

Open Government Plan

Peace Corps

April 7, 2010

Outline

1. Introduction

2. Open Government at the Peace Corps

- 2.1. Open Government Structure and Process
- 2.2. Public Engagement
- 2.3. Employee Engagement
- 2.4. Alignment with Strategic Goals & Performance Measures

3. Transparency

- 3.1. High Value Data and Information
- 3.2. Informing the Public
- 3.3. Congressional Requests
- 3.4. Freedom of Information Act
- 3.5. Records Management
- 3.6. Compliance

4. Participation

- 4.1. Current Activities
- 4.2. Proposed Activities

5. Collaboration

- 5.1. Collaboration Within the Agency
- 5.2. Collaboration Across Departments and Agencies
- 5.3. Collaboration Across Levels of Government
- 5.4. Public-Private Collaboration
- 5.5. Technology to Improve Collaboration

6. Flagship Initiative

- 6.1. Volunteer Delivery and Support System Redesign
- 6.2. Other Challenges

7. Appendix – Links to Existing Resources

1. Introduction

On December 8, 2009, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued memo M-10-06, titled [Open Government Directive](#), to executive departments and agencies. This memo dictates specific actions with the goal of transforming the way government operates by creating a culture of transparency, participation, and collaboration. The Peace Corps has developed the following plan which outlines how the agency will enhance openness and partnership with the American public. Major efforts are underway to change the way the agency recruits, selects, places, and supports Volunteers and to create dynamic new partnerships.

This document is the first open government plan of the Peace Corps, and has been developed in accordance with the Open Government Directive. Its purpose is to describe how the Peace Corps will incorporate the principles of the [Open Government Initiative](#) (transparency, participation, and collaboration) into its regular operations. Peace Corps is committed to the President's Open Government Initiative which is driven by the same principles of openness and partnership the agency has used to fulfill its mission since 1961.

The Peace Corps' mission is to promote world peace and friendship. While much has changed in the world since the Peace Corps' founding in 1961, its mission has not. The Peace Corps' three core goals are as relevant today as they were almost five decades ago:

- 1) To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
- 2) To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
- 3) To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

The Peace Corps carries out its mission and goals by assisting interested countries with their development needs and building cross-cultural understanding, while providing efficient and effective support to ensure a positive Volunteer experience for a diverse group of Americans.

Since the program's inception, nearly 200,000 Americans have served as Peace Corps Volunteers, and the agency has partnered with 139 countries around the world. These Volunteers foster positive relationships with the people of our requesting nations, represent the diverse faces of America, and promote sustainable development. During and after their service, Volunteers share their experiences with the American people about life overseas, the people they served, and the cultures they experienced.

Overall, the Peace Corps provides practical assistance to developing countries by sharing America's most precious resource – its people. The women and men who serve as Peace Corps Volunteers reflect the rich diversity of the United States and represent some of the finest characteristics of the American people: a generosity of spirit, a strong work ethic, a commitment to service, and an approach to problem solving that is both optimistic and pragmatic. Peace Corps Volunteers are afforded no special privileges and often live in remote, isolated communities where they speak local languages and learn

the cultures and customs of the people they serve. The Peace Corps combines development work with personal relationships that Volunteers forge with host country colleagues and communities. This combination serves as a crucial foundation for peace and friendship for generations to come.

The principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration are at the heart of the agency's work. Volunteers work side-by-side with host country partners, engaging the community around them. When Volunteers return to the United States, they share their experiences with those around them, explicitly through third goal programs (where returned Volunteers share their Peace Corps experience and information about host country cultures), as well as through their everyday interactions with fellow Americans.

2. Open Government at the Peace Corps

With openness and partnership being vital to the work of the Peace Corps, the development of the Open Government Plan began with an assessment of current activities that already align with the open government principles. The plan does not create new organizational structures or functions within the agency, but identifies current alignment with the principles of transparency, collaboration, and participation. Opportunities to enhance or incorporate these principles into new areas are also being examined.

The timetable for the development of the plan has been ambitious. Despite this challenge, there is evidence in the Peace Corps of renewed emphasis on transparency, participation, and collaboration, along with other key values and principles, as decisions are made within the agency. Peace Corps will continue to build on this momentum as it addresses the challenges of fully realizing the goals of the President's Open Government Initiative.

This plan is considered a living document, and the agency will continue to listen to comments and incorporate suggestions in future versions. By institutionalizing the values of transparency, participation, and collaboration into existing structures and processes, the agency will further strengthen the principles of open government within its operations.

2.1 *Open Government Structure and Process*

This plan was developed through work guided by the Peace Corps' Open Government Steering Committee. This group of agency senior leaders will continue to lead and oversee open government efforts. The committee will continue to seek employee and public input, and further versions of the plan and opportunities for feedback will be available on our Open Government page at <http://www.peacecorps.gov/open/>.

Open Government Steering Committee members include leaders in agency management and administration, information technology, financial management, communications, FOIA, records management, strategic planning, legal, and policy. They will continue to meet on a regular basis, driving and championing open government principles in the agency. Furthermore, the agency has a well established management structure, which will be tapped to further integrate open government ideals into ongoing operations at headquarters and the field.

2.2 Public Engagement

The Peace Corps engages the public in a number of arenas, both domestically and abroad, for a variety of reasons using a range of methods. Moving forward, the agency will seek to further strengthen its application of the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration in its public engagement.

The Peace Corps utilized its Open Government webpage to begin its initial engagement of the public for comments and ideas on open government issues. The Open Government Steering Committee 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 Peace Corps culture.

2.3 Employee Engagement

The Peace Corps is committed to developing a sustainable infrastructure and processes to strengthen and support employee adaptation of open government principles into activities at all levels of the agency, in addition to reducing the barriers to employee innovation.

Employees were asked to provide input and ideas via the agency intranet. As was the case with public engagement, time constraints presented a challenge to fully and effectively realize full participation. Work to fully engage staff will continue well after the plan is published.

Peace Corps' Open Government Steering Committee will examine a variety of ways to increase employee engagement and reduce barriers for innovation within the agency. This will include seeking open government "champions" to provide working group leadership, as well as creating specific mechanisms for employees to contribute ideas and feedback.

2.4 Alignment with Strategic Goals & Performance Measures

The agency's 2009-2014 Strategic Plan consists of the following strategic goals:

Strategic Goal One: Enhance the capacity of host country individuals, organizations and communities to meet their skill needs.

Strategic Goal Two: Promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of host country individuals, organizations, and communities served by Volunteers.

Strategic Goal Three: Foster outreach to Americans through agency programs that assist Volunteers and returned Peace Corps Volunteers to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

Strategic Goal Four: Provide Volunteers, who represent the diversity of Americans, to meet the evolving technical needs of host countries.

Strategic Goal Five: Implement the Peace Corps mission in an effective and efficient manner through the provision of high quality Volunteer support with optimal health care, safety and security support, and effective management of resources.

These five goals align the agency in meeting its mission of promoting world peace and friendship. As evident in these goals, the principles of open government are already a part of the core activities of the Peace Corps. Transparency, participation, and collaboration are essential to the agency's ability to accomplish its strategic goals. As such, the agency's performance measures are already tracking its progress in reference to transparency, participation, and collaborative activities and outcomes.

Additional information about specific strategies for accomplishing these goals and performance measures are found on page 4 of the *Peace Corps Strategic Plan FY 2009-2014*. It is [available online](#) on the agency website.

3. Transparency

The Peace Corps is committed to providing information on its activities to the public, ranging from the general public, individuals interested in becoming Volunteers, friends, family and fans of the Peace Corps, and returned Peace Corps Volunteers interested in hearing more about what the agency is working on. As the 2011 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps approaches, it is clear that even more interest in agency information and records will be generated, and a proactive approach to making as much information as possible open and available online will allow interested citizens to quickly and efficiently find what they seek.

The Peace Corps is interested in hearing the public's ideas about how best to achieve the goals of the open government plan. The plan is ongoing, and will continue to be informed by suggestions from outside the agency. Input can be sent via the open webpage at <http://www.peacecorps.gov/open>, as well as via email at opengov@peacecorps.gov.

3.1 High Value Data and Information

The agency plans to make its open government portal an effective and efficient tool for interested citizens to find the data and information they seek. The agency is working to identify "high value" data and information for release. High value is defined as data or information that can be used to improve the public's knowledge of the agency and its operations, to further the core mission of the agency, to increase agency accountability, and to respond to public demand. As most agency data and information are centered on individuals (Peace Corps Volunteers and staff), extra care must be taken to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to protect the safety and personal information of Volunteers. The agency will continue to work with guidance from OMB on safety and privacy standards for published data.

The Peace Corps will continue to publish high-value data sets and other tools as they are identified and become available. The agency is reviewing publication of a variety of data, including:

- Agency financial statements
- Impact evaluation data
- Employee staffing – organizational charts and types of employees
- Data on trainee and Volunteer attrition
- Data to support published reports such as the Health of the Volunteer

Most of these data are currently published in summarized form. The agency plans to produce new data sets on a regular basis, posting them on the agency Open Government portal and publishing them on the data.gov site.

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, as well as through social media tools such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).

3.2 Informing the Public

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

The Peace Corps is committed to exploring ways to fully leverage social media strategies for accomplishing its goals within all sectors of the agency. The Peace Corps will continue to use its news releases and online social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr to regularly inform the public about Peace Corps activities and news. In addition, Peace Corps will use these resources to solicit feedback from the public about how the agency can be more transparent and inform the public about the many open government-related resources available to them consistent with this Open Government Plan.

The agency recognizes the desire of the public to have access to the decision-making process and senior level decision makers. The Peace Corps will explore ways to be more transparent regarding its internal decision-making process. One of the first steps will be, within three months of publishing the plan, to create a page accessible via the Open Government portal that lists changes to the *Peace Corps Manual* – which contains the agency’s internal policies.

The Peace Corps will continue to make use of its Open Government portal (as well as other types of media) to announce changes, new products, or other milestones related to open government. As a small agency, the Peace Corps is not tracked on the [Open Government Dashboard](#), but the agency is developing its own similar scorecard to be located on its Open Government portal.

3.3 Congressional Requests

The Office of Congressional Relations at the Peace Corps coordinates activities related to all legislative issues and interests, and serves as the official liaison between the Director of the Peace Corps and members of Congress and congressional staff. Additionally, the Peace Corps regularly receives congressional inquiries related to specific constituent issues and operational issues. The Office of Congressional Relations coordinates the Peace Corps’ response to these inquiries in a timely manner.

The Peace Corps currently posts annual reports as mandated by Congress on the agency’s website. In an attempt to further expand openness between the Peace Corps and the public, the agency will explore the possibility of publishing additional communications between the Peace Corps and Congress, including appropriate responses to congressional inquiries and testimony before congressional committees.

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 for management.

The FOIA Office is supervised by the FOIA officer. The staff consists of one full-time FOIA specialist and shares an administrative assistant and two interns with the Records Management Office. In addition to the FOIA Office, an associate general counsel from the General Counsel’s Office is responsible for

reviewing and counseling staff on FOIA-related legal issues. The FOIA Office relies on other Peace Corps offices to provide any and all responsive documents related to FOIA requests received by the agency.

The Peace Corps Office of the 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 in order to ensure consistency and a lack of duplication in processing the request.

The Peace Corps publishes each fiscal year's FOIA report online, outlines the process for making a FOIA request, provides instruction on how to file a FOIA request (with a sample FOIA request letter), and answers frequently asked questions (FAQs) at www.peacecorps.gov/FOIA.

Most Frequently Requested Documents

The most frequently requested Peace Corps documents are the Peace Corps Volunteer safety reports, Peace Corps Partnership Program information, Peace Corps host countries statistics, early termination reports, Health of the Volunteer reports, Peace Corps employee directory information, and Volunteer surveys. Overall, the agency has found that a large portion of our FOIA requests reflect interest in guidelines and handbooks designed for Peace Corps Volunteers; Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP) reports; post operational budgets; medical reports; Volunteer surveys; congressional correspondence; budget and contractual information; post programs information; and evaluations/status reports.

FOIA Electronic Reading Room

The Peace Corps maintains an electronic Reading Room on its website. The Reading Room contains information routinely available to the public, as well as documents frequently requested under the FOIA. The list of items maintained in the Reading Room will continue to expand as we add records in which the public expresses an interest, according to new FOIA guidelines issued by the attorney general, and in keeping with open government principles. The Reading room is located online on the agency website, under the agency link [Freedom of Information Act](#).

FOIA Proactive Disclosures

The Peace Corps makes proactive and discretionary disclosures whenever possible. Approximately 93 percent of the documents released in response to FOIA requests were released in full. When full disclosure of a record is not possible, the FOIA Office suggests partial disclosure where appropriate. When 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's guidelines.

Current Backlog

The Peace Corps does not have a backlog. The Peace Corps processes approximately 85 percent of all FOIA requests received within 20 working days. To improve timeliness, the agency will continue to educate staff about FOIA requirements. Peace Corps will continue to look for other ways to streamline the FOIA process. For example, the agency is researching commercial databases to increase data retrieval and tracking capabilities. The FOIA Office is also working on updating the agency's FOIA policies to reflect recent changes to the FOIA process.

FOIA Discussion

The FOIA Office is planning to establish a FOIA point of contact (POC) in each office. This person would bear primary responsibility for communicating with the FOIA staff about responsive documents and any issues or concerns the office may have with releasing the documents. The POC would also receive additional training and updates from FOIA staff to ensure he/she is well-versed with the FOIA process and any procedural changes.

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 of records created by the federal government.

Records management refers to the planning, controlling, directing, organizing, training, promoting, and other managerial activities involved with respect to records creation, maintenance, use, and disposition in order 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 records. It is not limited to paper records, but includes electronic records and other information, regardless of physical form or characteristics.

Records control schedules are mandatory instructions of what to do with records no longer needed for current government business. The records control schedule indicates how long a document must be kept before it is transferred to a Federal Records Center, destroyed, or transferred to National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) for permanent preservation. General Records Schedules (GRS) provide mandatory disposal authorization for temporary administrative records common to several or all agencies of the federal government. They are issued by the archivist of the United States. The GRS include records relating to civilian personnel, fiscal accounting, procurement, communications, printing, and other common functions.

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 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, responsible for overseeing the records management program for the entire agency. The records management program shares one administrative assistant and two interns with the FOIA office.

Responsibilities

Peace Corps staff must create and maintain records to ensure that agency functions and activities are adequately and properly documented, and 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, carry out legal responsibilities, and most importantly, ensure a lasting history of Peace Corps and its accomplishments. The Peace Corps is responsible for developing agency record schedules, with the approval of the archivist of the United States, that are tailored to department-specific records that are not provided for in the GRS. A list of all GRS is available on the NARA website at www.nara.gov. A general introduction to the GRS and a listing of each of the GRS are available on the NARA Records Management website at: www.archives.gov/records-mgmt.

Records Management Discussion

The agency is committed to completely revamping its records management program. A few major objectives of the records management officer are: 1) Providing training to staff on the importance of records and maintaining them to ensure their correct disposition; 2) Revising records schedules for outdated record series; and 3) Compiling a comprehensive records manual. 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 as advised and assisted by the records management officer. The agency is also exploring how to efficiently publish the records management schedule on the agency Open Government webpage.

3.6 Compliance

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 surpass current requirements.

Data.gov

In May 2009 Data.gov was launched to allow the public easier access to government data sets. The Peace Corps has submitted data to be referenced on the site. The agency is currently developing a

process to continually identify and publish more data in response to the data.gov initiative. Please refer to Section 3.1 for more information including a description of data provided and currently being evaluated for future availability.

eRulemaking

The eRulemaking initiative is a current government-wide program with the goals of:

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

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

IT Dashboard

In June 2009 the Office of Management and Budget launched the IT Dashboard enabling federal agencies and the general public to view details of federal information technology investments. Peace Corps reports its IT investments to OMB via reports known as "Exhibit 300s" and the data is found on the IT Dashboard under the "other agencies" aggregation.

USASpending.gov

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 data are accessible on this site.

Recovery.gov

Recovery.gov is the Office of Management and Budget's website to track and report on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 spending and to report fraud, waste, and abuse. The Peace Corps did not receive funding via this Act and as such does not report any data.

4. Participation

The purpose behind the "participation" principle is to promote opportunities for the public to be involved in the decision-making process, which should result in more informed and effective policies. This is an area where the agency will focus particular attention as the open government process continues to unfold.

4.1 Current Activities

The Open Government Directive instructed agencies to engage the public as it developed its open government plan. The Peace Corps created an Open Government portal and requested ideas on how to make Peace Corps more open and transparent. Though time constraints limited the agency's ability to gather comments and incorporate them into this plan, future versions will benefit from public participation.

4.2 Proposed Activities

The Peace Corps will continue to utilize the Open Government portal, and is also reviewing additional ways to encourage participation from the public. Nearly 200,000 Americans have joined the Peace Corps since 1961, and as the 50th anniversary approaches, that engaged group of citizens is recognized as a powerful source of ideas.

5. Collaboration

The purpose behind the principle of "collaboration" is to leverage cooperation with other government (federal and non-federal) agencies, the public, and nonprofit and private entities to drive the agency's core mission. The agency is currently seeking ways to increase strategic partnerships with international and local nongovernmental organizations and community-based organizations.

5.1 Collaboration Within the Agency

As mentioned earlier, the Peace Corps has embraced the value of collaboration. Across the globe, Volunteers and staff in 76 countries work together and with host country partners, fulfilling the mission of the Peace Corps. At headquarters, employees are engaged across organizational units to share promising practices, develop solutions to problems, and foster a climate of creativity and innovation. Both formal and ad hoc working groups form as new challenges arise. Over the past year, agency-wide "swarm" teams have been used effectively to bring solutions to operational challenges as they have arisen. Efforts focused on quality growth and Volunteer recruitment and placement redesign have benefited from these cross-cutting work groups.

5.2 Collaboration Across Departments and Agencies

Collaboration across the U.S. government is inherent in the mission of the Peace Corps. The agency has a long history of working across the federal government on issues related to international development and volunteerism.

Since 2004, the Peace Corps has been an active partner in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), working closely with the State Department, the United States Agency for International Development, the Department of Health and Human Services, and others.

The recently created Office of Intergovernmental Affairs 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 cultivate new agreements and partnerships and to maximize the Peace Corps' contribution to ongoing international development efforts. This would include the U.S. Department of State and the Embassy of the United States in each country in which Peace Corps has a program, the United States Agency for International Development (including, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance), the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and the Centers for Disease Control.

5.3 Collaboration Across Levels of Government

The Peace Corps often works with state and local government officials in celebrating the work of Volunteers. Official proclamations from state governments help inform local communities about the power of service and the value of volunteerism. Beyond our own borders, the Peace Corps partners with governments in every one of the 76 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. Overseas most projects involve a partnership between Peace Corps and nongovernmental organizations or host country government organizations in planning and managing projects. Domestically, the agency has a number of programs that contribute to furthering the mission of the Peace Corps

Currently, the Office of Public Engagement (OPE) works closely with several other Peace Corps offices to develop and implement strategic partnerships between the Peace Corps and targeted domestic non-profit organizations. Over the last few months, OPE helped develop, and is now working to implement,

new partnerships between the Peace Corps and the National Association of Community Health Centers, the National Peace Corps Association, and City Year.

In addition, OPE staff manage the Coverdell World Wise Schools (CWWS) program, which was established in 1989 by then-Peace Corps Director Paul D. Coverdell to help America's 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. The CWWS program involves the development of classroom curriculum as well as connecting U.S. elementary and secondary school teachers with current Peace Corps Volunteers who share their Peace Corps experiences through a variety of media and methods. More information on this program can be found at www.peacecorps.gov/www.

Peace Corps relies heavily on collaboration with returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) to help the Peace Corps 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 www.peacecorps.gov/thirdgoal.

The Fellows/USA program, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2010, also supports the spirit of collaboration. 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 Fellows/USA program at any point after they satisfactorily finish their Peace Corps service. A complete list of all Fellows/USA partner schools and additional information is located at www.peacecorps.gov/fellows.

The Master's International program has made available the unique opportunity of integrating a master's degree with overseas service in a variety of fields. Established in 1987, Master's International produces Peace Corps Volunteers with additional education and skills to serve overseas. Currently, Peace Corps partners with over 60 academic institutions nationwide. More information on this program can be found at: www.peacecorps.gov/masters.

The Office of Private Sector Initiatives (OPSI) also works extensively on public-private partnerships. OPSI oversees and manages all cash and in-kind donations to the Peace Corps. The office supports the first and third goals of the Peace Corps and serves three distinct customer groups: Peace Corps Volunteers and the communities they serve, donors to the Peace Corps, and Peace Corps, the agency.

OPSI supports the work of Peace Corps Volunteers through the Peace Corps Partnership Program (Partnership Program or PCPP), which began in 1964 as the "Schools to Schools" program connecting American school children to school children abroad. Today, PCPP continues to connect interested groups or individuals to Volunteer-led, community-initiated projects worldwide. Although many Volunteers are able to undertake projects utilizing local resources and skills, PCPP provides a critical alternative for projects which require additional funds. PCPP is available for Volunteers at every post. More information about PCPP can be found at www.peacecorps.gov/donate.

OPSI offers a transparent mechanism for the private sector, which includes family 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 to the important work of Peace Corps Volunteers and agency initiatives. The office also accepts in-kind donations made to the Peace Corps and directly to Volunteers. 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.

In 2010 through 2011, OPSI will continue to play a significant role in planning and fundraising for the agency's upcoming 50th anniversary celebration. It is OPSI's responsibility to ensure that all contributions are in compliance with relevant policies and procedures. The Peace Corps' 50th anniversary is a wonderful opportunity to expand the agency's public-private partnerships and enhance its public engagement efforts.

5.5 Technology to Improve Collaboration

Peace Corps currently uses several applications to collaborate with its staff and Volunteers. Web conferencing tools are used to interact with potential and new applicants, as well as for training staff and interaction with other government agencies and organizations.

Additionally, Peace Corps has developed an online forum that enables staff from headquarters and overseas posts to share best and promising practices in the form of documents and discussion groups. At some posts, staff and Volunteers use post-specific intranet sites to coordinate activities. The agency is currently working on a plan to unify these two technologies so that staff, Volunteers and the public can benefit from these practices.

6. Flagship Initiative

6.1 Volunteer Delivery and Support System Redesign

The Peace Corps has launched a major sourcing effort to upgrade its Volunteer Delivery and Support System. This major program will transform the processes and systems the agency uses to manage outreach, recruitment, evaluation (professional and medical), placement, support (professional and medical), and the return of Peace Corps Volunteers. This system has been internally branded, via a naming competition, as the DOVE system (Database of Volunteer Experience).

The existing Volunteer Delivery and Support (VDS) System was developed to organize and administer the agency's central business processes required for recruitment, placement, and support of Volunteers for two years of overseas service and continuing interaction after service. The existing system is a

patchwork of paper-based and electronic systems developed over many years and requires a comprehensive revision in order to meet current governmental requirements and to cope with anticipated expansion.

The goal of the overall VDS System redesign is to develop and upgrade the core VDS business systems and processes required to manage all stages of the Volunteer lifecycle, encompassing both Volunteer support and medical management. The core principle of this program is transparency, aligning well with the Open Government Directive. Over the years, the agency has listened to feedback from citizens interested in becoming Volunteers, applicants, and those who have finished service. A common theme that emerged was the need for the recruitment and placement process to be more transparent to the applicant.

The agency must match the needs of host country requests for skilled Volunteers with the wide range of skills offered by interested Americans who wish to serve. Recruiting and placing Volunteers is a multi-faceted process, taking into account experience, skills, language abilities, health, and other issues that ultimately results in matching a qualified individual with a specific assignment in a particular geographic location.

While the Volunteer Delivery and Support System redesign will ultimately transform the technology used within the agency, as well as enhance and improve the way we do business, the exciting opportunity the redesign will present is opening up the “black box” of the process and making it more transparent. Through the entire application, recruitment, and placement process, individuals will have more information at their fingertips and more opportunities to provide input into the process. The agency anticipates that this new system will be operational within the next two years.

6.2 *Other Challenges*

The Peace Corps continues to work on other challenges – problems to which Peace Corps is seeking solutions – and invites input from the public. The agency’s new Office of Innovation will manage a bottom-up process, across all offices, and challenge staff to work on the issues that will promote change and support growth. The agency will continue to explore ideas and best practices from a variety of sources (the field, other agencies, and the public) to tackle challenges such as:

- Distribution of surveys to Volunteers around the world
- Building a viable best practices repository for Volunteers
- Leveraging mobile phone technology use by Volunteers
- Strengthening Volunteer-to-Volunteer collaboration

The agency is exploring new ways to collect ideas and feedback, but in the interim will continue to use its Open Government portal and the open@peacecorps.gov email address as a conduit.

Appendix – Links to Existing Resources

Peace Corps General Links

[Mission](#)

[Strategic Plan](#)

[Performance and Accountability Reports](#) (under Documents and Reports)

[Open Government Portal](#)

New Media

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Flickr](#)

FOIA

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[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

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