

# **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN**



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# **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

## **OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN**

### **I. Introduction**

On January 21, 2009, President Obama issued the first executive memorandum of his Administration, entitled “Transparency and Open Government.” In his memorandum, the President established three guiding principles for the conduct of government activities; that government should be transparent, participatory, and collaborative. On December 8, 2009, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued memorandum number M-10-06, “Open Government Directive,” providing guidance to federal agencies on specific actions to be taken to increase transparency, participation and collaboration in government. This plan outlines the steps that the Department of Commerce has taken to date and will take prospectively to achieve this objective.

Commerce fosters economic growth and opportunity by promoting innovation, entrepreneurship, competitiveness, and stewardship. For nearly 100 years, it has partnered with the U.S. business community to maintain a prosperous, productive America that is committed to free and fair trade, competitiveness, and environmental stewardship. Commerce has a long-standing record of innovation in manufacturing, transportation, communication, and measurement standards, and has contributed significantly to U.S. leadership in the international marketplace. It leads the way in dissemination of information, including economic and demographic statistics, technological innovation, weather and climate research, and marine resources management. And as the Department prepares to enter its second century of service to the American public, it seeks to ensure that the United States retains its position as a leader in the world economy.

With this vision in mind, Commerce fully embraces the principles of transparent and open government established by the President. Through this openness and the resulting interaction with businesses, nonprofit organizations, and private citizens Commerce will better understand the products and services that are needed, how to improve their usefulness, and whether they are effectively contributing to the Department’s mission. Through this effort, Commerce hopes to increase transparency and accountability, develop a new paradigm for internal and external collaboration and public participation in the decision-making process, facilitate timely and high quality review processes, and encourage the establishment of innovative programs that strengthen the private sector by further leveraging available information.

The Department will leverage its data and services to accomplish these objectives by:

- Continuing its leadership role in the Data.gov initiative by increasing the number of high value data sets made readily available to the American public;
- Developing analytical partnerships with the private sector, including businesses, academia and nonprofit organizations, to broaden input received for consideration during the regulatory process;
- Creating online tools to improve private sector access to Commerce services and to enhance understanding of its funding opportunities; and
- Increasing the use of social media tools to encourage the public to participate in idea-generation and to provide feedback on Commerce initiatives.

“President Obama took office with a call for unprecedented openness in government, and we are heeding that call.”

Gary Locke  
Secretary of  
Commerce

## **II. Leadership, Governance, and Culture Change**

The Department of Commerce’s programmatic responsibilities are carried out by 12 operating units:

Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS)	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)	National Technical Information Service (NTIS)
Bureau of the Census (Census Bureau)	National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)
Economic Development Administration (EDA)	U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)
Economics and Statistics Administration (ESA)	
International Trade Administration (ITA)	
Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)	
National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)	

Through their unique missions, each of these operating units contributes to Commerce’s overall objective of promoting economic growth for the nation and opportunity for all Americans. They are driving initiatives which range from enhancing patent processing to developing sustainable and resilient fisheries, from transforming service delivery to businesses to expanding international markets for U.S. firms, and from creating scientific and technological innovation to advancing measurement science.

This diversity creates challenges as well as strengths. Since taking office, Secretary Locke has called upon managers and employees at all levels to seek opportunities for greater collaboration both among Commerce operating units and other federal agencies. He has challenged the workforce to bring together ongoing initiatives from across the Department to form a unified, strategic approach and to pursue opportunities to collaborate, increase performance, and

enhance customer service. He has asked employees to think creatively as to how they can better work together to harness the power of their diverse talents.

The dissemination of scientific, technical and economic information has been a critical part of the Department's mission since its inception, and Commerce recognizes the benefits that government-wide initiatives to enhance transparency and accessibility offer in carrying out its responsibilities. To assist it in institutionalizing such initiatives, Commerce recently created an interdisciplinary, Department-wide leadership, planning, and execution team to implement the Open Government Initiative. Membership in this group comprises the Chief Information Officer; General Counsel; Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Administration (CFO/ASA); representatives from the Offices of Public Affairs, and Policy and Strategic Planning; and subject matter experts from key mission areas. This team supplements the existing and ongoing efforts of the extensive Data.gov team that Commerce launched almost a year ago.

As an organization, Commerce is continuing to explore other ways of working better across organizational lines to improve service delivery and recognizes that opportunities for greater progress exist. For example, CommerceConnect, which is discussed below, is a creative intersection where these cultural changes may meet. As announced by Secretary Locke, CommerceConnect is intended to streamline access to government services and solutions to aid American businesses. Commerce is leading this initiative focused on integrating grant programs, partnership efforts, and other business-related services by starting with a pilot project in Michigan. Its primary goal is to provide a "one-stop-shop" for information, counseling, and access to the breadth of services that can help a business transform itself into a viable and competitive enterprise.

### **III. Transparency**

#### **Why Commerce Needs to Do This**

Unlocking public access to government data is a critical component of the President's Open

"Transparency promotes accountability and provides information for citizens about what their government is doing. Information maintained by the Federal Government is a national asset."

President Barack Obama

Government Initiative because it can help drive innovation by tapping into the ingenuity of the American people, increase agency accountability, and create a standard for government that is open, transparent and participatory. Transparency is imperative to a government that is accountable to its people.

This principle particularly applies to Commerce, given its partnerships with state, local and tribal governments, educational and scientific institutions, nonprofit organizations, and for-profit businesses this principle is particularly relevant to Commerce.

From the amount of rainfall measured by NOAA’s National Weather Service (NWS) to the complex portrait of the nation developed every 10 years by the Census Bureau, data collection and dissemination is a vital aspect of what the Department does. As a result, Commerce – as a whole – must be fully committed to making its data sets more broadly accessible through the government-wide Data.gov initiative. It is also prepared to serve as a leader in the Federal Government’s effort to make more raw data and tool sets of packaged data available through the Data.gov website and other data repositories.

### What Commerce Has Done

Even before the issuance of the Open Government Directive, Commerce had published over 104,000 data sets and/or data tools on Data.gov and, in the last 120 days, it has released over 60,000 more. While the vast majority of the data sets involve Census geodata that will allow the public to map other bits of information, Commerce’s 166,512 data sets also include 40 tools that should make other sets easier to use and 18 different sets of raw, machine readable collections of information.

The following table provides additional detail about the data the Department is making available on Data.gov, the operating units that have provided or have responsibility for them, and how often they were downloaded during the week beginning March 28, 2010.

<b>Commerce Data Sets Released to the Public</b>					
<b>Agency / Operating Unit</b>	<b>Raw Datasets (high-value)</b>	<b>Tools (high-value)</b>	<b>Geodata</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Number of Times Downloaded (3/28/10 – 4/3/10)</b>
<b>Commerce</b>	<b>18 (4)</b>	<b>40 (2)</b>	<b>166,454</b>	<b>166,512</b>	<b>607</b>
BEA	0	2	0	2	28
BIS	2	0	0	2	15
ITA	0	2	0	2	23
NIST	0	3	0	3	37
NOAA	11 (1)	3	1,936	1,950	232
NTIS	1 (1)	0	0	1	25
NTIA	1 (1)	0	0	1	17
Census	2	2	164,518	164,522	94
USPTO	1 (1)	28 (2)	0	29	136

In many cases, the data Commerce has made available on Data.gov over the last year was already available elsewhere online, but in a larger number of cases data was not available in the raw format that developers and other members of the public find most useful.

## What Commerce Will Do

Throughout its history, the Department of Commerce has published high value data as part of its scientific, technological and economic programs. This has allowed Commerce to establish best practices in distribution and publication processes that meet the ever-evolving needs of the public. It has established a robust network of content owners and technology specialists to assist it in further converting existing data to machine-readable, high-value data sets for use by the public, and in retaining its leadership role across the government in information dissemination. The Department will also expand its use of developing technologies to make information about its operations and decisions readily accessible online, and to solicit input from the public to help identify information that will be of greatest use or interest prospectively.

Commerce has launched a series of projects to increase high-value information that is readily accessible by the public. Information concerning 17 of the projects currently underway across Commerce to improve transparency is provided below.

### National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)

- ***Project – Improving Dissemination of Basic Research Results via Web and Social Media***

*What’s New – Tagging content to ease search, simplifying public feedback process*

As part of an effort to disseminate more broadly its research results, NIST will implement a new website design based on a content management system. This system includes access to an improved database of research papers authored or co-authored by NIST researchers. Content posted on the new website will be “tagged” by topic, enabling the public to subscribe to receive new information posted on the

Projects to Increase Data Availability and Accessibility	
Operating Unit	Data Project
NIST	Improving Dissemination of Basic Research Results via Web and Social Media
	Improving Access to the Digital Data Repository of NIST Collections, including Publications, Artifacts, and Photographs Relating to Measurement Science
NOAA	Modernizing the NOAA Climate Database
	Severe Weather Data Inventory
	Ocean Surface Current Simulator
	San Francisco Exploratorium
	U.S. Drought Portal – Addition of Soil Moisture Observation Data
	Historical Climate Reanalysis Project
	NOAA Climate Services Portal
NTIA	Broadband Mapping
	Broadband Survey
NTIS	Making 5 years of Bibliographic Data Searchable
USPTO	Enhancing Patent Maintenance Fee Events Data
	Expansion of Patent Bibliographic Data
	Enhancing Existing USPTO Data Capabilities Available to the Public
Office of the Secretary	Public Schedule Data for Secretary
	Streaming Video for More Meetings

website on specific topics of interest such as nanotechnology or energy-related research. The new website will also allow the public to comment or ask questions about posted research articles and to share easily content from the NIST site with their own websites. NIST has recently created YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter sites as well. To ensure that as many people as possible benefit from NIST's work, news of major research results posted on the new NIST website will be routinely announced through these additional social media sites.

- ***Project – Improving Access to the Digital Data Repository of NIST Collections, including Publications, Artifacts, and Photographs Relating to Measurement Science***

*What's New – Using Open Archives Protocol to allow automatic harvesting by major search engines and research repositories*

Currently, information regarding NIST's publications is electronically available through its Research Library's online catalog, which includes links to the full text of many publications. Information about some of the objects in NIST's museum is also available through the NIST Virtual Museum (NVM). The online catalog and the NVM are available to the public. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, NIST will implement a digital library repository. This repository will conform to the latest library and publishing metadata standards to enhance the ability of other scholarly and research repositories to discover and harvest information. The repository will contain the full text of NIST's technical publications, including the *Journal of Research*, as well as images of and information about historical scientific objects that it maintains. The metadata will conform with the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH), which is the accepted standard within scholarly and scientific communities for making the contents of information collections available to researchers. File formats will adhere to Government Printing Office, Library of Congress, and National Archives preservation requirements. The repository will permit the digital forms of NIST's technical publications and other content to be easily searchable by the public through major Internet search engines, such as Google, Google Books, Google Scholar, WorldCat, and Yahoo. This will significantly enhance publication and distribution of NIST's research results.

## **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)**

- ***Project – Modernizing the NOAA Climate Database***

*What's New – Digitizing data from weather stations collected in the 18th and 19th centuries*

The Climate Data Modernization Program (CDMP) supports NOAA's responsibility to collect, integrate, assimilate and effectively manage Earth observations on a global scale, ranging from atmospheric, weather, and climate observations to oceanic, coastal, and marine life observations. Many of these data were originally recorded on paper, film, and other fragile media. Prior to CDMP, not only were these valuable data sources mostly unavailable to the scientific community, but storage technology for the archive had become obsolete.

Today, CDMP has greatly improved the preservation of and access to NOAA's holdings by migrating many of these resources to new digital media. CDMP has placed online over 53 million weather and environmental images that are now available to researchers around the world via the Internet. The amount of data online has grown from 1.75 terabytes in 2001 to over 11 terabytes in 2009. Hourly weather records digitized through CDMP continue to be integrated into NOAA's digital database holdings, extending the period of record for many stations back into the 1890's. Additional daily data records digitized through the CDMP will extend this data period back to the 18th Century for several weather stations.

- ***Project – Severe Weather Data Inventory (SWDI)***

*What's New – Simplified access to current and past information about severe weather incidents*

The SWDI at NOAA's National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) provides users access to archives of several data sets critical to the detection and evaluation of severe weather. These data sets include:

- Next Generation Radar – or NEXRAD – Level-III point features describing general storm structure, hail, mesocyclone and tornado signatures,
- NWS local storm reports collected from storm spotters,
- NWS warnings, and
- Lightning strikes from Vaisala's National Lightning Detection Network.

SWDI archives these data sets in a spatial database that permits convenient searching. These data are accessible via the NCDC website, FTP or automated Web services. The results of interactive Google Maps-based Web page queries may be saved in a variety of formats, including plain text, XML, Google Earth's KMZ and Shapefile. Summary statistics, such as daily counts, allow efficient discovery of severe weather events. More information may be obtained at <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/swdi>.

- ***Project – Ocean Surface Current Simulator***

*What's New – Upgrading the ability to visualize changes in ocean surface currents*

The Ocean Surface Current Simulator (OSCURS) numerical model is a research tool that allows oceanographers and fisheries scientists to perform retrospective analyses of daily ocean surface currents anywhere in a ocean-wide grid of 90 km cells that stretches from Baja California to China and from 10 degrees north of the equator to the Bering Strait. The model is used to measure the movement of surface currents over time, as well as the movement of what is in, or on, the water. Ocean surface currents affect organisms suspended in the water

column—such as fish eggs, small larvae, and plankton—and may affect their survival by determining their location after a few months of drift. Even swimming or migrating fish or mammals may have their destinations significantly offset by currents or the annual variability of currents. OSCURS has gained visibility as an accidental debris tracker to analyze accidental but fortuitous at-sea events beyond the scale of normal oceanographic science. Investigations of events such as spills of cargo containers loaded with plastic bathtub toys have been used to fine-tune the OSCURS model.

The model has been served for many years by a Live Access Server (LAS) at NOAA and has been used heavily. However, LAS requires the outdated Netscape browser and only allows the user to visualize and download one OSCURS run at a time. Data serving technology has greatly improved, and NOAA is developing a new interface to serve the OSCURS model (<http://las.pfeg.noaa.gov/oscurs>) that uses Google Maps as the visualization tool and the latest in AJAX technology to improve users' experience. Users will be able to visualize many runs at a time and possibly view other relevant environmental data using the same interface. This project should be ready for public use by the end of calendar year 2010.

- ***Project – San Francisco Exploratorium***

*What's New – Near real-time ability to visualize weather and water conditions in San Francisco Bay*

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service is developing a new way to visualize regional data in the San Francisco Bay (<http://las.pfeg.noaa.gov/SFBay>). Data from shore stations, buoys, high-frequency radar, and satellites are available, but scattered among many Web pages and stored in many formats. It is difficult for regional and public interests in the San Francisco Bay area to visualize and use this system to assess real-time conditions. As a demonstration tool to support NOAA's new partnership with the renowned science museum, the Exploratorium, and in collaboration with the Central and Northern California Ocean Observing System and other regional data providers, NOAA is developing a Web page to make it easy to visualize near-real time data in San Francisco Bay. The interface will use Google Maps and the latest AJAX technology to combine and compare data from diverse sources. Users will be able to visualize water temperature, salinity, and other station-based measurements along with overlays of satellite measurements of Sea Surface Temperature (SST) and radar measurements of currents. Users will also be able to compare time series of measurements from various stations and sources. Model data and animations will be added as they become available.

A public version of the project will be ready by the end of 2010, and will be continually developed with new data included as they become available.

- ***Project – U.S. Drought Portal – Addition of Soil Moisture Observation Data***

*What's New – Making public for the first time soil moisture observation data*

Timely recognition of drought risks depends on the ability to monitor and forecast the diverse physical indicators of climatological drought, as well as relevant economic, social, and environmental impacts. A 2004 report from the Western Governors' Association makes it clear that recent and ongoing droughts underscore the critical need for a coordinated, integrated drought monitoring, forecasting, and early warning information system. To fill this need, Congress passed the National Integrated Drought Information System Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-430) (NIDIS). The first component of NIDIS is the Drought Portal ([www.drought.gov](http://www.drought.gov)), which is part of an interactive system to:

- Provide early warning about emerging and anticipated droughts,
- Assimilate and control the quality of data about droughts and models,
- Provide information about the risk and impacts of droughts to different agencies and stakeholders,
- Provide information about past droughts in order to compare them with and to better understand current conditions,
- Explain how to plan for and manage the impacts of droughts, and
- Provide a forum for different stakeholders to discuss drought-related issues.

During the first quarter, FY2010, the Drought Portal was expanded to include soil moisture observation data from the U.S. Climate Reference Network, which had not been previously available to the public.

- ***Project – Historical Climate Reanalysis Project***

*What's New – Re-launching and expanding access to data sets describing past weather*

The Historical Climate Reanalysis Project uses a three-dimensional globally-complete climate model and available weather observations to produce output fields of weather variables measured four times daily from 1871, to the present. Using what are often, especially in earlier years, sparse data sets of observations, the Project is able to reconstruct past weather and fill in missing data values around the rest of the globe. These data will be available through a number of different types of Web-based, interactive plotting pages as well as file download. In addition to generating plots, users will be able to conduct basic analyses of data, download subsets of data, and obtain data in Google Earth format, which will permit easy visualization by the general public using the Google Earth application. Currently, the data are available at

the Physical Sciences Division of NOAA's Earth Systems Research Laboratory only in "grib" format, which is difficult to read and not available for online plotting and analysis. The complete dataset itself is well over four terabytes, so examining even portions of it requires enormous storage space and computing resources.

By enabling the public to work with the data and data products online, NOAA will allow users to examine past weather and climate events in a detailed way never before possible. Version 1 of the Project is available today at [www.esrl.noaa.gov/psd/data/20thC\\_Rean/](http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/psd/data/20thC_Rean/). It spans, however, only the years 1908 through 1958 and does not include the interactive plotting tools described above. NOAA expects Version 2 to include data for 1891, to the present, provide online plotting and analysis tools, and be available online during the second quarter of calendar year 2010.

- ***Project – NOAA Climate Services Portal***

*What's New – Enhanced Access to NOAA Climate Information*

NOAA is enhancing its climate information Web presence in response to customer requirements, emerging needs for improved decision-making capabilities across all sectors of society facing impacts from climate variability and change, and the value of leveraging climate data and services to support research and public education. NOAA has initiated development of a NOAA Climate Services Portal (NCS Portal) with the goal to become the "go-to" website for NOAA's climate data, products, and services for all users. The NCS portal is currently available as a prototype, which only scratches the surface of the many climate datasets, products, and services available across NOAA. The prototype highlights some of most popular datasets and products based on customer usage of the data, focused on several datasets and products from NOAA's National Climatic Data Center, Coastal Services Center, and Climate Prediction Center, among others. NOAA plans to gather user feedback through focus groups, usability studies, and informal communications. Over the next several years, NOAA will expand the NCS Portal's scope and functionality in a user-driven manner to enhance the access to, and extensibility of, climate data and services, timely articles and information, education resources, and tools for engagement and decision-making.

## **National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)**

NTIA is embarking on a series of data collection and dissemination initiatives to provide a more detailed, quantitative understanding of broadband Internet access and use in the United States. This information will inform efforts to increase broadband access and adoption, thereby supporting economic growth. Initiatives will include data collected through NTIA's broadband mapping program and a new broadband-related survey.

- ***Project – Broadband Mapping***

*What's New: National, interactive map showing broadband availability and speeds*

Through its State Broadband Data and Development Grant Program, funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, NTIA awards financial assistance grants for broadband data collection and planning. Data will be displayed in NTIA's national broadband map, which will be made publicly available by March 2011. The map will display the geographic areas where broadband service is available and its speed, as well as the technology by which it is provided, and its availability at public schools, libraries, hospitals, colleges, universities, and public buildings. The national map will be interactive and searchable by address, and will identify broadband service providers by census block or street segment. Data collection began in 2009, and will continue to take place semiannually between now and 2011. Data will be presented in a clear, accessible, and open format to the public, government, and research community. This new initiative will provide broadband information at an unprecedented level of comprehensiveness and granularity.

- ***Project – Broadband Survey***

*What's New – Resuming use of the Census Bureau's periodic Current Population Survey to study Internet usage*

Working with the Census Bureau, NTIA launched a 75,000-household Internet-use survey via the October 2009 *Current Population Survey*. Through this effort, NTIA will examine why people do not use high-speed Internet service and explore differences in Internet usage patterns around the country and across socio-economic groups. NTIA intends to release data in open, Web-based formats and to make the survey instruments and associated reports as widely available as possible.

## **National Technical Information Service (NTIS)**

- ***Project – Making Five Years of Bibliographic Data Searchable***

*What's New – Making 180,000 records describing federal reports available in XML format*

NTIS is making the latest five years of the NTIS Bibliographic File searchable via Data.gov. The file contains over 180,000 bibliographic records that link to a Web-store of federally funded technical reports from a broad spectrum of federal agencies. This bibliographic file is being made available through Data.gov in a compiled XML format, which will – for the first time – fully open access to NTIS' technical reports collection to Web exposure and extraction. NTIS will measure the effect of increased exposure via Data.gov by comparing future ordering information to existing baseline data. The increased exposure of scientific and technical content will be a significant step forward in opening public access to a valuable collection that has heretofore had limited library and commercial vendor availability.

## United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)

- ***Project Name – Enhancement to Patent Maintenance Fee Events Data***

*What's New – Making fee data available in machine-readable form for the first time*

During the first quarter of FY2010, USPTO met an expressed public need for data by making available a new machine-readable online product: *Patent Maintenance Fee Events*, a record of patent maintenance payments, expired patents, and related transactions. Patent maintenance fee information had been previously available only through interactive patent application retrieval from USPTO's Public Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) System. This data had been frequently requested by USPTO's data customers and is the first machine-readable, raw data made available from the Public PAIR system.

- ***Project – Expansion of Patent Bibliographic Data***

*What's New – Expanding online availability of information on past patent grants and applications*

Also during the first quarter of FY2010, USPTO made available more bibliographic information for patent grants issued from September 1996 through December 2008, and patent applications submitted from mid-March 2001 through December 2008. These data expanded the current USPTO dataset offerings on Data.Gov.

In addition, USPTO plans to make all patents, published patent applications, and related materials more easily searchable by the public online. With intellectual property-based businesses estimated to contribute nearly 40 percent of growth achieved by all U.S. private industry, the impact on jobs and the economy of more patent transparency should be significant. As a step toward improved access to patent information, USPTO will begin posting this data online for free download through a third-party provider during calendar year 2010.

- ***Project – Enhancement of Existing USPTO Data Capabilities Available to the Public***

*What's New – Upgrading of existing mechanisms for training users on intellectual property rights*

USPTO is developing an outsourcing model for public e-learning opportunities to educate and train the public on intellectual property, patents and trademarks. It is identifying better search tools and is re-designing application management systems to improve applicants' electronic business experience with around-the-clock capability. In addition to data sets already available on Data.gov, USPTO is working with the public to identify mechanisms to quickly expand public access to more USPTO data.

## **Office of the Secretary**

- ***Project – Public Schedule Data for Secretary***

*What's new – Regularly updated, searchable feed of the Secretary's public schedule*

The Office of Public Affairs, in conjunction with the Offices of Scheduling and Business Liaison, is planning to release the Commerce Secretary's daily public schedule on either a daily or weekly basis. Commerce intends for this data to be as readable and as complete as possible. It is currently examining options for dealing with technical and managerial hurdles involved in regularly releasing this data, but plans to begin posting it on Commerce.gov and Data.gov by the end of 2010.

- ***Project – Streaming Video for More Meetings***

*What's new – Expanded availability of Commerce meetings via the Web*

One of the more widely requested methods of being more transparent involves streaming video of appropriate Commerce meetings for public viewing. While it would be prohibitively expensive to provide video access to all meetings that occur at Commerce on any given day, it is important to increase the extent to which streaming is currently employed. To do so, Commerce plans to meet core new media objectives relative to streaming meetings or events in 2011.

## **How Commerce will Identify and Publicly Release More Data Sets**

To assist Commerce in adhering to the guidance provided in OMB's "Open Government Directive" to make existing and new data sets and tools more easily accessible by the public, the Department has established an internal community of Data.gov points of contact (POCs) from each of its operating units. This communication network supports the enhanced exchange of information throughout the Department.

The responsibilities of the POCs are built on OMB's guidelines for increasing transparency, participation, and collaboration while providing value to the public and other agencies. In doing so, they focus on certain central themes: expanding access; utilizing open platforms; disaggregating data; adopting rapid integration; emphasizing program responsibility; growing and improving through user feedback; and embracing and driving best practices.

Commerce will continue to be a key participant in developing requirements, collecting and analyzing data, and disseminating information to the public for the Federal Government. As it moves forward in implementing the Open Government Initiative, Commerce is using the POCs to build integrated, replicable processes that allow interaction between data owners, technical staff, knowledge management staff and the public.

As part of those processes, Commerce has encouraged data owners to develop timelines to publish new information and enhance previously published information. It is improving existing data user tools to allow greater access across all of its operating units and by other federal agencies and departments.

To carry out its various responsibilities, Commerce must maintain a diverse workforce with a broad spectrum of skills and access to a wide range of information and knowledge. Effective data sharing at all levels ensures that stakeholders receive services based upon information that meets the highest standards for accuracy, integrity and quality. To provide consistency across government, communities of practice (COPs) and communities of interest (COIs) are reviewing existing standards and establishing inter-agency best practices to encourage a well-defined, active information dissemination environment.

Through its involvement, Commerce will emphasize the following:

- *Information Quality* – A primary concern within Commerce is making Data.gov data more usable through better tools, user-friendly metadata, and sharing how the data was collected and its intended purpose.
- *Federal Spending Information* – The Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Administration (CFO/ASA) serves as the senior official responsible for the integrity of Commerce-related data posted to the USASpending.gov website. The Department’s grants are timely and comprehensively reported through USASpending.gov as reflected in the “green” ratings that Commerce has consistently earned from 2007 to the present. A formal process has been established to ensure that all grant offices are reporting in a timely manner and implementing a formalized data content oversight program. For contracts, the Department regularly conducts an independent validation and verification of data recorded in the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS) each quarter. Feedback on the results of those reviews is provided to the operating units. Quality control for non-Recovery Act transactions has been further strengthened by processes developed for reporting under the American Recovery Act. Commerce continues to meet all requirements for publishing spending information on this website and is an active participant in planning for its expansion.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act requires recipients of Recovery funds to report quarterly on how money is being spent. All data is posted on [www.Recovery.gov](http://www.Recovery.gov) so the public can monitor Recovery Act efforts. Other reporting requirements include posting program plans and performance metrics, weekly updates on financial status and major activities, notices of all funding announcements, and notifications of press releases and other public information about Recovery Act-related activities.

To develop processes, procedures and policies for complying with the Recovery Act and all related guidance, Commerce formed several interlocking intra-agency working groups in March 2009. Taking direction from OMB guidance, it created a team to implement the Recovery Act and report in as transparent a manner as possible. All reporting requirements are being met. Commerce has complied with all OMB guidance, timelines and milestones and, in many cases, has played a leading role in inter-agency working groups to improve timeliness, efficiency and effectiveness in reporting on Recovery Act activities.

- *Citation* – Commerce will explore best practices for citing published data to make reference data easier to locate for end-users. This will assist in establishing the context needed to understand fully the meaning of published data.
- *Intergovernmental Working Groups* – The government-wide Open Government Working Group has created cross-agency groups to examine data sets that would support health and green energy COPs. At Commerce’s suggestion, an additional group has been established to identify information and data sets to support job creation. This group is chaired by Commerce and focuses on data and resources across government. As a model, it uses National Weather Service data, which has created an entire industry based on its machine readable formats.
- *Security* – Commerce is using its POCs to verify that information being published poses no security risk once it is released to the public.
- *Privacy* – Commerce is also relying on its POCs to verify that information being published does not pose a risk of personally identifiable information being released.

#### **IV. Participation and Collaboration**

##### **Why Commerce Needs to Do This**

In his January 21, 2009 memorandum on open government, President Obama said:

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

Government should be collaborative. Collaboration actively engages Americans in the work of their Government. Executive departments and agencies should use innovative tools, methods, and systems to cooperate among themselves, across all levels of Government, and

with nonprofit organizations, businesses, and individuals in the private sector. Executive departments and agencies should solicit public feedback to assess and improve their level of collaboration and to identify new opportunities for cooperation.”

Commerce’s long-standing, close relationship with external partners makes the Department an ideal candidate to adopt leading practices in proactively soliciting participation by the public. Additionally, Commerce is seeking to increase employee participation in the formulation of significant policies and strategic plans. The Secretary has called for breaking down barriers to cooperation previously existing between the Department’s operating units to create a Commerce Department that is a fully integrated service provider positioned to support sustainable economic growth across the entire business life cycle. In order to realize this vision, managers across the agency have been asked to encourage communication and collaboration across operating units.

### **What Commerce Will Do**

- *Open Commerce Website* – The Commerce.gov/open website was launched on February 2, 2010, creating an easily accessible location for Americans to find how the Department is making itself more transparent, participatory, and collaborative. The new site meets all relevant guidelines established in OMB’s “Open Government Directive.”

Commerce sought input from the public for the development of this Open Government Plan on its Ideascale Web page, <http://www.OpenCommerce.Ideascale.com>. Suggestions that have been received have been incorporated as appropriate. Moving forward, Commerce will post additional strategic questions on its Open Government website for public input.

- *Online Partnership Tools* – Commerce’s NTIA and the Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Rural Utilities Service (RUS) were appropriated \$7.2 billion under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to award competitive grants to expand broadband capability. Both Commerce and USDA have embraced the principles of open government and launched multiple online information and collaboration tools. Among these, the BroadbandMatch tool has proven to be a signature initiative. This new online tool facilitates partnerships among prospective applicants to the agencies’ broadband programs. BroadbandMatch – at <http://match.broadbandusa.gov> – allows potential applicants to identify partners for broadband projects and helps them to combine expertise to create stronger proposals. For example, a broadband infrastructure provider might partner with community institutions, such as universities, hospitals, or libraries, on a proposal to bring high-speed Internet service to their facilities. Any company, nonprofit organization, state or local government, or qualified individual interested in applying for funding under NTIA’s Broadband Technology Opportunities Program or RUS’ Broadband Initiatives Program can post a profile, including key information about the contribution they can make to a broadband project, and search for other stakeholders whose skills and resources match their needs.

Commerce is exploring ways to use the technology and approach developed for the BroadbandMatch site for other Departmental initiatives that seek to connect grantees and better use government resources. One project currently under consideration involves adopting this model for EDA's Regional Innovation Clusters Program, which seeks to connect established businesses and entrepreneurs to pursue joint projects that will promote regional economic growth.

- *Long-Term Vision for e-FOIA* – Commerce employs a decentralized approach to implement the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The Departmental FOIA Officer, located within the Office of the CFO/ASA, exercises oversight for the program, coordinates the implementation of government-wide policies and initiatives, facilitates regular meetings held for training and collaboration, and processes FOIA inquiries that involve multiple operating units. Each operating unit has at least one FOIA Officer to coordinate implementation of the Act within their organization; larger operating units may have several FOIA Officers.

Incoming FOIA inquiries are directed to a lead operating unit that is most likely to have the requested records. The lead operating unit coordinates with others as needed to locate all responsive records, determine the extent to which any redactions are necessary, and respond to the request. The Departmental FOIA Officer is responsible for processing requests that relate to Commerce as a whole. In the event that a requestor wishes to file an appeal, the Department's Assistant General Counsel for Administration serves as the Departmental appeals official with the exception of USPTO, which – under the Patent and Trademark Office Efficiency Act – retains responsibility for processing its own appeals.

Commerce receives and processes an average of 2,100 FOIA requests each year. Recently, it has experienced an increase in both the number and scope of FOIA inquiries received. The Department has maintained a backlog of inquiries, which during the last two fiscal years has involved an average of 151 requests. The operating units are taking various steps to help reduce this level, which include additional training, streamlining procedures, augmenting staff, and automating processes.

The Department is also exploring options for procuring FOIA management software. While each operating unit uses information technology (IT) software and systems to a varying degree, a single approach has not been adopted across the Department. As an example, USPTO currently utilizes FOIAXpress (<http://www.foiaexpress.com/>) to manage all aspects of FOIA processing. At the Census Bureau, certain portions of its process are automated, e.g., redaction, while others are not.

By increasing its use of technology Commerce expects to enhance its ability to receive and track requests, produce and post FOIA reports to the Web, and manage documents responsive to FOIA requests. The Department is considering the purchase of a site license for software that could be used by the Departmental FOIA Officer and each operating unit's FOIA Officer. Also being considered by the interagency Chief FOIA Officers Working

Group, is the use of a government-wide IT solution. One possible option is Privasoft's "AccessPro Suite" (<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2010/02/prweb3578074.htm>), which has recently been purchased by the Department of Justice for its FOIA processing needs.

The Department is also working to provide quicker access to documents that are of public interest. It intends to create a searchable archive of FOIA responses. This will not only make it easier for the public to find out more about how the Department has responded to requests, but also reduce the staff time associated with answering duplicative requests. Additionally, in the past, records were typically posted to the e-FOIA Reading Room after a minimum of three requests had been received. Commerce is now posting records that relate to topics that may be of broad interest following the receipt and processing of one request.

- *Declassification of Records* – The Office of Security, within the Office of the CFO/ASA, serves as the central point for providing policy guidance and operational oversight for classification and declassification activities throughout Commerce, and actively coordinates systematic declassification review efforts required under Executive Order 12958. Through this effort, Commerce has exceeded the requirement for annual reviews by collaborating with the operating units to perform monthly reviews of classified holdings of national security information.

Additionally, Commerce has reduced the number of people authorized to make original classification authority (OCA) decisions, and to ensure proper education and training has been provided to those that do have such authority. Consistent with Executive Order 13526, Commerce is currently considering a further reduction in the number of OCAs.

- *Ideation* – As one member of the public suggested in the Department's open government Ideascale community, which has helped Commerce in implementing OMB's "Open Government Directive," the increased use of ideation tools could be beneficial. Ideation refers to a family of tools designed to gather feedback from employees or the general public. They range from systems as simple as a physical "suggestion box" or electronic mailbox to those as sophisticated as an electronic forum with a community of participants interacting with each other.

Deployment of such electronic collaboration and idea-generation tools could aid with enhancing intra-Departmental communication. Deployment could also help ensure that the public can reach decision-makers with their thoughts and suggestions, and share their ideas with others. Commerce is looking forward to building on its experience with Ideascale to develop an ideation platform to solicit thoughts from its employees and the public on how it can better deliver services and administer its programs. It is currently evaluating the wide array of ideation tools that are available and anticipates launching a solution by January 2011.

- *Open Source Information Technology* – Also emerging from Commerce’s Open Government Ideascale community was a suggestion to “become more open through the increased use of open source software.” The Department has already begun using the open source tool, Drupal, for a number of its new websites and plans to increase this use in the future. Using open source technology will allow Commerce to develop new technologies and collaborate more readily with the public and other government agencies, and within the Department itself.

To make this happen, the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Office of Acquisition Management will be consulted to ensure that open source offerings are fully considered during procurement processes. That consideration will include the value that the Department can receive through increased collaboration with the public and as a contributor to open source communities.

- *Blogging* – Commerce intends to increase the use of blogging tools to facilitate dialogue between leadership and the general workforce. A blog with comment capabilities is already being used on Commerce’s Open Government website. While more work needs to be done to keep this site regularly updated with fresh content, Commerce has ensured that comments can be posted and, most importantly, effectively addressed.

The Office of General Counsel has assisted in devising a standard policy that can be used across the Department to ensure a clear understanding of what is and is not allowed when blogging.

Blogging and commenting tools are planned to be a part of the next iteration of the Commerce website ([www.commerce.gov](http://www.commerce.gov)) and should assist management in carrying on conversations with employees across the Department and with the general public. The new version of the Commerce website should premier in the second half of 2010. An intranet, featuring tools for intra-Departmental blogging, may be also put in place in the second half of 2010, pending the availability of funding.

- *Social Media Use* – The Department’s current use of Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and YouTube has already shown how the strategic use of social media can help Commerce collaborate with and respond to the public. Expanded use of these tools will increase Commerce’s opportunities to interact with the public. In order to move forward with the use of social media throughout the Department, Commerce will:
  - Create and publish policy guidance on the use of social media and other Web 2.0 technologies, e.g., blogs and wikis, so that Commerce employees can safely use these tools;
  - Develop a system that allows Departmental officials to monitor official social media usage to ensure the adequacy and appropriateness of interaction with the public;

- Explore new ways to monitor social media services to assist Commerce in outreach to and interaction with the public regarding programmatic and mission-related responsibilities; and
- Encourage more Department officials to follow the example set by the Secretary and NOAA Administrator in using social media services and directly interacting with the public.
- *Responsiveness* – While a great deal of Commerce’s open government work focuses on what can be done to make it easier for stakeholders to reach out to Commerce, significant progress is needed to ensure two-way interaction.

For example, it is not enough to seek input from the public without recognizing the need to provide thoughtful, fulsome responses. As the Department begins to adopt these new forms of communication, employees may feel overwhelmed with new technologies or other responsibilities, or confused about the appropriate channels for responding to suggestions and comments received through social media.

To make certain that these new technologies are being used to engage in real dialogue, Commerce will:

- Develop additional guidance explaining how employees should respond to common questions and what types of communications require approval under Department Administrative Order 219-1, “Public Communications;” and
- Ensure that staff time needed to respond to comments and engage in online communities is considered when the Department and its operating units develop plans to engage the public online.

Additionally, when the Department receives a request for information from a Member of Congress or Congressional Committee, the Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs works to respond to the request in a timely and appropriate manner.

## **V. Flagship Initiatives**

Commerce is presently developing several innovative, public-facing projects that embody the principles of open government and showcase the Department’s ability to serve as a cohesive provider of services for the business community. Three examples can be found below.

*National Export Initiative (NEI)* – The NEI focuses on three key areas:

- A more robust effort needs to be made to expand trade advocacy in all its forms, especially for small- and medium-sized enterprises. This includes educating U.S. companies about overseas opportunities, creating direct connections between U.S. companies and new customers, and advocating more effectively on behalf of their interests.
- Access to credit needs to be improved, focusing on small- and medium-sized businesses with an interest in exporting.
- International trade laws need to be rigorously enforced to help remove barriers that prevent U.S. companies from obtaining free and fair access to foreign markets.

Additionally, NEI involves the creation of an Export Promotion Cabinet that will report to the President and involve top leaders from federal agencies able to contribute to this effort, e.g., the Departments of Commerce, State, Treasury and Agriculture; the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative; the Small Business Administration, and the Export Import Bank. Each agency in the Export Promotion Cabinet will be responsible for submitting a detailed plan to the President outlining how it will strengthen the nation's ability to export. Those plans will be integrated into a cohesive strategy under the NEI.

The President's budget for ITA for FY2011 includes a 20 percent increase to help achieve the goals of the NEI. If appropriated, these new resources will allow ITA to:

- Recruit as many as 328 additional trade experts to serve as advocates for U.S. companies;
- Assist more than 23,000 clients to begin or increase exporting in FY2011;
- Put special focus on increasing by 50 percent the number of small- and medium-sized businesses exporting to more than one market over the next five years;
- Increase the presence of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service in emerging high-growth markets such as China, India and Brazil; and
- Develop a comprehensive strategy to identify market opportunities in fast-growing sectors such as environmental goods and services, renewable energy, healthcare and biotechnology.

Through the NEI, the government will continue its efforts to remove barriers that prevent U.S. companies from obtaining open and fair access to foreign markets, to combat unfair tariff and non-tariff barriers, and to address practices that blatantly harm U.S. companies. The Administration will pursue trade agreements that are balanced, ambitious and improve market access for U.S. workers, firms, farmers and ranchers.

Commerce, through the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee (TPCC), leads the Administration's trade promotion efforts and will help operationalize the NEI. This interagency group, which is chaired by the Secretary of Commerce, establishes trade promotion priorities to expand trade and create jobs for Americans. The TPCC provides a platform for Commerce to advance a government-wide agenda for trade promotion and to directly engage the heads of other TPCC agencies. The Export Promotion Cabinet will coordinate with the TPCC to carry out the NEI.

Commerce will develop a robust online presence to inform the public of progress of this important initiative and solicit citizen input.

- *Sustainable Business Clearinghouse* – Commerce's Sustainable Manufacturing American Regional Tours (SMART) effort involves Assistant Secretary-led, regional manufacturing facility tours across the United States aimed at enhancing awareness of the benefits of sustainable manufacturing practices. Numerous U.S. companies have voiced concern over the lack of visibility that sustainable manufacturing receives nationwide and the lack of information many U.S. manufacturers – particularly small and medium-sized businesses – possess in this field. In order to continue spreading awareness of sustainable manufacturing's benefits to U.S. global competitiveness and the environment, Commerce held its first round of SMART events in:
  - Atlanta, Georgia on February 22, 2010,
  - Columbus, Ohio on October 27, 2009,
  - Seattle, Washington on July 13, 2009,
  - Rochester, New York on September 23, 2008,
  - Grand Rapids, Michigan on September 3, 2008, and
  - St. Louis, Missouri on July 28, 2008.

Commerce created the Sustainable Business Clearinghouse to provide U.S. companies with a central portal for information on programs and resources which can assist them in enhancing their competitiveness and profitability in environmentally sustainable ways.

Commerce has started by collecting information on federal programs and resources in this searchable Clearinghouse. It plans to expand the Clearinghouse to include state-level resources, and state government programs or firms that receive state-sponsored services are encouraged to contact Commerce with information on those programs.

More information regarding the Sustainable Business Clearinghouse may be found at <http://ita-web.ita.doc.gov/sbc/sbc.nsf/pgSearch?OpenPage>. Additionally, a list of key

federal programs and resources that support sustainable business practices can be found at [http://www.trade.gov/competitiveness/sustainablemanufacturing/USG\\_PRS\\_Sustainable\\_Business.asp](http://www.trade.gov/competitiveness/sustainablemanufacturing/USG_PRS_Sustainable_Business.asp). Comments, questions, or information regarding a federal or state government site that should be included in the Clearinghouse may be submitted via e-mail to [Sustainability@trade.gov](mailto:Sustainability@trade.gov)

- *Virtual CommerceConnect* – Businesses and entrepreneurs need federal partners who understand their requirements and can provide them with efficient access to the full spectrum of government resources as they strive to succeed, and to maintain and create jobs. This is particularly true in times of economic crisis and recovery. The burden should not be on businesses and entrepreneurs to determine how the government can help them. Instead, government should reach out to them – understanding their needs and delivering appropriate services and solutions.

To demonstrate this, Commerce Secretary Locke has established CommerceConnect, an initiative designed to streamline access to government services and solutions in order to aid American businesses. Commerce is leading this initiative to integrate grant programs, partnership efforts, and other business-related services by undertaking pilot project in Michigan. The primary goal is to provide a “one-stop shop” for information, counseling, and access to the breadth of services that can help a business transform itself into a viable and competitive enterprise.

Currently in the first phase of a multi-phase pilot, a cadre of case managers is developing its knowledge base of all programs and services available through Commerce. They are interacting with a select group of businesses that are willing to help refine the process of client engagement and develop a method to evaluate results. Commerce’s on-the-ground experts are responsible for assessing a business’ needs and connecting it with the most relevant services – services that could involve addressing infrastructure needs, improving operational efficiency, gaining access to capital, adopting innovation, protecting intellectual property, commercializing technology, or engaging in foreign trade.

An integral part of the pilot’s first phase is identifying and recruiting resource coordinators, who have broad, expert knowledge of Commerce programs and services. These coordinators will work in tandem with the case managers as they engage client companies. Additionally, inter- and intra-agency collaboration will be critical in successfully addressing the immediate needs of the clients and, subsequently, long-term needs as they move from survival mode to strategically position themselves for future growth.

The team will monitor progress as it designs mechanisms to evaluate the results of its engagement with clients, to assess the efficacy of federal programs, and to identify gaps between client needs and available services. Experience gained from this effort will also be used to establish similar integrated approaches for providing services to businesses – “one-

stop shops” – in other areas of the United States. This pilot will also help develop an integrated customer relationship management platform within and across operating units to allow for optimal service delivery. This initiative will play a critical role in bringing federal resources to businesses in an effective and efficient way – making the Federal Government a true partner in helping to revitalize business communities.

“Virtual” CommerceConnect will expand the reach of “bricks-and-mortar” CommerceConnect locations in an online setting. An initial version of the CommerceConnect website has been launched at [www.commerceconnect.gov](http://www.commerceconnect.gov) and the process of evaluating the real-world business process of CommerceConnect is underway. The functionality of CommerceConnect.gov will be enhanced through an extensive beta testing process and a fully operational 1.0-level product is expected to be deployed by the end of calendar 2010.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The Department of Commerce is committed to the principles of Open Government established by President Obama: transparency, participation and collaboration. It will build on its long history of information dissemination and adopt new tools and technology available to make its actions, decisions and information more transparent and accessible to the American people. It will continue to encourage and strive for increased participation among its employees, with other government agencies and by the American people.

This plan represents just the beginning of a continuing journey – a journey toward a more fully open and effective Department of Commerce. As implementation proceeds, the team of open government collaborators will grow both internally and externally. Commerce will continue to make public its ideas and plans to become more open on the Open Government website – [www.commerce.gov/open](http://www.commerce.gov/open) – and to seek input from stakeholders to help in achieving that objective.

Commerce invites the American public to join in as the Department moves toward a more collaborative, effective provider of government services and information.