



# 2016 Biannual Open Government Plan

The Peace Corps

September 15, 2016

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## 1. Introduction

The Peace Corps' 4<sup>th</sup> Open Government Plan describes the progress that has been made to incorporate the principles of the [Open Government Initiative](#) into the agency's core operations and serves as a roadmap for future initiatives. It outlines the specific steps taken to integrate the values of transparency, participation, and collaboration into the organizational culture and day-to-day operations. The plan has been updated in accordance with the [Open Government Directive](#), and incorporates the Office of Management and Budget guidance provided in the July 14, 2016 Agency Open Government Plans M-16-16 memorandum. This update also reports on the status of previous flagship initiatives and outlines plans for three new initiatives.

### 1.1 About the Peace Corps

The Peace Corps' mission is to promote world peace and friendship through community-based development and cross-cultural understanding. While much has changed in the world since the Peace Corps' founding in 1961, its mission has not. The Peace Corps' three goals are as relevant today as they were more than 50 years ago:

- 1) Advance local development by strengthening the capacity of local communities and individuals through the service of trained Volunteers.
- 2) Promote a better understanding of Americans through Volunteers who live and work within local communities.
- 3) Increase American's awareness and knowledge of other cultures and global issues through Volunteers who share their Peace Corps experiences and continue to serve upon their return.

The agency exemplifies the best of the American spirit by making it possible for Americans to serve around the world advancing development and building cross-cultural understanding. Through this unique approach to development, the Peace Corps is building strong relationships between our country and the people of our partner nations while making a difference in the communities it serves, in the lives of its Volunteers, and back home in the United States. More than 220,000 Volunteers have served in 141 countries since 1961.

The Peace Corps advances its mission through the work of the Volunteers, both during and after their tour of service. Rather than providing monetary assistance to countries, the agency sends Volunteers to share their skills and experience while living and working alongside local individuals and communities. This day-to-day interaction gives Volunteers a unique perspective and the opportunity to partner with local communities to address their development challenges and to strengthen mutual understanding.

Peace Corps Volunteers are the face of our nation in communities around the globe, building positive perceptions of the United States and sharing American values with their communities. After Volunteers complete their service, they return to the United States with new sets of skills, deep knowledge of other cultures, and long-lasting relationships. Returned Volunteers continue their service by promoting awareness of other cultures and global issues with friends, family, and the American public; maintaining relationships with colleagues and friends from the countries where they served; and sustaining their commitment to volunteerism and public service.

## 1.2 Peace Corps Highlights

Highlights of the Peace Corps' Open Government achievements during the last two years include:

- Establishing a Peace Corps open data policy, including the appointment of an agency open data coordinator and a framework to proactively make data accessible to the American people.
- Overhauling the Peace Corps website to make the Peace Corps more accessible to audiences through the platforms they already use and to share the authentic Volunteer experience using robust, multi-media assets.
- Making the following Peace Corps annual survey data and reports available on the Peace Corps Open Government webpage:
  - 2015 Global Counterpart Survey Summary Report
  - 2015 Host Country Staff Survey Summary Report and tabular data
  - 2015 Annual Volunteer Survey (AVS) reports for each of the agency's overseas posts
  - 2009 to 2015 AVS global tabular data reports
  - 2013 and 2014 AVS Voice of the Volunteer report
- Making the following Peace Corps administrative data and reports available on the Peace Corps Open Government webpage:
  - FY 2007 to 2015 early termination data by country and year
  - FY 2003 to 2012 early termination data by country and Volunteer cohort
  - FY 2012 to 2015 global early termination reports
  - FY 2009 to 2015 on-board strength (OBS) by post, age, ethnicity, gender, and sector data

## 2. Open Government at the Peace Corps

The Peace Corps' mission aligns and supports the fundamental concept of open government. Transparency, participation, and collaboration are guiding principles for the agency's work. The job of every Peace Corps Volunteer is to work side-by-side with people in their host community to transfer skills, find solutions together, and better understand each other's culture. When Volunteers return to the United States, they share their Peace Corps experience and information about host country cultures with family, friends, and co-workers, as well as through their everyday interactions with the American people.

The Peace Corps also fundamentally supports the ideals of public service, which by its nature fosters a more open and participatory government. The agency is proud to be part of the resurgence of service as evident in the increase of two-year Volunteer program applications from 10,118 in FY 2013 to 22,956 in FY 2015.

### 2.1 Open Government Planning

With partnership and participation being central to the work of the Peace Corps, the development of the Open Government Plan began with an assessment of ongoing activities that aligned with the Open Government principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration

set forth in the President's January 21, 2009, [Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government](#). Opportunities to enhance or incorporate these principles into new areas were also examined.

Agency leaders and staff were consulted during the updating of this plan. The Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning coordinated input and feedback from across the agency and to further integrate open government principles into ongoing operations at the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps also participated in the joint stakeholder session with civil society colleagues. The session hosted by the Office of Management and Budget provided an opportunity for the Peace Corps to gain input from civil society advocates on its 2016 Open Government Plan.

The Peace Corps' Open Government Plan is considered a living document. Suggestions for improvement from a broad and diverse audience, both within and outside the agency, are always welcome.

## 2.2 Public Engagement

The Peace Corps uses its Open Government portal ([www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/)) to continue to solicit input from the public on Open Government issues. The agency will continue to explore a variety of ways to increase public and staff engagement, promote creative solutions to agency problems, and champion Open Government as an integral part of the Peace Corps' culture.

The Peace Corps engages the public in a number of ways, both domestically and abroad, promoting our programs and communication vehicles. The long-standing Peace Corps Partnership Program links interested private sector donors with small, community-initiated, Volunteer-led development projects in the countries where Volunteers serve. As is common practice today, the public also seeks out information using multiple channels. The Peace Corps has one of largest followings of any federal agency on the Web and on social media, with nearly 700,000 monthly visits to its website, over 800,000 followers on Twitter, hundreds of different Facebook groups around the world, and dramatic increases in the number of people visiting the agency's YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, and Google+ pages. These venues are highly accessible, interactive, and provide options for people from all backgrounds and interests to follow the work of the Peace Corps and engage with staff and Volunteers.

In addition to engaging relevant audiences on multiple platforms, the Peace Corps is also experimenting with fresh approaches to communicating its story. For example, the agency added a new dimension to its "Top Colleges" earned-media initiative with an interactive data visualization that allows users to immerse themselves in the top college rankings. The visualization showcases the global reach of universities and colleges and allows users to tour the top Peace Corps Volunteer-producing schools. This tool generated significant online traffic and increased engagement by schools and prospective Volunteers.

## 2.3 Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Engagement

The Peace Corps has a unique constituency with a large and active network of alumni, referred to as returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs). More than 215,000 RPCVs live and work across the United States and abroad, continuing to promote the ideals of public service. Returned Volunteers also share their knowledge of living in another culture and the deep

relationships they forged with their host country communities. Sharing their experiences as Peace Corps Volunteers at home helps to promote awareness of other countries and peoples among the American people, while demonstrating the work of the Volunteers.

The Peace Corps keeps RPCVs involved in the work of the agency through a variety of initiatives. The Office of Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services actively engages with RPCVs on the Web, social media, and via monthly e-newsletters, including RPCV Buzz and RPCV Dispatch. These newsletters provide RPCVs with career advice, job openings, advanced education opportunities, and information about Peace Corps events and initiatives. Additionally, the agency manages a Speakers Match program that provides RPCVs with opportunities to share their stories through classroom presentations, panel discussions, conferences, and other venues around the country. More information can be found at [www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv](http://www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv).

The Office of Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services also supports RPCV career transition after service. The office achieves this by hosting career conferences, career-focused webinars, and networking events for RPCVs. The office also hosts RPCV Career Link ([www.peacecorps.gov/resources/returned/careercen/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/resources/returned/careercen/)), an online jobs board that posts thousands of jobs each year from employers seeking to hire RPCVs.

Through the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program, RPCVs are also given the opportunity to pursue graduate school while continuing to serve the American public. RPCVs participating in the Coverdell Fellows Program receive a reduction in the overall cost of tuition at an accredited graduate school program and participate in an internship benefiting an underserved American community.

## **2.4 Employee and Volunteer Engagement**

Peace Corps Volunteers and employees at all levels are encouraged to engage and discuss innovative approaches to improve agency operations and culture. Offices at headquarters and posts abroad engage employees and Volunteers in planning future activities during annual strategic planning retreats and through the preparation of office strategic plans.

The Office of Innovation continuously strives to create a culture of innovation by engaging employees and Volunteers in finding creative solutions to long-standing problems. Examples of this type of engagement are described in Section 4.2.

## **2.5 Alignment with Strategic Goals and Performance Measures**

The Peace Corps Strategic Plan for FY 2014–2018 and Annual Performance Plan for FY 2016–2017 is a blueprint for moving the agency forward while remaining true to the agency’s long-standing mission and three core goals. It guides the agency’s work to improve operations and increases the impact of Volunteers in the communities they serve. The plan strengthens and advances the far-reaching reforms undertaken in recent years, addresses decades-old challenges, and leverages critical new opportunities.

The Peace Corps’ three core goals continue to serve as the foundation for the Peace Corps’ approach to development and the three strategic goals that guide the FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan:

### **Strategic Goal 1: Building Local Capacity**

*Advance local development by strengthening the capacity of local communities and individuals through the service of trained Volunteers*

### **Strategic Goal 2: Sharing America with the World**

*Promote a better understanding of Americans through Volunteers who live and work within local communities*

### **Strategic Goal 3: Bringing the World Back Home**

*Increase Americans' awareness and knowledge of other cultures and global issues through Volunteers who share their Peace Corps experiences and continue to serve upon their return*

Additional information on the agency's three strategic goals, 11 objectives, and 29 performance goals can be found in the strategic plan ([www.peacecorps.gov/strategicplan](http://www.peacecorps.gov/strategicplan)), which is accessible through the agency's [Open Government portal](#).

## **3. Transparency**

The Peace Corps is committed to providing information on its activities to the general public, including individuals interested in becoming Volunteers; friends and family members of Peace Corps Volunteers; RPCVs; and individuals interested in international development, cross-cultural experiences, and international volunteerism.

The Peace Corps also shares its activities with the general public by posting agency information, data, and reports on its financial and performance data to [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov). The Peace Corps will continue to seek input from the public on what data and information citizens deem to be of high value and will make every effort to respond to those requests. The agency will continue to publicize the availability of any new data sets via its Open Government portal, and through social media platforms such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), Instagram, and [YouTube](#).

### **3.1 High-Value Data and Information**

The Peace Corps recognizes the tremendous value of providing data and information to its partners and the general public. The agency continues to improve its Open Government portal as an effective tool for interested citizens to find the data and information they seek. The agency strives to share publicly all data and information by default—unless there is a legal or other restriction. By increasing access to data, the Peace Corps will increase public understanding of its program accomplishments and strengthen accountability for results.

In addition to providing information about its programmatic impact, the agency publishes analytical-ready and summarized data on Peace Corps Volunteer characteristics, including country of service, age group, and project sector. This provides valuable information about the breadth and scope of the Peace Corps Volunteers serving abroad. The Peace Corps also conducts a variety of quantitative and qualitative surveys to measure program success. Given



that available data are often focused on Peace Corps Volunteers and staff, the agency is careful to respect the privacy of individuals and protect personally identifiable information.

The agency will continue to publish data sets on the agency's Open Government page and other tools as they are identified and become available. Examples of the type of data that the agency will continue to review for publishing include:

- Agency financial statements
- Historical data about Volunteer dates and country of service
- Evaluation data related to operational effectiveness and programmatic impact
- Employee staffing—organizational charts and types of employees
- Data on trainee and Volunteer attrition
- Volunteer satisfaction data
- Project summary information

The Peace Corps will continue to seek input from the public on what data and information is of high value. The agency will continue to publicize the availability of new data sets via the Peace Corps' Open Government portal and through social media outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter.

### **3.1.1 Open Data and Enterprise Data Inventory**

The Peace Corps continues to refine its inventory of important agency data and will continue to identify data sets that can be published on its Open Government portal. Currently available data sets can be found at <https://www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/reports>.

### **3.1.2 Annual Volunteer Survey**

The Annual Volunteer Survey (AVS) is a confidential survey of currently serving Peace Corps Volunteers. It provides direct feedback from Volunteers at a fixed period of time regarding their satisfaction with training, site selection, project activities, overall support, the impact they are having in their host communities, and other aspects of their service. Since 2012, the AVS has been administered exclusively online for greater efficiency. Responses to all questions are provided directly by the Volunteers, and rigorous data-cleaning procedures are applied prior to analysis to ensure data quality.

The survey has consistently received a very high response rate from Volunteers: 90.6 percent of nearly 7,000 Volunteers completed the survey in 2015. The survey has also been configured for better access on mobile devices, which is expected to further increase participation and response rates.

As with all surveys, the Annual Volunteer Survey is subject to various limits to data validity, including nonresponse bias, but provides an important basis for long-term trends and analysis. The Peace Corps will continue to use the survey to inform agency management through Volunteers' perspectives on key issues, areas of strength, and opportunities for improved performance. A tabular report of the survey results and—since the publication of the last Open Government Plan—survey results by post are publicly available on the agency's Open Government portal.

### 3.1.3 Global Counterpart Survey

The second Global Counterpart Survey was launched in FY 2015 to provide information on the impact of Volunteers on local communities from the perspectives of Volunteers' primary work partners. The survey consists of a short interview of Volunteers' primary work partners administered by overseas staff.

Global results are drawn from a randomly selected group of 400 respondents, of whom 399 were interviewed by post staff in 2016. These results provide key findings on how Volunteers' counterparts in host countries credit the Peace Corps with increased local capacity and a better understanding of American culture and diversity. As this was a random sample, the results are highly representative of the Peace Corps' entire counterpart population.

Counterparts are partners of the Peace Corps and, as such, have opinions about the agency's effectiveness. They also have multiple incentives to respond positively when asked to express their opinion of Peace Corps Volunteers and the work they do. There are various methods for reducing positivity bias in surveys, but one recommended method for measuring the relative importance of different concepts—particularly across multiple countries or cultures—is known as a “MaxDiff” or “best-worst scaling” approach. Using this method, respondents create a discriminating ranking of items by choosing their top and bottom choices from a list, then repeating the top and bottom ranking on the remaining items from the list until all items have been evaluated. These rankings can then be calculated into scores, scaled from -100 to 100, that show the relative importance of each item. This type of question prevents respondents from simply ranking everything at the top, thereby reducing positivity bias.

Data quality challenges include potential interviewer error and ambiguity in the total survey population. The interviews are conducted by staff experienced in project fieldwork and counterpart communication but who may not have extensive survey-interviewing or data-collection experience. Issues of translation, variation in interview styles, and accuracy of coding may have unpredictable influences on the results. The agency is addressing this challenge by providing extensive tools, training, and support to staff and by closely monitoring survey results to identify inconsistencies. The agency also provided translations of the survey into French and Spanish.

Determining the survey population is a challenge. Since no direct sampling frame exists that lists all Volunteer counterparts at all posts, Volunteers are used as a selection proxy for the counterparts who make up the random sample. In addition, there are multiple uses and interpretations of the title “counterpart” across the agency. To address this, the agency has defined counterpart as the Volunteer's primary work partner as reflected in post records for his or her primary project. In cases where a Volunteer no longer has any working relationship with their post-assigned counterpart, the Volunteer is asked to identify their primary work partner.

The 2015 Global Counterpart Survey Summary Report is publicly available on the agency's Open Government portal.

### 3.1.4 Host Country Staff Survey

The Host Country Staff Survey is a short, confidential, voluntary survey designed to learn more about the agency's impact in the posts where it operates by gathering input from host country staff for two performance goals in the agency's strategic plan, as well as achievements for the Peace Corps' Goals One and Two. The survey was administered online from August 10 to September 11, 2015, and was completed by 52 percent of the total host country staff population. The survey was comprised 14 questions covering the following: diversity and

inclusion, staff training, contributions to the Peace Corps' goals, development impact, and job satisfaction. In 2016, several questions were added on Volunteer integration and reasons for working at the Peace Corps. In future years, the agency expects to expand the survey to include additional questions to more fully capture the perspectives of host country staff on a range of topics related to post operations and support.

As in 2014, the primary data quality challenge with the survey in 2015 was the development of the sampling frame. Identifying and contacting all host country staff proved difficult; some staff members in administrative or support positions did not have official email addresses. Due to this challenge, the sampling frame in FY 2014 only consisted of the host country staff who could be reached via email. Therefore, the 2015 sample covered 52 percent of all host country staff but 73 percent of all host-country staff with a known email address. Additionally, while the 2015 Host Country Staff Survey was offered in English, French, and Spanish, limited ability in those languages, as well as factors such as lack of computer access or familiarity with online survey tools for some staff, may have contributed to nonresponse bias.

The 2015 Host Country Staff Survey Summary Report is publicly available on the agency's Open Government portal.

### **3.1.5 Using Administrative Data for Statistical Purposes**

The Peace Corps collects administrative and program information at various stages of the Volunteer lifecycle. For example, prospective Volunteers provide demographic data, including ethnicity and age information, when applying to the Peace Corps, which the agency then uses to provide summary statistics. As administrative systems contain personally identifiable information, the agency protects applicants and Volunteers' privacy by publishing certain data only in aggregate form.

The Peace Corps is committed to providing information on its activities to the general public, which often includes individuals interested in becoming Volunteers; friends and family members of Peace Corps Volunteers; RPCVs; and individuals interested in international development, cross-cultural experiences, and international volunteerism.

The agency continually reviews its financial and performance data and has shared this information with the public in its annual Performance and Accountability Report. This report describes how the agency manages its resources, highlights major accomplishments of Volunteers and staff serving around the world, and outlines plans to address future challenges. The financial and performance results in this report allow the President, members of Congress, and the American people to assess the effectiveness of the agency's operations.

To streamline agency planning and reporting of performance information for stakeholders, the Peace Corps will publish a combined Annual Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report starting with the FY 2018 Annual Performance Plan and FY 2016 Performance Report. An Annual Financial Report will be published in November 2016 instead of the Performance and Accountability Report.

## 3.2 Informing the Public

To build a culture of open government, active communication with the public is vital. The Peace Corps plans to leverage its Open Government portal, as well as traditional and new media tools, to communicate key milestones and significant actions.

The agency will continue to intensify its presence on social media and electronic media. The Peace Corps will continue to use its social media outlets, such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#), to regularly inform the public about Peace Corps activities, Volunteer profiles, and agency news.

The agency will continue to expand the use of the Peace Corps website, social media, and mobile technology to share agency information more efficiently. Many paper forms, documents, and recruiting materials are being transitioned to electronic versions that Volunteers, staff, and the public can access, including making content available for Volunteers on their mobile devices and tablets. Assets are being collected and shared in increasingly user-friendly ways (e.g., a media library for collecting, showcasing, and sharing photographs and videos). As part of the Open Government Initiative, the Office of Communications posted application program interfaces (APIs) related to website data for use by developers to build new applications using agency information (e.g., Job Specific Requests and country APIs).

In addition, the reforms of the Volunteer Delivery System – the process through which the agency sends Volunteers to overseas posts - will keep applicants better informed during the application process. The Peace Corps will also continue to make use of its Open Government portal (and other types of media) to announce changes, new products, or other Open Government milestones.

### 3.2.1 Privacy

The associate director for the Office of Management serves as chief privacy officer and is responsible for the development and maintenance of privacy policies, procedures, and guidance essential to safeguarding the collection, access, use, dissemination, and storage of personally identifiable information (PII) in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974. In addition, the associate director of Office of Management collaborates with the chief information officer regarding the E-Government Act of 2002, the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA), and policy and guidance issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

The Peace Corps collects, maintains, and uses personal information on individuals to carry out the agency's mission and responsibilities, and to provide services to the public. By federal law and regulation, privacy issues and protections must be considered for information technology systems that contain any PII. The Peace Corps uses the Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) as a key tool in fulfilling these legal and regulatory obligations. Completed PIAs can be found by searching for Privacy Impact Assessment on the Peace Corps website at [www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/reports](http://www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/reports).

It is Peace Corps policy to publish a system of records notice (SORN) in the Federal Register for any agency-maintained information technology system or paper-file system that contains information on individuals and retrieves the information by a personal identifier. The Peace Corps publishes a SORN in the Federal Register when establishing a new system of records,

altering an existing system, and/or when a correction is needed in a previously published notice or the cancellation of a previously published notice is necessary. Published SORNS can be found at [www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/reports](http://www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/reports).

### 3.2.2 Whistleblower Protection

The Peace Corps and its Office of Inspector General (OIG) are committed to informing and providing to Peace Corps staff, contractors, and Volunteers information about prohibitions on retaliation for protected disclosures, and the rights and remedies for those who have made or are contemplating making a protected disclosure. In early August of 2016 the Peace Corps registered to be certified by the U.S Office of Special Counsel (OSC) in its Whistleblower Protection Act certification program. The Peace Corps has already implemented all of OSC's requirements, and expects to submit proof of compliance in September to receive certification of compliance in the near future.

The Peace Corps is prohibited by federal law from taking an unfavorable personnel action against an employee in retaliation for:

- Cooperating with or disclosing information to OIG or the Office of the Special Counsel (OSC)
- Disclosing fraud, waste, or abuse to a supervisor
- Disclosing information required to be kept secret by law or executive order when the disclosure is made to OIG or OSC
- Filing an appeal, complaint, or grievance
- Helping an individual file a complaint or testify on their behalf
- Making a disclosure to Congress
- Refusing to obey an unlawful order

Peace Corps Volunteers and trainees also receive whistleblower protections. Peace Corps staff are prohibited from taking or threatening to take a negative administrative or other action (e.g., separation, reassignment, reduction in allowances) against Volunteers or trainees in retaliation for reporting wrongdoings such as:

- Concerns regarding the conduct of other individuals or organizations, even if the issue is beyond the Peace Corps legal jurisdiction
- Discrimination
- Misconduct
- Mismanagement related to Peace Corps management and operations
- Violations of law or Peace Corps policy (including sexual assault)
- Waste, fraud, and abuse

### 3.3 Congressional Requests

The Peace Corps Office of Congressional Relations coordinates activities related to legislative issues and interests, serving as the official liaison between the Peace Corps Director and members of Congress and congressional staff. The Office of Congressional Relations also coordinates a timely response to congressional inquiries related to specific constituent and operational issues.

The annual reports mandated by Congress and testimony before congressional committees are posted on the agency's Open Government portal. Additionally, the agency has published Congressional Budget Justifications from 1961 through the current fiscal year.

### 3.4 Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Office for the Peace Corps is located in the Office of Management and operates under the authority of the associate director of Management.

The office is supervised by the FOIA officer and consists of five FOIA /Privacy Act specialists – two FOIA specialists, one FOIA trainee, and two temporary FOIA specialists (one contractor and one temporary employee). In addition to the FOIA Office, an associate general counsel from the General Counsel's Office is responsible for reviewing agency responses and counseling staff on FOIA-related legal issues. The FOIA Office relies on other Peace Corps offices to provide responsive documents related to FOIA requests.

The Peace Corps Office of Inspector General (OIG) has the authority to process, release, deny, and respond to requests for OIG records. Requests for OIG-generated documents are processed by the OIG FOIA officer. The deputy inspector general and legal counsel provide counseling and legal advice to the OIG FOIA officer. The Peace Corps FOIA officer and the OIG FOIA officer consult with each other when a request includes both Peace Corps and OIG records. This is done to ensure consistency and to prevent duplication in processing the request.

The Peace Corps' [FOIA webpage](#) provides information about performance, such as FOIA reports by fiscal year. Basic information about the Freedom of Information Act and making a FOIA request can be found on the Peace Corps website under [FOIA FAQs](#). The Peace Corps launched a new section of its website in FY 2013, making it possible to submit a request as well as track its progress electronically. The agency's FOIA contact information follows:

#### FOIA Office (Peace Corps)

- FOIA Public Liaison: Denora Miller, (202) 692-1236
- FOIA Requester Service Center: (202) 692-1236
- Email: [foia@peacecorps.gov](mailto:foia@peacecorps.gov)
- Webpage: [www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/foia/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/foia/)

#### FOIA Office (Peace Corps, OIG)

- FOIA Public Liaison: Jeffrey Reichert, (202) 692-2922
- FOIA Requester Service Center: (202) 692-2922
- Email: [foia@peacecorps.gov](mailto:foia@peacecorps.gov)
- Webpage: [www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/foia/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/foia/)

#### 3.4.1 FOIA Electronic Reading Room

The Peace Corps' FOIA webpage also includes an electronic Reading Room that contains information routinely available to the public, in addition to frequently requested documents. According to new FOIA guidelines issued by the attorney general and in keeping with Open

Government principles, the list of documents maintained in the Reading Room will continue to expand as records in which the public expresses an interest are added.

### 3.4.2 FOIA Achievements

The Peace Corps makes proactive disclosures, when possible, to ease the administrative burden of responding to frequently requested and disclosed records. In FY 2015, 30 percent of all requests processed (69 out of 231) resulted in the full release of the documents. When full disclosure is not possible, the FOIA Office suggests partial disclosure, where appropriate. If a portion of a record is technically exempt, the FOIA Office determines whether the exempt portions can be released on a discretionary basis. This requires further review and determination of “foreseeable harm” and consent of the program office and General Counsel. In determining “foreseeable harm,” the FOIA Office generally follows the Department of Justice, Office of Information Policy guidelines.

### 3.4.3 FOIA Requests

The Peace Corps received a 68 percent increase in FOIA and OIG requests (173 to 291) from FY 2013 to FY 2014, and a 15 percent decrease in requests (291 to 248) from FY 2014 to FY 2015. Due to the surge of requests during FY 2014, the request backlog increased from 41 pending requests at the beginning of the year to 133 at the end of the year. During FY 2015 the backlog increased only slightly to 150 pending requests at the end of year even though the total number of requests remained high compared to FY 2013. The average number of days for processing FOIA requests in FY 2015 was 111 days (simple requests) and 278 days (complex requests). The median number of days was 185. The Peace Corps processed 10 percent of simple FOIA requests (24 out of 231) within a period of 20 working days.

The processing time during the current fiscal year (2016) is improving due to staff additions and cross-training with existing staff. A process study was conducted to identify key bottlenecks. The Peace Corps now has a plan in place to reduce and to ultimately eliminate the backlog of requests. Several changes have already been implemented that are now helping to improve FOIA request process times and reduce the backlog of requests.

### 3.4.4 FOIA Discussion

The FOIA Office has enhanced its staff training about FOIA requirements and responsibilities. Supervisors and FOIA points of contact from major program offices (which is a system established in July 2010) are provided training once each year, in addition to coaching. Additionally, all new employees have an introductory session on FOIA during their new-employee orientation training.

## 3.5 Records Management

The Federal Records Act of 1950 establishes the basic responsibilities for records management in the federal government. It also sets the basic requirements for the creation, use, and potential destruction or transfer of records created by the federal government.

Records management refers to planning, controlling, directing, organizing, training, promoting, and other managerial activities involved with respect to records creation, maintenance, use, and disposition to achieve adequate and proper documentation of the policies and transactions of the agency and effective and economical management of agency operations. Records

management addresses the complete life cycle of all records, regardless of physical form or characteristics.

### 3.5.1 Records Management Staff

The Records Management Office for the Peace Corps is located in the Office of Management and operates under the authority of the associate director for the Office of Management. The records management program is supervised by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) officer. The staff consists of one full-time records management officer who is responsible for overseeing the records management program for the entire agency, two program assistants, and one records scheduler on a temporary appointment.

### 3.5.2 Records Management Responsibilities

Peace Corps staff create and maintain records to ensure that agency functions and activities are adequately and properly documented. Such records must protect the rights of the agency and persons directly affected by the agency's actions. Having comprehensive, accurate record schedules is essential to the agency's ability to conduct business, fulfill legal responsibilities, and, most importantly, ensure that there is a record of the history of the Peace Corps and its accomplishments.

The Peace Corps is responsible for adhering to all federal laws and regulations regarding the disposition of records. The agency follows two sets of mandatory disposition authorities regarding records: (1) the General Records Schedule (GRS), which is issued by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and provides mandatory disposal authorization for temporary administrative records common to several or all agencies of the federal government; and (2) the Peace Corps' own schedules for records unique to the agency. There are more than 90 sets of schedules, written and proposed by the agency between 1966 and 2016, and approved by the archivist of the United States. Both types of records control schedules indicate how long a record must be kept before it is destroyed or transferred to NARA for permanent preservation. Both the GRS and the Peace Corps' records schedules are available on the NARA website at [www.archives.gov/records-mgmt](http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt).

### 3.5.3 Records Management Discussion

The agency is still in the process of revamping its records management program. Major objectives that have been achieved recently include obtaining NARA approval for the disposition of all post records, compiling a comprehensive post records manual, and providing ongoing training to staff on the importance of record maintenance to ensure the correct disposition of all records. Ongoing objectives include the following: (1) developing records schedules and proposing dispositions to NARA for all unscheduled records; (2) revising records schedules for outdated record series; (3) reviewing records stored at the Washington National Records Center with incorrect disposition authorities; and (4) creating a mandatory annual records management course including a test and certificate of completion, in compliance with the OMB/NARA Directive M-12-18.

Major mandated objectives (based on the NARA/OMB M-12-18 Managing Government Records Directive and the Presidential Memorandum Managing Government Records, November 28, 2011) have been put on temporary hold due to a cut in electronic records management funding. Those objectives include (1) managing all email records electronically by December 31, 2016,



and (2) managing all Peace Corps records electronically by December 31, 2019. Pursuit of these objectives is in addition to other priorities and objectives. Successful completion will require several years of commitment by all Peace Corps staff members as advised and assisted by the Records Management Office.

### 3.6 Using Technology to Improve Transparency

The Peace Corps is committed to maintaining compliance with applicable transparency initiatives listed in the Open Government Directive. The agency will continue to explore new ways to promote transparency, participation, and collaboration that go beyond current requirements.

#### 3.6.1 Data.gov

In May 2009, [Data.gov](http://Data.gov) was launched to allow the public easier access to government data sets. The agency will continue to identify potential data sets for inclusion on Data.gov. Please refer to Section 3.1 for more information, including a description of the data provided and currently being evaluated for future availability.

#### 3.6.2 eRulemaking

The eRulemaking initiative is a current governmentwide program with the goals of:

- increasing public access to, and participation in, developing regulations and other related documents that can impact the public; and
- promoting more efficient and effective rulemaking through public involvement.

In 2003, the eRulemaking program launched the [Regulations.gov](http://Regulations.gov) website to enable citizens to search, view, and comment on regulations issued by the federal government. The Peace Corps' Federal Register notices are available on the regulations.gov website.

#### 3.6.3 USASpending.gov

[USASpending.gov](http://USASpending.gov) is the Office of Management and Budget's response to the requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006. The Transparency Act requires a single searchable website with data on contracts, grants, purchase card spending, and other transactions. Peace Corps financial data are accessible on USASpending.gov site.

#### 3.6.4 RPCV Portal

In June 2015, the Peace Corps launched the RPCV Portal (<https://rpcvportal.peacecorps.gov>), a self-service website where returned Peace Corps Volunteers can join, update their contact information, and opt in to receive RPCV and Peace Corps updates, career services, Peace Corps Response opportunities, Paul D. Coverdell Fellows news, Speakers Match program information, event invites, and more (these are the services discussed in Section 2.3 of this document). Planned enhancements to this portal include publishing a list of RPCVs' names, countries of service, and years of service. This information will be accessible to anyone whether or not they were a Peace Corps Volunteer. This list will be sortable, filterable, and RPCVs will have the ability to remove their name from the page, without removing their country and years of service, which will then be indicated by a generic name such as "Volunteer."

### 3.6.5 DATA Act

In May 2014, President Obama signed the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act) (P.L. 113-101) into law. Once implemented, the DATA Act will make federal-spending data more accessible, searchable, and reliable. It will not only make it easier to understand how the federal government spends taxpayer dollars but will also serve as a tool for better oversight, data-centric decision making, and innovation, both inside and outside of government. The U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) are leading the governmentwide implementation of the DATA Act. As Treasury and OMB develop and promulgate this guidance to agencies, the Peace Corps is working actively to incorporate the new standards into its existing reporting framework.

### 3.6.6 ForeignAssistance.gov

The user-centric ForeignAssistance.gov (FA.gov) was launched in December 2010 as the U.S. government's tool for improving foreign assistance transparency. It was created in response to President Obama's Open Government Initiative and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The Peace Corps follows OMB Bulletin 12-01 on the reporting standards when submitting the agency's foreign assistance data.

## 4. Participation

Public participation is central to the Peace Corps' mission. The Third Goal of the Peace Corps is to help promote Americans' understanding of other peoples, and Volunteers and RPCVs carry out this goal as they engage Americans by sharing their experience about the countries where they served. The agency hosts many events to bring RPCVs and the general public together, providing a window to the people and cultures where Volunteers have served and highlighting agriculture, business, education, health, youth development, and other Peace Corps projects being conducted around the world.

### 4.1 Participation in Public Events

The Peace Corps hosts hundreds of public events around the country and around the world. They include such diverse events as general recruitment sessions for potential applicants, local community events hosted by RPCVs, sessions at Peace Corps headquarters with leading international development experts, and in-country public forums and celebrations. These events are published on [peacecorps.gov](http://peacecorps.gov) and public participation is highly encouraged.

The agency has also increased public participation in online events, utilizing technology to better connect with people across the Peace Corps network. The Peace Corps regularly conducts live Twitter chats, Facebook Live events, and Skype sessions with staff and Volunteers—all of which are publicly available so people can better understand the work of Volunteers and engage the agency on the most popular online platforms.

### 4.2 Participation in Crowdsourcing Solutions

The Office of Innovation continuously strives to create a culture of innovation by encouraging employees and Volunteers to crowdsource solutions, share best practices, model new ways of getting work done, and simplify complex systems and processes. Many innovation projects are

underway that bring together creative people inside and outside the agency to produce real results using open, highly participatory approaches. Examples include:

**Crowdsourced web and mobile apps:** Through partnerships with universities and organizations like General Assembly, the Anita Borg Institute, and University of Maryland's Project Delta, the Peace Corps has developed applications that:

- Make it easier for Volunteers and staff to track requests for medical supplies. Volunteers and staff are now using the web and mobile application, Medlink, in 19 countries and have processed over 20,000 requests to date. More information about Medlink can be found at [https://www.youtube.com/Peace Corps Medlink](https://www.youtube.com/Peace_Corps_Medlink).
- Provide an easy-to-navigate manual for Peace Corps Volunteers dealing with sexual assault on an offline mobile app.
- Streamline vacation requests from Volunteers while providing real-time travel warnings via text messaging for staff and Volunteers through the State Department's open application programming interface (API).

**Language course creation:** Through a partnership with the Pittsburgh-based language learning app, Duolingo, the Peace Corps is currently creating four language courses through the Duolingo Incubator, the company's crowdsourcing platform. The first two courses, Ukrainian for English speakers and English for Ukrainian speakers have now been used by over 1 million people through Duolingo's free platform. The next two courses to be released this summer are Guarani for Spanish speakers and Swahili for English speakers and represent the first indigenous languages of South America and Africa, respectively, on the platform.

These projects exemplify the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration and are contributing to open source solutions that are embraced by Volunteers and can also be used by other agencies and organizations.

### 4.3 Participation in Website Improvements

The Peace Corps unveiled a refreshed brand platform which includes a new responsive, mobile-friendly website to make the Peace Corps more accessible to audiences through the platforms they already use. The new site features a fresh design that is bold, compelling, and inspirational, and puts the Volunteer experience at the center. An emphasis is placed on authentic narratives, captivating imagery, and Volunteer-generated media. Users can easily navigate content and are presented with the most current and useful information at every point of their digital journey.

Information on Volunteer openings offers greater transparency by providing highly detailed descriptions and medical considerations as well as links to the corresponding country section to learn what it is like to live and serve in a specific country. Prospective Volunteers can also easily locate and connect with a recruiter, should they have more questions, and search events in their area and online.

The website platform is configured to easily pull content from social media, application program interfaces, and other systems to create an integrated experience. Given the website's multiple uses and audiences, it was designed with a content management system and integrated social media to allow more content contributors. Visitors to the site can more directly experience the work of Volunteers in the field and the impact they are having in communities around the world.

After securing OMB clearance, the Peace Corps is now capable of surveying users online to measure customer satisfaction in relation to the user experience, content, and web design. This strengthens the agency's ability to continuously make data-driven decisions and enhancements to the website based on external feedback from those actually using the website.

Through an engaging and user-centric design, the Peace Corps' new website supports increased transparency, participation, and collaboration.

## 5. Collaboration

The purpose behind collaboration is to leverage cooperation with other government (federal and nonfederal) agencies, the public, and nonprofit and private entities to drive the agency's core mission. The Peace Corps is continuing to seek ways to increase strategic partnerships with international and local nongovernmental and community-based organizations.

### 5.1 Collaboration within the Agency

Volunteers and staff work with host country partners to fulfill the mission of the Peace Corps. Employees engage colleagues across organizational units to share promising practices, develop solutions to problems, and foster a climate of creativity and innovation. Both formal and informal working groups form as new challenges arise.

To more closely align programming, training, and evaluation, for example, the agency formed a Monitoring and Evaluation Task Force in 2015. The task force developed a multiyear plan that recommends increasing the use of baselines, project evaluations, benchmarking and more structured project design based on logic models and theories of change. The implementation of these recommendations will ultimately lead to a better understanding of the agency's impact in the communities it serves, as well as the communication of that impact to the public.

The agency conducts regular performance reviews that are designed specifically to foster increasing collaboration across the offices in the agency and to advance the cultural of data-driven decision making.

To further advance the culture of data-driven decision making, the Office of Communications embarked on a year-long project to create a robust digital analytics program that standardizes testing, measurement, and optimization efforts related to engagement and outreach. As part of this project, custom dashboards were created for multiple departments that aligned with their goals, key performance indicators, and website content and data. These dashboards are sent to key Peace Corps stakeholder offices on a weekly, monthly, and quarterly basis with ad hoc data analysis as requested.

### 5.2 Collaboration with Other Federal Agencies

The Office of Strategic Partnerships is responsible for developing and implementing the agency's policy and strategy for building and maintaining relationships with other executive branch departments and agencies. Of particular focus are those agencies whose missions intersect most directly with that of the Peace Corps, making it possible to maximize the Peace Corps' contribution to international development efforts. These include the U.S. Department of

State, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For example, through the Small Project Assistance Agreement, the Peace Corps works with USAID to provide small grants to communities to implement development projects alongside Peace Corps Volunteers. Through the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas, the Peace Corps and the Department of State provide training on sustainable energy practices in rural areas, with an emphasis on expanding the use of clean cook stoves.

Since 2004, the Peace Corps has been an active partner in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), working closely with the Department of State, USAID, the Department of Health and Human Services, and others. Additionally, the agency collaborates with the President's Malaria Initiative (USAID, CDC, NIH) and its implementing partners (Population Services International, World Vision, and others) to maximize the effectiveness of Volunteers and ensure that the malaria prevention efforts of all Volunteers complement, rather than duplicate, partner activities. The Peace Corps also strongly supports the Feed the Future initiative, working with USAID and other agency partners to promote food security.

### **5.3 Collaboration across Levels of Government**

The Peace Corps often works with state and local government officials to commemorate the work of Volunteers. Official proclamations from state governments help inform local communities about the power of service and the value of volunteerism. Beyond U.S. borders, the Peace Corps partners with governments in every one of the countries in which Volunteers are placed, working together to develop projects that meet the needs of the host countries that request Peace Corps assistance.

### **5.4 Public-Private Collaboration**

The Peace Corps engages a wide array of partners both domestically and abroad. Most overseas projects involve a partnership between the Peace Corps and host country organizations to plan and manage projects. The agency also forms partnerships with local and international NGOs to augment training and offer work opportunities to Peace Corps Volunteers. In addition, the agency has a number of domestic programs that contribute to furthering the mission of the Peace Corps; such as, the Coverdell World Wise Schools and Peace Prep programs outlined below. The agency established two new offices in 2012: the Office of Strategic Partnerships and the Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services. These offices manage strategic partnerships and develop opportunities for RPCV groups and individuals to collaborate with the agency.

The Office of the Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services manages the Coverdell World Wise Schools (WWS) program, established in 1989 by then-Peace Corps Director Paul D. Coverdell. It is designed to help American schoolchildren learn about the world's diverse peoples, cultures, and geography through standards-based classroom resources and educator partnerships with current and returned Peace Corps Volunteers. WWS connects U.S. elementary and secondary schools with current Peace Corps Volunteers who share their Peace Corps experiences through a variety of media and new technologies. It also connects RPCVs

with classrooms and communities via the Speakers Match program. More information on this program can be found at <https://www.peacecorps.gov/educators/>.

The Peace Corps also relies heavily on collaboration with RPCVs to help the agency achieve its Third Goal. Resources are provided to help RPCVs engage in activities that promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans. Information about all of the Peace Corps' Third Goal efforts can be found at <https://www.peacecorps.gov/returned-volunteers/>.

Peace Corps Prep is a partnership program between the Peace Corps and over 50 universities that helps prepare undergraduate students for intercultural service abroad. The Peace Corps provides four core learning objectives around which partner universities build their programs, weaving together coursework, extracurricular activities, and professional development activities. Program graduates receive a certificate from the Peace Corps and a competitive edge when applying for service. More information on this program can be found at <https://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/university-programs/peace-corps-prep/>.

The Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program is another example of how the agency collaborates with private institutions. Participating graduate schools provide financial assistance to RPCVs enrolled in various advanced degree programs. At the same time, RPCVs make a commitment to work in an underserved U.S. community as they pursue their graduate degrees. Peace Corps Volunteers can participate in the program at any point after they satisfactorily finish their Peace Corps service. A complete list of all Coverdell Fellows Program partner schools and additional information can be found at <https://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/university-programs/coverdell-fellows/>.

The agency also supports the work of Peace Corps Volunteers through the Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP), connecting interested groups or individuals to Volunteer-led, community-initiated projects worldwide. Although many Volunteers are able to undertake projects using only local resources and skills, PCPP can provide additional support to Peace Corps Volunteers as they work with host communities to identify local needs and design sustainable solutions. The program provides a critical source of private sector support that is complemented by a mandatory local contribution of at least 25 percent of the total cost of a project. Furthermore, it connects the American public to Volunteers' work and enables them to learn about the communities where Volunteers serve. Through PCPP, the Office of Strategic Partnerships offers a transparent mechanism for the private sector—which includes families and friends of Volunteers, RPCV groups, schools, foundations, trusts, corporations, businesses, faith-based organizations, and civic groups—to be part of the Peace Corps experience by donating directly to the important work of Volunteers and agency initiatives. Related information on individual Volunteers and their PCPP projects is posted online along with real-time donations tracking. More information about PCPP can be found at [www.peacecorps.gov/donate](http://www.peacecorps.gov/donate).

The Peace Corps also accepts in-kind donations. As defined by the Peace Corps Act (Pub. L. 87-293, as amended: 22 U.S.C. §2501 et seq.), gifts or bequests to the Peace Corps are tax-deductible as charitable contributions under Section 170(c) (1) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Moving forward, the Peace Corps will continue to seek more opportunities to collaborate and participate with outside groups through expanded partnerships and taking greater advantage of

the gift authority. Working more closely with external partners means that the agency can take advantage of outside expertise, resources, technology, and large, diverse communities that might otherwise be difficult to tap into. Taking a more open approach to partnerships and the gift authority gives the agency tremendous opportunities to expand its activities to advance the Peace Corps mission and to support as many Volunteers abroad as possible.

## 5.5 Using Technology to Improve Collaboration

The Peace Corps is committed to modernizing its approach to technology to foster greater collaboration among staff, Volunteers, returned Volunteers, partners, and other key customer groups. This is especially critical for an agency that supports nearly 10,000 staff and Volunteers at over 60 posts abroad and eight regional recruitment offices across the United States.

Using technology more effectively will position the agency to drive innovation, be more efficient, and improve the lives of people in the developing world. The Peace Corps' vision for technology includes the following goals:

- **More efficient operations:** Modernize IT platforms and systems to put the agency on par with leading organizations, streamline operations, recruit and support talented and highly motivated people to serve in the Peace Corps, and ensure that staff and Volunteers can easily collaborate anywhere, anytime, and on any device.
- **Empower a culture of innovation and openness:** Implement a modern, holistic IT strategy that allows the agency to be flexible, innovative, and adapt to a rapidly changing global technology environment, drives openness and autonomy, and uses open data for strategic decision making.
- **Improve development outcomes:** Expand Volunteers' access to digital tools and resources so they can promote the use of technology to achieve sustainable results in health, education, economic growth, the environment, and other sectors.
- **Communicate impact:** Empower users of digital technology to more effectively connect around the work and impact of the Peace Corps. Expand the agency's presence in digital communities to share and discuss the tremendous work Volunteers are doing in their communities and how returned Volunteers continue to make a difference after they complete their service.

One of the most pressing challenges for collaboration is the fact that the agency operates in 63 countries around the world with vastly different levels of access to technology, broadband capabilities, and network reliability. Some posts abroad have the same level of connectivity as the United States, while others have very low bandwidth capabilities, which can vary from day to day. While this is the current state, the agency wants to ensure that it is planning for the future in terms of expected worldwide growth in technology. The Peace Corps must also be prepared to operate in a 24/7 environment since the agency supports the safety and security of Volunteers in the field. In addition, the agency has a large domestic footprint, with eight regional recruitment offices and recruiters at college campuses across the country. This is partly what makes collaboration challenging—the Peace Corps supports a very large, global, and widely distributed network of both staff and Volunteers.

While Peace Corps Volunteers are not employees of the federal government and thus have a different status than staff, they are the heart and soul of the agency. Frequently, Volunteers bring the latest technology solutions and modern thinking to their work, but they are sometimes hampered by inadequate infrastructure that may limit their digital capabilities. The agency will address this challenge by fostering a technology ecosystem that is dynamic and responsive to global changes—and that enables staff and Volunteers to easily collaborate and support each other using the digital tools and technology they need to be successful.

To address the critical need for better collaboration tools, the Peace Corps will make significant investments in its foundational IT infrastructure. This investment is necessary to deliver consistent service and provide the backbone for future innovation. The agency has been actively negotiating with internet service providers in host countries to improve the level of service at posts around the world. The agency is also working to update and better integrate IT systems and to improve data integrity. The Peace Corps is always looking to collaborate with other federal agencies wherever possible to leverage their resources and experience.

## **6. Initiatives to Advance Transparency, Participation, and Collaboration: 2014–2016**

### **6.1 Publish Data Set of Peace Corps Volunteer Openings by Country and Assignment**

In July 2014, the Peace Corps began publishing the full data set of Volunteer job openings at <https://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/volunteer-openings/>. The data set includes six months' worth of data about the number of job openings by country, sector, and departure date, as well as language and other skill requirements, living conditions, medical considerations, and other important characteristics of each job opening.

Making this information publicly available has provided a more transparent snapshot of all Volunteer job openings, so that anyone can easily see the type of work that Peace Corps Volunteers engage in worldwide. It also enhances the user experience by providing a comprehensive view of the options for serving in the Peace Corps, better informing potential applicants about where they may be eligible to serve and what to expect in various job settings. Empowering applicants to explore and select job openings has also helped the agency better pair candidates with assignments that align with their skills and interests. By allowing the public to become familiar with the types of Peace Corps assignments available prior to applying, the Peace Corps has been able to generate interest in more specialized positions now that these qualified individuals realize there are opportunities for them with the Peace Corps.

### **6.2 Reshape Peacecorps.gov as the Agency's Open, Integrated Publishing Platform**

On June 1, 2016, the Peace Corps launched its refreshed internet platform. The refreshed platform includes a new responsive, mobile-friendly website to make the Peace Corps more accessible to audiences through the platforms they already use. The updated website is an open content management system and it is decentralized to make it easier and faster for content contributors across the agency to publish relevant and timely content. The updated



website features a fresh design that is bold, compelling, and inspirational, and puts the Volunteer experience at the center. An emphasis is placed on authentic narratives, captivating imagery, and Volunteer-generated media. Users can easily navigate content and are presented with the most current and useful information at every point of their digital journey.

Country pages (the former post websites) were also reshaped and launched on June 1, 2016. General information, such as host country language, number of Volunteers, and “slice-of-life” visuals, such as photos and blog posts from Volunteers, is now available. Many posts have also taken the opportunity to add local content; others will do so at a later date. Country pages now contain a new Health and Safety section. This includes links to the Statistical Report of Crimes Against Volunteers and the Annual Volunteer Survey. In addition, information about country-specific living conditions, including health and medical information, is available for each posting in the Volunteer Openings section.

Information on Volunteer openings offers greater transparency by providing highly detailed descriptions and medical considerations as well as links to the corresponding country section to learn what it is like to live and serve in a specific country. Prospective Volunteers can now easily locate and connect with a recruiter, should they have more questions, and search events in their area and online.

The website platform is configured to easily pull content from social media, application program interfaces, and other systems to create an integrated experience. Given the website’s multiple uses and audiences, it was designed with a content management system and integrated social media to allow more content contributors. Visitors to the site can more directly experience the work of Volunteers in the field and the impact they are having in communities around the world.

After securing OMB clearance, the Peace Corps is now capable of surveying users online to measure customer satisfaction in relation to the user experience, content, and web design. This strengthens the agency’s ability to continuously make data-driven decisions and enhancements to the website based on external feedback from those actually engaging with the website.

Through an engaging and user-centric design, the Peace Corps’ new website supports increased transparency, participation, and collaboration.

## **7. New Initiatives to Advance Transparency, Participation, and Collaboration: 2016–2018**

### **7.1 Open ICT4D Repository Initiative**

The Peace Corps’ Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS) leverages Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) at a broad, cross-sector level and across all programs. Using ICTs strategically helps to ensure that efforts are transparent, communicative, scalable, and measurable.

The Peace Corps is extending this strategic priority to Volunteer programs through the focus given to ICT for Development, or ICT4D—the framework that applies ICTs to the realm of international development and social good. For example, Volunteers use ICT4D to extend the reach of their messaging (radio, text, and SMS messaging), address challenges in new ways

(design thinking and leveraging technology for monitoring and evaluation work), and more directly address the Peace Corps' Goals Two and Three (through social media, such as blogs, and through media production, such as video contests and professional photography). Building a Peace Corps Digital Repository for Volunteers and the communities they serve is another application of ICT4D.

The Peace Corps Digital Repository—also known as “Digital Peace Corps”—serves as a framework for Volunteers and staff to leverage technology appropriately and in significant ways to increase the impact of their service. The Digital Peace Corps is the focal resource through which Volunteers can learn best practices of technology use during their service. At a higher level, the “Playbook” within Digital Peace Corps serves as a guide for Peace Corps programming staff to learn ways to integrate ICTs effectively into their project frameworks.

The Digital Peace Corps was developed using Jekyll, an open-source static site generator. Using the Jekyll framework allows the site content to be created simply and translated into a variety of formats (HTML, PDF, EPUB, etc.). This content can be hosted on any website, or even locally on an individual computer to be accessed offline—useful for locations where access to the internet and connectivity are limited or nonexistent.

All of the computer programming code, content, and documentation related to the site are publicly available. Currently, this information is shared on Github—the same platform that hosts the code (<https://github.com/peacecorps/letgirlslearn>) for the Peace Corps' Let Girls Learn website (<http://letgirlslearn.peacecorps.gov/>). The code is made available with the Git version control framework, meaning that it contains all version changes to the code and the content in a way that is open and nonproprietary.

Hosting this resource on a publicly available forum and in this format ensures full transparency with the general public. It also allows for the general public to provide suggestions for improvements, commentary, deletions, and corrections. The strategy is to continue to make the process of submitting ideas and suggestions to the platform as simple as possible, allowing for all citizens with an interest in ICT4D at the Peace Corps to contribute their experiences and insights. Additionally, this initiative builds on itself as metrics surrounding public viewership, engagement, and feedback are recorded as site and project analytics, allowing Peace Corps staff to assess overall satisfaction with the site products and services.

While the ICT4D Repository initiative is focused on the Digital Peace Corps resources and Playbook, the long-term goal of this initiative is to act as a catalyst in paving the way for other projects, programs, and priorities to leverage similar transparent code-and-content models. This work will facilitate maximum flexibility, accountability, scalability, and knowledge-sharing across the various regions, sectors, and communities where Peace Corps Volunteers serve.

## 7.2 Website Digital Analytics Program (DAP) Participation

The Peace Corps' newly created custom analytics implementation will soon be integrated with the General Services Administration's (GSA's) Digital Analytics Program. The participation of the Peace Corps will connect the agency's website visitor data with the federal platform, which will deliver an unprecedented, governmentwide view of how well agencies serve their customers

through the Web. With participation of 39 agencies from a variety of websites within government, analytic data will become more accessible and create new possibilities for agencies to collaborate to improve digital services.

### **7.3 Brand Asset Management Repository**

The Peace Corps plans to ensure brand consistency and messaging by developing a centralized brand repository of materials, guides, and collateral. This will allow greater collaboration between Peace Corps offices by giving staff the ability to easily access and use agency assets, some of which offer customization options for their specific use stored in a cloud-based repository. Staff will be able to review materials already entered into the brand repository system and alter them within set brand guidelines for their own purposes without requiring professional design skills. Offices will also participate by offering input related to their needs that can help shape the type of products that populate the new system. The roll-out will focus on Volunteer recruitment and training staff to expand the agency's user-base. This is a cloud-based solution that will integrate with other platforms, increase efficiency and access, and allow for a work-flow permission structure for Peace Corps branded products. Ultimately, the repository will help to facilitate more information sharing between Peace Corps offices and the public by breaking down barriers to producing materials, while ensuring that they reflect the look and feel of the Peace Corps brand.

## Appendix—Links to Existing Resources

### Peace Corps General Links

[Mission](#)

FY 2014–18 Strategic Plan and FY 2016–17 Annual Performance Plan ([under Budget and Performance](#))

Performance and Accountability Reports ([under Open Government Reports](#))

[Open Government Portal](#)

### Social Media

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Google Plus](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Instagram](#)

### FOIA

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[FOIA Request Portal](#)

[Electronic Reading Room](#)

### Records Management Resources

The Peace Corps follows the National Archives and Records Administration guidelines, rules, and regulations. The following resources are used by the Peace Corps and are available online at [www.archives.gov/records-mgmt](http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt)

- [Law and Statutes](#)
- [National Archives and Records Administration](#)
  - [Federal Register](#)
  - [Records Management Programs](#)
  - [Records Center Locations](#)
- [Records Management Handbook](#)