



Open Government Plan

The Peace Corps

June 1, 2014

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1. Introduction

The Peace Corps' third Open Government Plan describes progress that we have made in incorporating the principles of the [Open Government Initiative](#) into our core operations and serves as a roadmap for future initiatives. It outlines the specific steps that we've taken to integrate the values of transparency, participation, and collaboration into our organizational culture and day-to-day processes. The Plan has been updated in accordance with the Open Government Directive and regular consultations with the Office of Management and Budget. This update also reports on the status of our previous flagship initiatives and outlines plans for two new initiatives.

About the Peace Corps

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 goals are as relevant today as they were more than 50 years 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 1961, over 200,000 Americans have served as Peace Corps Volunteers living and working side-by-side with local community members in 139 countries around the world. These Volunteers foster positive relationships with the people of those countries, represent the diverse faces of America, and promote sustainable development. During and after their service, Volunteers share with the American people their stories about life overseas, the people they served, and their cultural experiences.

2. Open Government at the Peace Corps

The Peace Corps' mission aligns and supports the fundamental concept of open government. Transparency, collaboration, and participation are guiding principles for all our work. The job of every Peace Corps Volunteer is to work side-by-side with people in their host communities 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 fellow Americans.

The Peace Corps also fundamentally supports the ideals of public service, which by its nature fosters a more open and participatory government. We are proud to be part of the resurgence of service and are

making major reforms to make it even easier for Americans to apply to the Peace Corps and fulfill the promise of service.

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

2.1 Open Government Structure

The Peace Corps' original Open Government Plan was developed through work guided by the Peace Corps' Open Government Steering Committee. The committee collected employee and public input, and this feedback was incorporated into the plan.

Agency leaders and staff from key stakeholder offices contributed to the update of the Plan. The Director of Digital Integration coordinated contributions and feedback and works closely with the Office of Innovation and the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning to ensure that Open Government principles continue to be integrated into ongoing operations across the agency.

2.2 Public Engagement

The Peace Corps uses its Open Government portal (www.peacecorps.gov/open) 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 Peace Corps' culture.

The Peace Corps engages the public in a number of ways, both domestically and abroad. One example of how the agency has been engaging the American public since 1964 is the Peace Corps Partnership Program, which links interested private-sector donors with small, community-initiated, Volunteer-led development projects in the countries where Volunteers serve.

The most popular way that people engage with the Peace Corps is through our website, Peacecorps.gov, and through blogs and social media. Peace Corps has one of largest followings of any federal agency on the web and on social media, with over half a million followers on Twitter, nearly 700,000 monthly visits to our website, hundreds of different Facebook groups around the world, and dramatic increases in the number of people visiting our YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, and Google+ pages. These venues have evolved from being mostly "broadcast out" mediums to highly engaging, interactive venues where people from all backgrounds and interests are following the work of Peace Corps and engaging with staff and Volunteers.

2.3 Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Engagement

The Peace Corps has a unique constituency with a large and active alumni network, referred to as Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs). Over 215,000 RPCVs live and work across the U.S. and overseas, continuing to promote the ideals of public service. Returned Volunteers strongly self-identify with their Peace Corps service, with many of them describing their service as the most influential thing they've ever done. When Volunteers return home, they share the knowledge of living in another culture and the deep relationships they forged with their host country communities. Sharing their experience

helps bridge the gap between Americans and people of other countries and demonstrates that the U.S. government fosters collaboration not just in the U.S., but also overseas.

The agency 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 and social media and via quarterly and monthly e-newsletters, including *RPCV Hotline* and *Peace Corps Update*. These newsletters provide RPCVs with career advice, job openings, advanced education opportunities, and information about major agency initiatives. Additionally, the agency manages a Speaker's Match program that provides RPCVs with opportunities to share their stories through classrooms, panels, conferences, and other venues around the country.

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 for an accredited graduate school program and participate in an internship benefitting 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 overseas posts 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, within the Director's Office, continuously strives to create a culture of innovation by engaging employees and Volunteers to find 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 2014-2015 is a blueprint for moving our agency forward while remaining true to our longstanding mission and three core goals. It guides our work to improve agency operations and increases the impact of our Volunteers in the communities they serve. The plan strengthens and advances the far-reaching reforms we have made 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 three strategic goals, 11 objectives, and 26 performance goals are found at www.peacecorps.gov/strategicplan and is available online on the agency's [Open Government Portal](#).

3. Transparency

The Peace Corps shares its activities with the general public by posting agency information and reports on its financial and performance data to www.peacecorps.gov.

The Peace Corps Annual Performance Report (previously known as the Peace Corps Performance and Accountability Report) provides performance results and evaluation findings to the public. This report describes how the agency aligns resources to its Strategic Plan, highlights major accomplishments of Volunteers and staff serving around the world, and outlines plans to address future challenges. The report allows the President, members of Congress, and the American people to assess the effectiveness of the agency's operations.

The agency uses various data sources to verify progress on the agency's performance goals that are reported in the Annual Performance Report, including surveys of Volunteers, data calls to overseas and headquarters staff, and administrative data. In addition to summarizing results in the Annual Performance Report, the agency provides summaries of select data through its Open Government portal.

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. We want the default to be that we publicly share data and information -- unless there is a clear business need or other restrictions that prevent us from being open. By increasing data transparency, we will increase public understanding about what our programs are accomplishing and strengthen accountability for results.

The agency publishes raw, 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 over 7,000 Peace Corps Volunteers serving overseas. The Peace Corps also conducts a variety of quantitative and qualitative surveys to measure program success. Because 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.

Moving forward, the Peace Corps' will more proactively use Data.gov to publish data sets and will expand the amount of high-value data sets that we can provide to the public. We will continue to

include our public data sets on our open government page. Examples of the type of data that will be reviewed for publishing include:

- Agency financial statements
- Historical data about Volunteer dates and country of service
- Evaluation data
- 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. We will continue to publicize the availability of new data sets via Peace Corps' Open Government portal, and through social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter.

Open Data and Enterprise Data Inventory

The Peace Corps is developing an inventory of important agency data and will identify data sets that can be published on its Open Government portal. The Agency has proposed a new position to manage the process of publishing open data sets, and will work with offices to identify and expand data that can be of value to statistical agencies and the public.

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're 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 we apply rigorous data cleaning procedures to the dataset prior to analysis to ensure data quality.

The survey has consistently received a very high response rate from Volunteers: 92% of over 7,000 Volunteers completed the survey in 2013. The survey has also been configured for better access on mobile devices, which we expect will increase participation and response rates.

As with all surveys, the Annual Volunteer Survey is subject to various limits to data validity, including non-response bias, but provides an important basis for long-term trends and analysis. The Agency will continue to use the survey to inform agency management about Volunteers' perspectives on key issues, areas of strength, and opportunities for improved performance. Anyone can view a tabular report of the survey results on our Open Government portal.

Other Data Sources

The Peace Corps uses a number of other data sources to measure impact and results. For example, the agency requests data from headquarters offices and overseas posts through online survey software, and responses are downloaded and analyzed using statistical software. These administrative records are not yet tied to our central database system, so we're currently limited in our ability to fully validate the accuracy of the data. To compensate for this limitation, the agency develops data collection tools to ensure that respondents are fully aware of data collection procedures, and that they collect data in a consistent way throughout the year. We will examine ways to more fully integrate and standardize our data collection procedures in FY14.

Several new data sources are in development in FY 2014, including the Global Counterpart Survey, the Host Country Staff Survey, and strengthening of the Volunteer Reporting Tool. The agency is developing methodologies to ensure that data collected from these new data sources are high quality.

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 shares this information with the public annually in the *Peace Corps 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

For the last five years, the Peace Corps has been awarded the Association of Government Accountants (AGA) Certificate of Excellence in Accountability Reporting (CEAR) award. The award is given to federal government agencies whose Performance and Accountability and Annual Financial Reports achieve the highest standards of clarity in communicating financial information and performance accountability.

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 Peace Corps will continue to intensify its presence on social media and electronic media for accomplishing its goals within all sectors of the agency. The Peace Corps will continue to use its social media outlets such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#) to regularly inform the public about Peace Corps activities, Volunteer profiles, and agency news. The Peace Corps will also use these resources to solicit feedback from the public about how the agency can be more transparent and to inform the public about the many Open Government-related resources available to them, consistent with this Open Government Plan.

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.

In addition, the reform of our Volunteer Recruitment and Delivery System 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 milestones related to open government.

3.2.1 Privacy

The Associate Director 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 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).

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. Peace Corps uses the Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) as a key tool in fulfilling these legal and regulatory obligations. Completed PIAs are posted on the Peace Corps website at www.peacecorps.gov/foia.

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. 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/foia.

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.

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
- 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 is prohibited from taking or threatening to take a negative administrative or other action (e.g. separation, reassignment, reduction in allowances, etc) 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.

Annual reports mandated by Congress and testimony before congressional committees are posted on the agency's Open Government portal. Additionally, we publish 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 for Management.

The office is supervised by the FOIA officer and consists of one full-time FOIA/Privacy Act specialist. 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 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. 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, as well as information about making a FOIA request, with instructions and a sample letter and 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. It is possible to communicate by different methods:

FOIA Office (Peace Corps)

- FOIA Public Liaison: Denora Miller, (202) 692-1236
- FOIA Requester Service Center: (202) 692-1236
- Email: foia@peacecorps.gov
- Webpage: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/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
- Webpage: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/foia>

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 are added in which the public expresses an interest.

FOIA Proactive Disclosures

The Peace Corps makes proactive disclosures, when possible, to ease the administrative burden of responding to frequently requested and disclosed records. In FY 2013, 63 percent of all requests processed (85 out of 134) resulted in 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.

FOIA Requests

The average number of days for processing FOIA requests in FY 2013 was 44 days (simple requests) and 183 days (complex requests). The Peace Corps processed 28% of simple FOIA requests (35 out of 124) within a period of 20 working days. The number of FOIA requests increased from 151 in FY 2012 to 160 in FY 2013.

Five of the ten oldest pending FOIA requests closed in FY 2013, while the backlog of requests increased from 15 in FY 2012 to 35 in FY 2013. (Strategies for minimizing backlog, which DOJ/OIP has endorsed, are explored whenever appropriate.) We are considering additional staff to assist with the processing of FOIA requests in order to reduce the backlog. Moreover, the FOIA Office implemented an electronic FOIA tracking system in December 2012 which improves the monitoring of FOIA requests. Thereafter, the agency revised FOIA policy to implement guidance regarding discretionary disclosures of records or information exempt from disclosure. (See the final rule, published in the *Federal Register* on August 7, 2013.)

FOIA Discussion

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

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.

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 program assistant.

Records Management Responsibilities

Peace Corps staff creates and must 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 a lasting 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 70 sets of schedules, written and proposed by the agency between 1966 and 2013, 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 Peace Corps' records schedules are available on the NARA website at www.archives.gov/records-mgmt.

Records Management Discussion

The agency has begun revamping its records management program. Major objectives that have been achieved recently include compiling a comprehensive 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: (1) Developing records schedules and proposing dispositions to NARA for all unscheduled records; and (2) Revising records schedules for outdated record series.

Major new objectives (mandated by the Office of Management and Budget-National Archives and Records Administration Managing Government Records Directive M 12-18, based on the Presidential Memorandum Managing Government Records, November 28, 2011), 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 officer.

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.

Data.gov

In May 2009, 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 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 IT Dashboard, enabling federal agencies and the general public to view details of federal information technology investments. The Peace Corps reports its IT investments to OMB via reports known as "Exhibit 300s" and the data is found on 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

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 such 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 and public participation is highly encouraged.

We have also increased public participation in online events, so we can take advantage of technology to better connect with people across the Peace Corps network. We regularly conduct live Twitter Town Halls, Google + Hangouts On Air, and Skype sessions with staff and Volunteers – all of which are publicly available so people can better understand the work of Volunteers and engage with us on the most popular online platforms.

4.2 Participation in crowdsourcing solutions

The Office of Innovation, within the Director's Office, continuously strives to create a culture of innovation by encouraging employees and Volunteers to crowd-source 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:

- **Crowd-sourced web and mobile apps:** Through partnerships with universities and organizations like Random Hacks of Kindness, Peace Corps has developed prototype apps that will:
 - Help Volunteers track their malaria medications and reduce the risk of getting malaria
 - Improve how people can view and filter information about Volunteer job opportunities
 - Make it easier for Volunteers and staff to track requests for medical supplies
 - Collect performance data and indicators about their Peace Corps projects, such as number of teachers or health workers trained
- **Open mapping technologies:** The Peace Corps is exploring ways to use open source mapping technology to improve data about Volunteers' work sites, strengthen safety and security protocols, and make better use of geographic-based data for more informed and transparent decision-making. Part of this effort will include having large numbers of Volunteers and their host country counterparts to collaborate in mapping data across as many Peace Corps overseas posts as possible, so impact and participation happens on a broad scale.

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

4.2 *Participation in website improvements*

Given the increasing impact of the web and social media, we plan to embark on a major overhaul of Peacecorps.gov in 2014. The site will be transformed from a more traditional website to an open publishing platform that will focus on telling the Peace Corps story in real-time (or near real-time). This will allow people to more directly see and experience the work of Volunteers in the field and the impact they're having in their communities. It will result in a more engaging, immersive experience, with the goal of increasing transparency, collaboration, and participation. The site will be more participatory and more open to a diverse range of contributors who want to share their piece of the Peace Corps experience— such as prospective Volunteers, current Volunteers, host country communities, staff, RPCVs, partners, and family and friends. This initiative is also described later as one of our flagship initiatives.

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 continuing to seek ways to increase strategic partnerships with international and local nongovernmental organizations 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.

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 cultivate strategic partnerships and maximize the Peace Corps' contribution to international development efforts. These include the U.S. Department of State, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Millennium Challenge Corporation, Environmental Protection Agency, and 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 cookstoves.

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 celebrate 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. Domestically, the agency has a number of programs that contribute to furthering the mission of the Peace Corps. 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 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. 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 www.peacecorps.gov/wws.

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 www.peacecorps.gov/thirdgoal.

The Master’s International program is a unique opportunity for Peace Corps Volunteers to combine a master’s degree with their overseas service. It also provides the Peace Corps with Volunteers with additional education and skills. Currently, the Peace Corps partners with over 80 academic institutions

nationwide through the Master's International program. More information on this program can be found at www.peacecorps.gov/masters.

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 is located at www.peacecorps.gov/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 are able to undertake projects using local resources and skills, PCPP supports 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. Further, 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. More information about PCPP can be found at 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 our gift authority. Working more closely with external partners means we 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 our gift authority gives us tremendous opportunities to expand our activities to advance the Peace Corps mission and to support as many Volunteers overseas 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 like ours that supports nearly 10,000 staff and Volunteers at 65 overseas posts and 8 regional recruitment offices across the U.S.

Using technology more effectively will help us drive innovation, be more efficient, and improve the lives of people in the developing world. Our vision for technology includes these goals:

- **More efficient operations:** Modernize our IT platforms and systems to put us on par with leading organizations, streamline operations, recruit and support the best and brightest people to serve in the Peace Corps, and ensure that staff and Volunteers can easily collaborate anywhere, anytime, on any device.
- **Drive culture of innovation and openness:** Develop a modern, holistic IT Strategy that allows us 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 everyone who is connected with the Peace Corps to use digital technology to more effectively convey the work and impact of Peace Corps. Expand our 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 we work in 65 countries around the world, with vastly different levels of access to technology, broadband capabilities, and network reliability. Some of our overseas posts have the same level of connectivity as we experience in the U.S., while others have very low bandwidth capabilities, which can change from day to day. While this is the current state, we want to ensure that we're planning for what the future holds in terms of expected worldwide growth in technology. The Peace Corps must also be prepared to operate in a 24/7 environment since our mission is to support the safety and security of over 7,000 Volunteers in the field. In addition, we have a large domestic footprint, with 8 Regional Recruitment offices and hundreds of part-time recruiters at college campuses across the country. This is partly what makes our mission unique – we are supporting 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 our organization. Frequently, Volunteers bring the latest technology solutions and modern thinking to their work, but are sometimes hampered by older systems that are not aligned to their needs. We want to address this challenge by creating a technology ecosystem that is dynamic and adaptable to global changes -- and enables staff and Volunteers to easily collaborate and support each other using whatever digital tools and technology they need to be successful.

To partly address the critical need for better collaboration tools, the Peace Corps is preparing to move to a cloud email and collaboration platform. This will help improve the most fundamental, core systems we use every day to collaborate and share information. We expect it will significantly increase productivity because staff will be able to seamlessly access email and collaborate on documents in real-time, anywhere, anytime, on any modern device. This type of technology will give our staff more autonomy to

do their jobs and to be more mobile, whether they are working from their office, from home, or on site visits with Volunteers in potentially remote locations. We are collaborating with other federal agencies that have already moved to cloud email and collaboration platforms, so we can learn from their experience. As part of this effort, we are making plans to upgrade connectivity and devices for our overseas posts and recruitment offices.

As we plan for this initiative, we'll continue to use other tools and applications to collaborate with staff and Volunteers. Many staff regularly use web conferencing tools and are increasingly using Google Hangouts, Skype and other interactive platforms to interact with potential and new applicants, as well as for training staff and interacting with other government agencies and organizations.

6. Status of 2012 Flagship Initiatives

6.1 Initiative 1: Stomping Out Malaria

Stomping Out Malaria (Stomp) is a Peace Corps-led initiative that matches Volunteers serving in Africa with partners such as Malaria No More and the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), as part of a collective commitment to significantly reduce the number of malaria deaths in Africa. The agency will leverage the agency's Open Government website to share data sets and reports with the public in an open format and link to open platforms for the discussion of malaria eradication strategies.

The agency launched the Stomping Out Malaria in Africa Initiative on World Malaria Day – April 25, 2011. This regional initiative is coordinated by a program manager who is responsible for building and maintaining partnerships with U.S. government and external partners, in addition to overseeing the development and implementation of the region's action plan and training. The program has grown to support malaria prevention activities in 23 countries across the continent. In 2013, more than 1,000 Peace Corps Volunteers reached over 465,000 people in 1,455 communities with malaria prevention outreach, doubling Peace Corps Volunteer efforts of the previous year. In addition, Volunteers conducted over 360 trainings of local community mobilizers. This focus on building up local capacity is a hallmark of the Peace Corps' approach to development and further demonstrates our commitment to collaboration and participation. These trained mobilizers will be educating their communities about the importance of malaria prevention long after Volunteers complete their service.

The Peace Corps Malaria Initiative has built formal alliances with PMI, USAID, Johns Hopkins University, Population Services International, Malaria No More, and others in a joint commitment aimed at significantly reducing malaria deaths in Africa by 2015. These partnerships have expanded and promoted Peace Corps' role in country-level programs and have already provided Volunteers access to resources, such as bed nets and funding for Volunteer housing. The Peace Corps will continue to maintain this multi-year commitment to providing partner organizations with a team of dedicated trained men and women.

Looking forward, the Peace Corps has set the following objectives for 2014:

- Increase the number of Volunteers actively involved in malaria prevention activities from just over 1,000 to 2,000.
- Increase the number of individuals across the 23 Peace Corps programs directly reached with malaria prevention interventions from 222,000 to 500,000.
- Double the number of communities reached with malaria prevention work from 1,500 to 3,000.
- Continue to deepen partnerships with PMI, National Malaria Control Programs, and key NGOs to keep accelerating the progress toward elimination of malaria in Africa.

The agency will continue to leverage the [Stomp Out Malaria website](#) to post data sets and reports and share its progress in significantly reducing the number of malaria deaths by 2015. As a publicly available website, these data sets and reports will be widely available for distribution. In addition, the data sets will be posted in an open format available to the public to incorporate into their own projects and analysis. By focusing on transparency, participation, and collaboration, the malaria initiative will serve as a model for future agency efforts in creating a more open and transparent government.

6.2 Initiative 2: Develop an Agency Evaluation Policy

The Peace Corps adopted an agency-wide framework for evaluation in February 2013. The framework lays out the importance of, and suggested approaches to, the evaluation of Peace Corps programs, operations, and processes throughout the agency. Monitoring progress, conducting research, and evaluating the results and impact of the Volunteers' work increases transparency and supports evidence-based decision-making and effective use of agency resources.

The framework articulates key principles of the agency's unique development model based on community participation and capacity building while promoting best-practices in evaluation. These best-practices include the development of baselines, data quality standards, a high level of program office and stakeholder involvement, and publication of findings. The framework outlines a goal of seeding the agency with evaluation capacity at all levels, rather than centralizing the function in a single office at headquarters. In FY 2012/2013, Peace Corps' field-based evaluation capacity consisted of two full time staff. In 2014, every post has a trained evaluation champion, and dozens more have full time evaluation staff in their proposed budgets. These strategies aim to support the culture of learning that is essential to the Peace Corps.

The agency is now in the process of developing an operational evaluation policy, to include more specific guidance on organizational roles and responsibilities, minimum reporting standards, and resource allocation. This policy will be consistent with the framework and will be instituted in FY 2015.

The agency created an [evaluation section](#) on the Open Government portal, to which it will continue to add findings reports.

6.3 Initiative 3: Enhance the Agency's Social Media Strategy

The agency has made significant progress in enhancing our social media strategy to encourage currently serving Volunteers, returned Peace Corps Volunteers, and partners to participate in the agency's activities. As discussed in Section 2.2, we use a broad range of social media platforms to encourage as much public engagement as possible.

In 2014, we released an agency-wide Social Media Policy, which aims to further expand our use of social media and create a more decentralized and distributed governance model. The policy gives greater autonomy to our front-line workers—such as regional recruiters and overseas staff—to actively use social media to share the work of Peace Corps Volunteers, build networks and communities, answer questions, and provide timely customer service. As one example, many of our overseas posts have established active Facebook groups for incoming groups of Volunteers (Invitees), and are using social media to provide timely information to families and friends of Volunteers. By continuing to engage with the public through popular social media platforms, the Peace Corps will increase its visibility among stakeholders and encourage public participation.

7. New Initiatives to Advance Transparency, Collaboration, and Participation: 2014 - 2016

7.1. Publish dataset of Peace Corps Volunteer openings by country and assignment

Beginning in July 2014, the Peace Corps will publish the full dataset of Volunteer job openings on www.peacecorps.gov. The dataset will include a full year's 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. The dataset will also be available on other repositories such as Data.gov and Github. Making this dataset publicly available will provide a more transparent snapshot of all Volunteer job openings, so anyone can easily see the type of work that Peace Corps Volunteers do worldwide. It will also give potential applicants a fully transparent view of the options for serving in the Peace Corps so they can be more informed about where they may be eligible to serve and what to expect in various job settings. Providing the information as an open, accessible dataset will also allow for new discoveries about the data.

7.2 Reshape Peacecorps.gov as the agency's open, integrated publishing platform

Peace Corps will reshape its current website into an open publishing platform, so we can deliver a more effective, interactive, and inspiring customer experience. We will transition from a traditional website to a more open content management system and decentralize our publishing model to make it easier and faster for content contributors across the agency to publish relevant and timely content. It will also showcase a streamlined online application. The platform will be configured to easily pull content from social media, APIs, and other platforms to create an integrated experience. Our focus will be to

empower the tens of thousands of current and former Volunteers to be the face and voice of peacecorps.gov, so they can directly contribute stories and data about the impact they are having in communities worldwide. This will lead to greater collaboration, participation, and transparency with all stakeholders.

Appendix – Links to Existing Resources

Peace Corps General Links

[Mission](#)

[Strategic Plan](#)

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

[Open Government Portal](#)

Social Media

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Google Plus](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Instagram](#)

[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](#)