planning in Ethiopia and Kenya.



In order to grow the crowd, the HIU and the Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) created MapGive, an educational campaign bringing people around the world into the OpenStreetMap community by teaching them about the importance of creating open map data, giving them the skills to map, and helping them get connected with mapping tasks through a user-friendly website. New volunteers are engaged in creating open geographic data that can help empower organizations and communities to make important decisions across a range of environmental, economic, and crisis management themes through <http://mapgive.state.gov/> and @MapGive on Twitter.

The data created is made freely and available to the public through the Open Data Commons Open Database License 1.0. There are many other free maps on the Internet, but most have legal or technical restrictions preventing others from using the data openly. With OSM, both the maps and underlying data can be downloaded for free, for developers or anyone to use or redistribute. Additionally, in many places of the world where there is no commercial motivation to develop this data, OSM is often the best available resource. During a crisis response, digital volunteers can be mobilized quickly to create new data, with their efforts coordinated by HOT.

### **Department of State by State Map**

The Department of State by State initiative provides an interactive U.S. map that shows how the Department benefits each U.S. state. It illustrates how the Department's work matters to each state's education system, economy, travel, and security, etc. The webpage also has information and links for Department careers, the Business Information Database System (BIDS), the Direct Line Program for American Businesses, the U.S. Diplomacy Center, and ForeignAssistance.gov.

Such information increases the Department's transparency and helps to educate the public on the many varied tasks conducted by the Department, which connects services to taxes and consequently builds trust in government. The Department will update the information in the Department of State by State map as new programs and initiatives are implemented. The Department of State by State interactive map can be viewed at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/map/index.htm>. The state.gov application programming interfaces (APIs) "Select State.gov Data" also includes data from the State by State map. See [www.state.gov/developer](http://www.state.gov/developer).

### **Embracing Technologies and Platforms to Increase Public Access to Information**

The evolving technology landscape has provided the Department with new opportunities to improve information delivery to the public. The Department recognizes the benefits of information dissemination and strives to deliver these services in numerous ways, including the StateAir initiative and an open source platform for State.gov.



### **Improving Public Access to Air Quality Information**

On April 29, 2013, the Department launched StateAir ([www.stateair.net](http://www.stateair.net)), which unified all Mission China air quality monitoring and publishing under a single software platform to help protect the health of American citizens abroad. In addition to improving and standardizing the presentation of Mission China air quality monitoring data, the new system makes it possible to analyze historical air quality data from every post. The public is able to use dashboards to view current and historical air quality information for Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang. Additionally, the public is able to sign up to receive real-time information from social media microblogging service and Rich Site Summary (RSS) feeds. The next step is expanding this or a similar system to our Missions around the world.

### **Open Source Platform for State.gov**

In support of the President's Open Government Directive to publish information online in an open format, the Office of Website Management (PA/WM) is migrating the current, proprietary Content Management System used for the Department's website, state.gov, to an open source platform. This will allow users to easily repurpose any code developed for state.gov. The Directive also requires agencies to use modern technology to disseminate useful information. PA/WM is developing more application programming interfaces (APIs) to allow users to access and disseminate our data more easily, thereby extending the reach of our information. The Department estimates that this migration will be completed in 2015.

### ***Ongoing Flagship Initiatives***

#### **Virtual Student Foreign Service**

The Virtual Student Foreign Service (VSFS) Program was established on a pilot basis during the summer of 2009. For the 2013-2014 VSFS eInternship program, 511 students are virtually interning on 276 projects with eight federal agencies. VSFS eIntern duties and responsibilities will vary according to the location and needs of the VSFS projects identified at the sponsoring domestic or overseas diplomatic office. VSFS projects may be research-based, contributing to reports on issues such as human rights, economics, or the environment. They may also be more technology oriented, such as working on webpages, or helping produce electronic journals. Selected students are expected to work virtually for an average of five to 10 hours per week on VSFS eInternship projects. Students apply in the summer and, if selected, begin the eInternship that fall lasting through spring. Most work and projects are internet-based and some have language requirements. Past projects have asked students to:

- Develop and implement a public relations campaign using social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. to communicate and reach out to youth;
- Conduct research on the economic situation, prepare graphic representations of economic data, and prepare informational material for the U.S. embassy website;
- Create a system to gather and analyze media coverage on a set of topics including environment, health, and trade;
- Research IT-based interventions that have been successful in higher education, particularly in teacher training;
- Write and contribute biweekly articles to the U.S. embassy's Facebook page on topics such as internet, computer science/technology, history, and literature;



- Develop a series of professional instructional video clips to be published by the U.S. embassy; and
- Survey social media efforts of U.S. diplomatic posts, NGOs, and private companies around the world to help establish best practices in a U.S. embassy's social media outreach business plan.

More information on the VSFS program can be found at <http://www.state.gov/vsfs/>.

### **ForeignAssistance.gov**

The ForeignAssistance.gov site was created in response to the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and President Obama's Open Government Initiative. As part of the efforts to pursue greater transparency in government, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released [Bulletin 12-01](#) on the collection of U.S. foreign assistance data, which provides U.S. agencies guidance on providing data to ForeignAssistance.gov. The U.S. government is committed to making information on foreign assistance programs more transparent, accessible, and compatible with international standards. ForeignAssistance.gov is also a commitment in the U.S. National Action Plan of the multi-national Open Government Partnership, where it is specifically highlighted in the plan as a means to increase the transparency of foreign assistance.

The goal of ForeignAssistance.gov is to standardize and improve aid reporting to make all U.S. foreign assistance information available in an accessible, machine readable and easy-to-understand format on one public website. The website offers data in multiple ways: through pre-defined charts and graphs, through downloadable datasets, and through XML files prepared in the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) format. All of the data can be downloaded in excel, csv, or machine readable XML. The visualizations and downloadable data enable a wide variety of stakeholders to examine, research, and track U.S. government foreign assistance investments and compare them against other donors and organizations.

ForeignAssistance.gov is also the mechanism used to deliver a unified U.S. report that meets the IATI standard. The U.S. government is implementing a whole-of-government approach by reporting data in a consolidated and standardized manner from all U.S. agencies that possess a foreign assistance portfolio. This is to standardize the information across the U.S. government, ensure consistent U.S. government reporting, and improve data quality. The IATI format is a specific international standard for which the U.S. government has developed a crosswalk to ensure that it presents its data in a unified and consistent manner to primarily benefit development in assisted countries. Data submitted to ForeignAssistance.gov is converted to the IATI XML format and registered to the IATI registry with no delay. Making foreign assistance data public enables us to pursue the following objectives:

- Make foreign aid more useful for development. Greater aid transparency accomplishes this objective by assisting recipient governments to better manage their aid flows and by empowering citizens to hold governments accountable for how assistance is used.
- Increase the efficacy of our foreign assistance. With a clearer understanding of what we are doing, where, and to what effect, the United States will be better positioned to maximize the impact of our resources and investments.
- Increase international accountability. Greater access to information about assistance will help developing country governments and international civil society to hold donors accountable for the quantity and quality of aid flows.



ForeignAssistance.gov is still in development. The goal is to have budget, financial, and programmatic data in a standard form from all 22 U.S. government agencies that receive or implement foreign assistance by the end of 2015. Nine agencies are currently reporting data: USAID, the Department of State, Department of Defense, and Department of the Treasury, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, U.S. African Development Foundation, Inter-American Development Foundation, the Peace Corps, and Department of Agriculture. The addition of the Department of Health and Human Services' data in the summer of 2014 will represent about 98 percent of all U.S. foreign assistance data available on ForeignAssistance.gov.

It is a Department priority to improve the quality of the data from reporting agencies and expand the number of reporting agencies. In addition to leading the overall effort of the development of ForeignAssistance.gov, the Department will work to improve its own reported data.

Data gaps are a known concern within the Department's published data. The source of the data is the Department's centrally-managed financial system, which was not created with the purpose of tracking data according to the current international transparency standards. The data required by ForeignAssistance.gov is spread through multiple internal Department systems, is not standardized, or does not exist. Efforts are underway to improve both the quality and scope of data reporting across the entire Department.

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), administered through the Department's Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator, has embarked on an ambitious plan to deliver a comprehensive set of program data to the public via the PEPFAR.gov Analytics Dashboard, co-hosted by ForeignAssistance.gov.

The Analytics Dashboard was unveiled in June 2014 with the Planned Budgetary module on Foreignassistance.gov. The Dashboard will later include PEPFAR Targets and Results module and the Expenditures module, both of which follow the 'dynamic drill-down' charting paradigm. The program is actively developing data resources at the site level and plans to make this level of detail available as well in the coming months. The website is designed specifically to provide total program transparency and to demonstrate the impact that can be achieved by delivering quality services at reasonable costs.

### **Public and Agency Ideas**

The Department of State welcomes feedback from other agencies and the public. The Department is interested in innovative ideas for enhancing collaboration. A "Contact Us" feature is available and is accessible from the "Stay Connected" box and footer on every page of the [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov) website. This design enables quick access to all of the Department's social media platforms also on the Stay Connected box and the user can "Share" links within documents.

In addition, a number of special purpose e-mail addresses have been set up specifically for public feedback: [APIfeedback@state.gov](mailto:APIfeedback@state.gov), [OpenGov@state.gov](mailto:OpenGov@state.gov), and [OpenData@state.gov](mailto:OpenData@state.gov) solicit comments from application programming interface (API) developers, Open Government questions Open Date requests, respectively.



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A key component of writing this Open Government Plan was stakeholder engagement. The Department requested input and also received proactive suggestions from civil society organizations on much of the content of the plan. Representatives from the Department also participated in workshops in Washington, D.C., on May 1, 2014, where stakeholders provided feedback and shared input on the Department’s Open Government efforts. The Department plans to continue engaging with the public and looks forward to working together to move forward in creating a transparent, collaborative, and participatory government.