



**United States Department of Agriculture  
Open Government Plan  
April 2010**

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## Change Log

Version	Date	Comments
Version 1.0	4/7/2010	Initial Release

## 1.0 Introduction

This USDA Open Government Plan represents the Department's response to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Directive M-10-06. This directive calls for an agency roadmap addressing President Obama's Open Government Initiative.

### 1.1 The Open Government Initiative

President Obama's first executive action upon taking office, the Open Government Memorandum, calls for a more transparent, participatory, and collaborative government.

Within the memorandum, President Obama states, *"My Administration is committed to creating an unprecedented level of openness in Government. We will work together to ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration. Openness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government."*

As part of the Obama Administration's effort to change how Washington operates, the White House issued the Open Government Directive requiring Federal agencies to take immediate, specific steps to open their operations up to the public. The directive, released by OMB, sets an unprecedented standard for government agencies, insisting that they achieve key milestones in transparency, collaboration, and participation. The White House unveiled the directive on a live Web chat hosted by Federal Chief Technology Officer Aneesh Chopra and Federal Chief Information Officer Vivek Kundra.

White House OMB Director Peter R. Orszag stated, "The President has been clear from day one in office: the Federal Government must break down the barriers between it and the people it's supposed to serve. Today's announcement will help to make government more open, transparent, and accountable to bridge the gap between the American people and their government."

The directive stems largely from the unprecedented Open Government Initiative coordinated by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. In it, the Administration reached out directly to the American people for specific policy recommendations. Thousands of citizens participated in the online forums. They offered ideas on how to transform the government into a more transparent, accountable, and participatory operation.

In addition to the directive, the Administration released the Open Government Progress Report to the American People. The report analyzed the steps already taken to increase transparency. It also looked at future actions. Every Cabinet Department is launching new open government projects that will spark significant expansion in public accountability and access.

The Open Government Directive puts accountability and accessibility at the center of how the Federal Government operates. It instructs agencies to

share information with the public through online, open, accessible, machine-readable formats. Agencies are to inventory existing information and establish a timeline for publishing them online. These moves are designed to:

- Increase agency accountability and responsiveness;
- Improve public knowledge of the agency and its operations;
- Further the core mission of the agency;
- Create economic opportunity; and
- Respond to need and demand as identified through public consultation.

The three principles, or core values, of transparency, participation, and collaboration form the cornerstone of an open Government. Transparency promotes accountability by providing the public with information about what the Government is doing. Participation allows members of the public to contribute ideas and expertise so that their government can create policies with the benefit of information that is widely dispersed in society. Collaboration improves Government effectiveness by encouraging partnerships and cooperation within the Federal Government, across levels of government, and between the Government and private institutions.

## 1.2 USDA Supporting Open Government

On January 20, 2010, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced "*President Obama's Open Government Initiative serves as a new government-wide charge that will transform how the government engages the American people in a more open and transparent manner.*" In response to President Obama's Open Government Initiative, the Secretary of Agriculture has directed USDA leadership to fully support the Open Government mission and core values, and enable and support public participation in the process.

On December 8, 2009, OMB issued Memorandum M-10-06, Open Government Directive. This memo provides task-level details in support of that directive. Based on OMB M-10-06, there are 10 task items, of which 3 require direct USDA action. The specific activities that the Department is working on to meet the OMB requirements are outlined below.

### **Publish Government Information Online**

Within 45 days, by January 22, 2010, publish online in an open format at least 3 high-value datasets, and register those datasets via Data.gov. These must be datasets not previously available online or in a downloadable format.

### **Implement Open Government Web site:**

Within 60 days, by February 6, 2010, create an Open Government Web site, located at <http://www.USDA.gov/open>. This site will serve as the gateway for agency activities related to the Open Government Directive. It shall be maintained and updated in a timely fashion.

### **Create and Institutionalize a Culture of Open Government, and Publish Open Government Plan on Open Government Web site**

Within 120 days, by April 7, 2010, develop and publish on its Open Government Web site an Open Government Plan. The plan will describe how it will improve transparency and integrate public participation and collaboration into its activities.

### **1.3 Open Government Supporting USDA Strategic Goals**

When Abraham Lincoln founded USDA in 1862, he referred to and labeled it as “The People’s Department.” It is a description that is as true today as it was then. The Department touches the lives of Americans every day, in every way. USDA impacts many of our Nation’s largest industry sectors, and works in collaboration across most, if not all, of our other Federal Executive Branch partners and Congress.

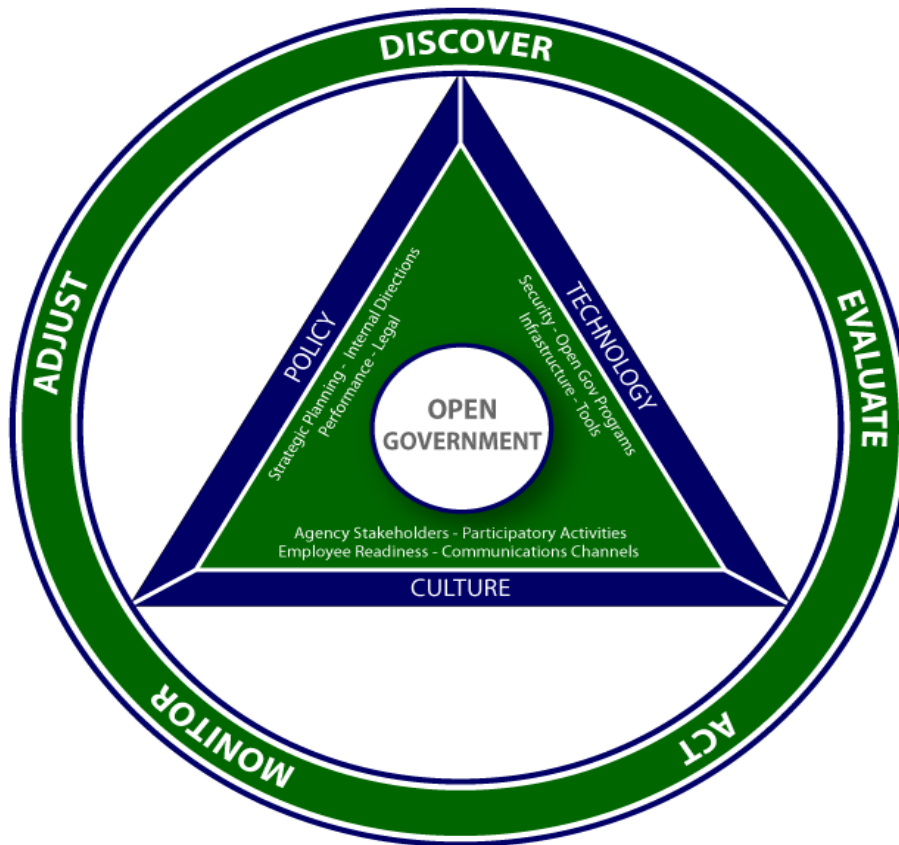
With the history and mission of USDA in mind, the *FY 2010 – 2015 Strategic Plan* forms the basis on delivering on the vision, promises, and objectives of the Department. The strategic plan lays out the Secretary’s Core Values, which outline the vision that USDA will work towards to be successful in executing its mission. Our success depends on:

- **Transparency:** Making the Department’s management processes more open to help the public learn how USDA supports the American public every day in every way;
- **Participation:** Providing opportunities for USDA constituents to shape and improve the services provided by the Department;
- **Collaboration:** Working cooperatively at all governmental levels domestically and internationally on policy matters affecting a broad audience;
- **Accountability:** Ensuring that the performance of all employees is measured against the achievement of the Department’s strategic goals;
- **Customer Focus:** Serving USDA’s constituents by delivering programs that address their diverse needs
- **Professionalism:** Building and maintaining a highly skilled, diverse, and compassionate workforce; and
- **Results Orientation:** Measuring performance and making management decisions to direct resources to where they are used most effectively.

These USDA strategic core values align with the core values of open government. They also put USDA in a position to be a successful, citizen-focused agency that operates in a transparent and open manner.

## 2.0 Principles and Approach

The Open Government Initiative represents a significant shift in the way Federal agencies conduct business and engage with the public. This USDA Open Government Plan is just one part of the larger Department Strategic Plan to increase transparency and openness. More specifically, this Open Government Plan describes how USDA will improve transparency and integrate public participation and collaboration into its activities. It will also recognize the Department's current and ideal cultural, policy, and technological environments. USDA has adopted a comprehensive approach to help plan and implement the transformations required to achieve the Open Government initiative. This planning approach, shown below, includes the stages of Discover, Evaluate, Act, Monitor, and Adjust.



### 2.1 Organizations, Committees, Working Groups

Upon the release of OMB's Open Government Directive in December 2009, USDA worked swiftly to create an organizational structure that would establish open government within the Department. At the top of this structure is the Open Government Steering Committee. This committee oversees and ensures proper agency accountability in the Open Government



process. Serving as liaisons to the steering committee is the Open Government Advisory Council. This body reviews recommendations made by the working groups. It also provides feedback and approval on work submitted to the steering committee. The final pieces of the organizational puzzle are several Open Government Working Groups. These groups are comprised of subject matter experts that provide expertise in the group's area of focus. They can contribute to the work required to complete the tasks that will enable USDA to comply with all OMB Open Government Directive requirements. These organizations will ensure that this Open Government Plan and the open government activities and initiatives undertaken align with the *USDA Strategic Plan*. They also will ensure the process meets or exceeds the open government directive criteria.

The diagram below illustrates how Open Government is organized at USDA:



## 2.2 Open Government Community Outreach

Open Government implies opening the agencies to the community. USDA is actively engaged in opening itself, making it more accessible and accountable to citizens. To foster accessibility, USDA recently launched its own Open Government Web site, located at <http://www.usda.gov/open/>. The site serves as a gateway for Department activities related to the Open Government Directive. More specifically, it boasts two different sections for citizen idea sharing. In the first of these sections, citizens can learn about and comment USDA information, including available and proposed datasets, records, reports, and other resources. The second section encourages citizens to post their own ideas about transparency, collaboration, and participation at the Department. Here, the public can submit comments or vote on other ideas to help USDA create its Open Government Plan and be more innovative and efficient.

Community outreach and program education are integral to the People's Department. USDA provides training, fact sheets, and electronic information. It also hosts meetings and forums to spread the word about our mission, and inform farmers and would be farmers about the many programs and services we offer and how to access them. The [Education and Outreach Web site](#) contains information and links for these programs.

In addition to providing a forum for citizen participation, USDA agencies are responsible for responding to public input received on the Open Government Web site regularly. They also must maintain and update the site in a timely manner. To ensure accountability, USDA is working to develop ways to present and evaluate its progress. Available on the Open Government Web site, the USDA Open Government Dashboard will allow the Department to evaluate its progress in addressing USDA's Open Government objectives. These steps are just the beginning of a new and open way of doing business at USDA.

In addition to asking the public for feedback on the open government plan through the Open Government Web site, USDA employees have actively participated in the ongoing Open Government Directive Workshop Series. This series, an unpaid, transparent volunteer effort, is a partnership between the public and private sectors. Each workshop has been spearheaded by a Federal agency and publicized online at the [Open Government Playbook](#). USDA has been invited to host the fourth workshop in the series in April 2010. The workshop will focus on identifying and addressing solutions to challenges in implementing Federal agencies' open government plans.

### 2.3 High-Value Datasets

One of the key components of open government is making data open and available to the public. Allowing the public to access and view raw data and published datasets increases transparency and allows for greater citizen collaboration and participation opportunities. To accomplish this goal, the Executive Branch created Data.gov to increase the ability of the public to view, access, download, and use government produced data. Each Executive Branch agency was instructed to nominate datasets for inclusion on Data.gov. This information includes three datasets identified as being high value. The high-value datasets are required to include data that were previously unavailable or not easily accessible to the public, either online or in a downloadable format.

USDA agencies nominated datasets that they owned to be considered for inclusion on Data.gov. The working group compiled an inventory of datasets for consideration and ultimately decided on three high-value datasets to be published initially, as part of the January 2010 target defined in the Open Government Directive, with others being considered for future publication. The USDA high-value datasets currently published on Data.gov are:

- Census of Agriculture Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Profile Data;
- Feed Grains Database; and

- USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 22.

Currently USDA has identified, and is in the process of submitting two additional high-value data sets and two tools that will be posted on Data.gov:

- Your Food Environment Atlas;
- National Agricultural Library Thesaurus (English);
- Tesauro Agricola (Spanish Version of the National Agricultural Library Thesaurus); and
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Participating and Cost Data

Detailed descriptions are available in [Appendix C: New Dataset Submissions](#).

A calendar of new datasets and tools through December 2010 is under development. The calendar of complete datasets and tools will be available by the end of June 2010. USDA will also continue to solicit input from the public, federal agencies, and stakeholders on identification of high-value data and information that can be posted as high-value datasets.

## 2.4 Goals and Outcomes

The goals of the Open Government Plan align with the overall Department strategic goals of increasing transparency, participation, and collaboration across USDA. These three pillars of open government are part of the Department's core values, they support each of the four strategic goals and the management initiatives contained in the *USDA FY 2010-2015 Strategic Plan*. Each mission area, agency and staff office has a role to play in increasing transparency and providing openness to the public. The goals of the Open Government Plan are to:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive Open Government Plan that will provide a roadmap forward for increasing transparency, participation and collaboration;
- Raise USDA employee and agency awareness of openness and transparency in Government;
- Develop and maintain a current set of Open Government Plan guidance and standards for the Department, as appropriate;
- Champion Open Government internally, at both the mission area and Departmental level, and externally; and
- Highlight Open Government success stories at USDA and share best practices.

## 2.5 Cross-Agency Collaboration

Collaboration across agencies will help to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure the positive outcomes of Open Government. USDA is supportive of cross-agency collaborative efforts as a component of open government. USDA is establishing an Open Government Cross-Agency working group to promote collaboration across government departments and agencies and

leverage intellectual capital, platforms, and tools. In this spirit of cross-agency collaboration, the Department will achieve the following Open Government cross-agency objectives:

- Lead or participate in cross-agency working groups for developing Open Government leading practices, improving Open Government planning, and establishing Open Government cross-agency dialogues;
- Provide at least one dataset containing cross-agency information or the provision of information developed from a cross-agency collaboration;
- Lead or participate in a cross-agency Open Government activity relating to improving the health of Citizens;
- Provide a USDA resource that will serve as an advocate for Open Government efforts and serve as a contact for cross-agency collaborative engagement;
- Encourage employees to participate in cross-agency discussions for improving and opening government; and
- Provide intellectual capital from USDA Rule Making and Policy initiatives to other agencies.

USDA is actively involved in the Whitehouse Open Government Working Groups to provide thought leadership, support, and active participation. USDA is leading the Open Government Green Affinity. USDA is also an active member of the open Government Jobs Creation Working Group.

## 2.6 Cultural Transformation

Embracing open government and applying its principles to the day-to-day operations of USDA means changing the culture and process. The ideas and functions that lead to transparency, participation, and collaboration are ones that need to be rooted in all Department levels to truly achieve open government. The change must occur at all levels of the organization, from leadership to staff and direct interaction with citizens. To meet the challenge of transforming the Department into a premier organization and model employer, a Transformation Task Force was launched. This task force, led by the Secretary and comprised of a diverse group of USDA leadership, is developing a plan to achieve cultural transformation at the Department. The goals of the task force include:

- An inclusive workplace environment where there is equity of opportunity and all employees are empowered to reach their full potential;
- The modernization of technology and systems that will enable us to provide the highest level of service;
- A commitment by USDA employees to improving the Department's past and future record of civil rights, including expanded outreach efforts to socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers;
- Systems of accountability that encourage all employees to achieve high standards of performance and customer service; and

- A renewed commitment to creating diversity in the workforce and succession planning.

Leadership will oversee the changes with input from employees. Making USDA a model employer that is open, responsive, transparent, collaborative, and highly effective is a goal shared by all Department employees. Improving the way Government interacts and engages with citizens leads to changes in operations and policies. Ultimately, this process will create overall cultural change. The Department's flagship initiatives will drive our cultural transformation to ensure that USDA is rightly perceived as a trustworthy, collaborative, and service-oriented world agricultural leader. For example, USDA is exploring avenues to enhance existing efforts, such as EPA's Rulemaking Gateway, and provide a virtual one-stop center for anyone interested in a particular policy topic – with information on the origin of the policy and its evolution, as well as training and education materials.

Being open to new channels of communication and collaboration among employees and citizens is one step toward cultural change. The rise of social media and online interaction is a great enabler for this change. Opportunities for direct interaction with citizens have traditionally been limited in number and scope, but new tools and technologies have decreased those limits. Constantly connected users can share their ideas, view existing ideas, and provide feedback on any number of issues. Technology alone cannot change policies and traditions. Steps will be made to change the policies as needed. The barriers that exist to employees and citizens embracing technologies will be addressed in ways that maintain security while still allowing for open government. Employee engagement is an important component for cultural change. USDA will modify performance plans and provide training, incentives, and awards all designed to integrate Open Government core values into its everyday actions.

## 3.0 Transparency

*"A basic tenet of healthy democracy is open dialogue and transparency."  
– Peter Fenn*

Transparency within government can be defined as opening the Government to citizens by providing information, and therefore promoting accountability.

USDA will provide an open, responsive, and accountable environment for the purpose of having a more informed public; safe, reliable, and accessible food supply; health education; and user-friendly technology supporting information about programs.

### 3.1 Goals

Transparency is an integral guiding principle on how the Department intends to exist as a catalyst for helping the public learn how Government, USDA, does provide the substantial support that is entrusted to our 110,000 dedicated civil servants to deliver the benefits to our constituents.

Transparency provides a number of concepts that will serve as the guiding philosophy for which USDA perceives Open Government. The Department will serve as a model of transparency to the American people by accomplishing the following goals:

- Continuously educate the American public about the Department's programs and decision-making processes;
- Prioritize data and release processes;
- Provide truly new, high-value datasets and information holdings;
- Utilize state-of-the-art, user-friendly technology to monitor, stimulate, and incorporate innovative uses of information.

### 3.2 Opportunities to Overcome Challenges

In order to meet its transparency goals, USDA has several ideas, initiatives, and programs that allow the public to view the Government's information and data. Each of the Department's goals provides a different aspect of transparency to the public, and as a whole, the goals move USDA towards doing its work in an open and transparent manner.

#### **Continuously educate the American public about the Department's programs and decision-making processes.**

Information about USDA's programs and decision-making processes is not consistently transparent or easy to understand and access. To make our processes more transparent, the Department is committed to improving the openness and access to information across all levels. Specifically, USDA is making more information available to reduce the need for Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, improving Web sites and search capabilities, and providing more information on our planning and decision-making processes. FOIA allows any person to request access to Federal agency records or information. In addition, the Department is actively

educating the public about its programs and activities by hosting public events, town hall meetings, and roundtable discussions.

The OMB IT Dashboard stands out as an exemplary example of an initiative USDA is participating in that is aimed at better informing the public about its ongoing programs and processes. This Dashboard allows the public to monitor Federal information technology (IT) projects. Because the IT discipline is maturing rapidly, the Department must offer greater visibility into its IT investments. Thus, the Dashboard acts as the “public face” for USDA’s investments and IT projects. It provides the public with a clear look at the Department’s IT investments, the economic and programmatic rationale for those investments, and various schedules and performance information. To learn more about USDA’s IT investments, visit the [IT Dashboard](#) now!

Meantime, USDA also recognizes the need to share information about the progress of all its programs and the daily activities of its employees. To this end, the Department is exploring avenues that would allow it to publish information like the Secretary and Deputy Secretary’s calendar of public appearances,

#### **Prioritize data and release processes.**

Currently, USDA is developing a clear data prioritization and release process that will be available to the public. The Department is exploring ways to open the information dissemination process and make available the criteria for prioritization as well as the schedule for releasing data. USDA currently publishes data in many different ways and locations. Several agencies place data on public-facing Web sites and information portals. Members of the public can obtain data on physical media or in print. A data prioritization and release process will provide clarity to when and how USDA releases data to the public. It also will standardize expectations across the Department for how data should be released. Establishing a clear process will allow USDA to proactively move towards greater transparency and openness. This process will allow for the release of data to the public in clear and useful ways.

One idea that is being explored is creating a calendar that provides a timeline for the release of datasets to the public. The calendar would allow the public to know when data would be released and what data the Department has prioritized for release.

#### **Provide high-value datasets and information holdings.**

Datasets and information holdings published by USDA are not always easily accessible or usable for public consumption. To lessen confusion and improve the public’s ability to use Department data and information, USDA is actively working to expand on and clarify the data that are already published. In addition to making currently published datasets more accessible and easier to understand, the Department is working to publish high-value datasets and information holdings in a consistent and timely manner. Finally, USDA is exploring ways to more clearly define its process for managing public feedback and requests received from its data-sharing Web sites.

One example of an initiative currently in use at USDA is OMB Data.gov. The site allows the Department to increase the public's ability to find, view, access, download, and use USDA-produced data. Data.gov provides the public with information about how to find and use datasets. It also boasts tools to leverage those data for consumption. Currently, USDA has nine datasets published on Data.gov. It is actively working to identify more candidates for inclusion. [Discover more!](#)

USDA also provides information on its spending. Through USASpending.gov, the Department shares information about its investments, awards, grants, and loans with citizens. USASpending.gov provides information on all Federal contracts in an easily accessible and understandable manner. Because much of this information regards the use of American tax dollars, this initiative in particular is critical to establishing trust between citizens and the Government. Moreover, it holds the Government and departments like USDA accountable for being honest and fair about how they spend money. [See where your money goes!](#)

**Utilize state-of-the-art, user-friendly technology to monitor, stimulate, and incorporate innovative uses of information.**

Making information available to the public in a user-friendly and understandable way has been a challenge at USDA. New technologies allow the Department to overcome this challenge. Information on Department programs, policies, and activities is available in real time. This process allows the public to monitor USDA's activities and provide immediate feedback. By embracing innovative new technologies, USDA is providing the public with ways to monitor its activities and stimulate greater participation in its processes.

One such new technology is eRulemaking, which is a component of Regulations.gov. USDA participates in eRulemaking to ensure that proposed rules and regulations benefit from public review and comment. The Department publishes its proposed and final rulemaking actions, notices, and related information in the *Federal Register*. By publishing this information, USDA ensures that its constituents can easily study the rules and monitor the rulemaking process.

Also noteworthy is the Department's use of Recovery.gov. Since the passing of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), USDA has utilized Recovery.gov to provide easy access to data related to Recovery Act spending. Recovery.gov allows the public to track the spending of stimulus money throughout USDA. It also provides reports of potential fraud, waste, and abuse through such user-friendly tools as charts, graphs, and maps. These tools offer both telescopic and microscopic views of Recovery projects across the country. They are consistently enhanced and refined to ensure easy usage. ARRA, also known as the stimulus or recovery package, was designed to jump start America's struggling economy and save or create millions of jobs. [Track the money!](#)



### **3.3 Outcomes – Clarity and Accountability**

USDA's transparency efforts give the public clear insight into its activities. This process also allows the public to hold the Department accountable for its use of taxpayer dollars. Providing greater accessibility to data and current information gives the public a better understanding of USDA as an organization. Greater transparency also provides the public with the tools and information it needs to provide the Department with valuable feedback and suggestions. Ultimately, it is this kind of citizen feedback that helps us shape our future policies and programs, and become the best agricultural service provider we can be.

## 4.0 Participation

*"We think in America that it is necessary to introduce the people into every department of government as far as they are capable of exercising it, and that this is the only way to insure a long-continued and honest administration of its powers."*

– Thomas Jefferson

Participation "allows members of the public to contribute ideas and expertise so that their government can make policies with the benefit of information that is widely dispersed in society." Citizen participation is an integral component of USDA's work. Through public participation, the Department becomes more aware of what issues most interest the American public. With that in mind, USDA can then frame its policies and programs around those issues so that it can provide better customer service.

As a part of open government, the Department will increase opportunities for the public to contribute ideas and expertise in shaping the policies and services USDA provides.

### 4.1 Goals

USDA has a number of channels currently available that offer real, concrete opportunities for committed and engaged citizens to participate in its decision-making processes. Many of these opportunities may not be as robust or widely understood as they can be. More fundamentally, public expectations are changing. Today's near-universal availability of interactive social media and real-time data feeds and communication have revolutionized private-sector business and the institutions of civil society. This technological advancement poses a challenge to USDA and other Federal agencies. The Department will step up and harness new technologies and new interest in 24-7 government to deepen public participation by pursuing the following objectives:

- Expand and improve the participation processes and mechanisms;
- Guide the public involvement and outreach in participating in developing and implementing policy;
- Build on existing outreach efforts and expand those efforts to all constituencies and key stakeholders; and
- Improve education for employees on public participation processes.

### 4.2 Opportunities to Overcome Challenges

Expanding participation with citizens and other government partners is an important goal for USDA. Each of the aforementioned goals is aimed at improving participation in a specific way. The ideas, initiatives, and programs associated with each goal are specific ways that the Department will move to improve and enhance participation processes.

#### **Expand and improve the participation processes and mechanisms**

USDA recognizes the importance and need to reach more people and taking greater advantage of new technologies to make participation easier. To reach out to a more engaged citizenry, the Department is expanding and improving the participation process. Specifically, USDA is adopting more user-friendly tools to reduce barriers to participation. These tools enable the public to personalize their interaction with the Department. They also allow the public to contribute directly to subject matter discussions of interest.

The MyPyramid for Kids initiative is one such program at USDA that is encouraging greater participation through the use of new and improved tools and technologies. MyPyramid for Kids is a child-friendly version of MyPyramid designed for 6-11- year-olds. MyPyramid for Kids allows school children to use the interactive tools to personalize eating plans, make healthy eating choices, and be more physically active. On the site, kids can play a nutrition game, color their own pyramid, or even complete meal tracking worksheets. [Let's move!](#)

USDA also is exploring the use of Web-based communication and face-to-face strategies to extend its outreach and call to participation. By utilizing technologies like webinars, and hosting listening sessions, the Department can make sure that it hears from everyone, including those in the most rural of communities and citizens who are not equipped with Internet access.

An example of face-to-face outreach, USDA-Office of Chief Information Officer is spearheading a series of Listening Sessions intended to collect and convey information that will be use to provide better service delivery to USDA internal and external customers by improving business processes and leveraging existing information technology. USDA-OCIO and other USDA Agencies, such as the Farm Service Agency, will visit several USDA Service Centers and producer group forums to identify customer needs, discuss existing challenges in service delivery and to identify opportunities to improve service delivery. The information and customer feedback captured during these sessions will be evaluated by the Department and Agency heads and used to support IT enhancements, priorities and goals; and to improve farm program business process and policy implementation.

### **Guide the public involvement and outreach in participating in developing and implementing policy**

Crafting policy within the Federal Government is a complicated and technically challenging process. Involving the public in this process is equally difficult. Providing the tools to participate is only one part of the equation. USDA is prepared to help guide the public through the contribution process so it can develop agricultural policy alongside Department employees. It is providing this guidance, in addition to the necessary tools, that makes the Department a model agency for open government.

To this end, USDA is beginning a process to allow the public to participate in the creation and implementation of a modern planning rule. The planning rule would address current and future needs of the National Forest System. These needs include restoring forests, protecting watersheds, addressing

climate change, sustaining local economies, improving collaboration, and working across landscapes. The Forest Service already operates a Web site that provides information about the planning rule's development and opportunities for the public to submit comments and become involved in the process. The Department will continue to use new media tools in conjunction with face-to-face interaction to facilitate wide public participation in this effort.

### **Build on existing outreach efforts and expand those efforts to all constituencies, key stakeholders**

USDA has a well-established group of key stakeholders with whom it communicates effectively and efficiently. As the Department embraces the concept of a more open government, it seeks to provide equity of opportunity to a wider and more diverse citizenry. This citizenry includes those without access to high-speed Internet. To reach the whole of the American public, USDA is building on and expanding existing outreach efforts and activities to reach everybody.

One such outreach effort is USDA's Peoples Garden. USDA uses this initiative, as well as its seasonal Farmers Market, to extend beyond its facilities and engage Americans across the country every day. The first People's Garden, located at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C., serves as a model of sustainable agriculture and a place to share samples of healthy locally grown food. This initiative also challenges USDA employees and stakeholders to establish their own People's Gardens in communities worldwide. Thus, not only does People's Garden encourage environmental stewardship and responsibility, it also encourages outreach to and participation from nontraditional USDA customers. [Be a part of People's Garden!](#)

Aside from the People's Garden, USDA is engaged in numerous outreach activities to promote public participation from all sectors of society. For example, the Department employs a Food Safety Mobile to help educate citizens in all areas about food safety issues at the grassroots level. In addition, Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food is a USDA initiative that connects consumers with local producers to create new economic opportunities for communities. The Department sees this initiative as the start of a national conversation about the importance of understanding where food comes from and how it gets to one's plate. Moreover, the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Web site encourages users to share their ideas and stories about food, agriculture, and local and regional food systems. [Get to know your farmer!](#)

USDA actively works to reach out to all minority and disadvantaged groups. One example of this outreach is USDA's outreach efforts to Native Americans. To this end, the USDA Office of Tribal Relations was created. This office oversees Government-to-Government relations between USDA and tribal governments. The office works to develop plans for consultation and collaboration with tribal governments. It strives to ensure that programs and policies are developed in consultation with the Native American constituents they impact. [Learn more about USDA-Tribal Relations!](#)

### **Improve education for employees on public participation processes**

Participation is at times limited to employees in program areas or chains of command. Open government challenges the Department to involve employees at all levels. Greater public participation requires employees to become more familiar with the tools and processes that USDA employs for participation purposes.

The Department is working towards improving internal understanding of the participation process. It encourages all employees with policy or rulemaking roles to receive training in public participation processes. To do this, USDA is exploring leveraging its existing instructional systems and processes, such as AgLearn, to provide participation training and education. This training would inform employees of new ways to most effectively engage the public. These activities include using the latest social media technologies and instructing employees on how to best utilize public feedback and input for improving processes and services. In addition, as part of USDA's employee education process, the Department is exploring ways to better leverage cross-agency collaboration and outreach communication protocols across mission areas.

### **4.3 Outcomes – Active Engagement of the Public**

Increased participation opportunities allows citizens to assist USDA in making decisions for more prosperous and vibrant rural communities, safer and more secure food supplies, healthier natural resources, and improved nutrition for America's youth.

Improved participation brings the Department closer to citizens. It also optimizes other Federal and private partner investments so that USDA can create policies and services that better serve the American people.

## 5.0 Collaboration

*"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."  
- Helen Keller*

Collaboration is defined by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget as "[improving] the effectiveness of Government by encouraging partnerships and cooperation within the Federal Government, across levels of government, and between the Government and private institutions."

Collaboration is about creating an environment that fosters partnerships in program and service delivery. Effective collaboration enables the government to harness the innovative ideas and know-how of the private and public sectors. To ensure that it is a model agency for open government, USDA will improve upon existing partnerships and establish new sustainable collaborative ones. This process is designed to develop and enhance a shared understanding of the Department's mission.

### 5.1 Goals

USDA maintains a wealth of information and provides a wide range of services and support to employees, citizens, businesses, and other domestic and international stakeholders. Through new and improved collaboration initiatives and processes, the Department can streamline and standardize the ways in which it interacts with both internal and external stakeholders collaborate, thereby improving service. USDA will pursue the following goals to maximize collaboration opportunities and results:

- Create a cultural, technical and policy environment that fosters partnerships in program and service delivery;
- Harness the innovative ideas and know-how of the private and public sector as well as citizens to achieve our shared objectives and improve the lives of Americans;
- Create incentives for employee and organizational collaboration; and
- Harness the power of technology to support collaboration to enhance efficiencies and reduce process redundancies.

### 5.2 Opportunities to Overcome Challenges

Improving collaboration across all levels of USDA is an important goal. The specific goals and their related ideas and initiatives work together to achieve this greater collaboration.

#### **Create a cultural, technical and policy environment that fosters partnerships in program and service delivery.**

USDA recognizes the opportunities available to further the use of collaboration processes and tools across mission areas or with external entities. To really take advantage of the collaboration efforts underway both internally and externally, the Department will create an environment where collaboration is understood and encouraged. To create a fully collaborative

environment, the cultural, technical, and environmental aspects of collaboration at USDA must be addressed. Moving towards an environment that allows collaboration to flourish will allow the Department to more effectively and efficiently cooperate with internal and external partners to achieve its goals.

Similarly, USDA agencies are using GovDelivery.com as a communication tool to reach out to a large customer base. Interested stakeholders can select to be notified immediately as information is released in any of 109 categories. The Farm Service Agency, for example, has nearly 26,000 users, with an average of 4 topics chosen per user. Recently, the Food Safety and Inspection Service and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration merged subscriber lists, allowing stakeholders to choose from all food-related options between the two agencies.

USDA also is committed to developing and improving the skills and abilities of its workforce to more fully utilize existing and emerging collaborative tools. To this end, the Department is exploring processes to formalize its standards, expectations, and policies for collaboration with all stakeholders. In conjunction with this effort, USDA is working to engage communities using Web-enhanced communications whenever possible to enhance collaborative working opportunities across agencies or with other stakeholders.

**Harness the innovative ideas and know-how of the private and public sector as well as citizens to achieve our shared objectives and improve the lives of Americans.**

USDA recognizes the need to improve and further develop methods for soliciting collaboration opportunities, and a systematic approach for then managing those collaborative relationships. To accomplish this, The Department is seeking new partnerships and leveraging existing relationships for collaboration. It is soliciting input on successes to serve as a model across the Department. USDA is also broadening the use of collaboration and discussion tools to actively engage stakeholders and maintain open lines of communication. Adopting a more proactive communications focus and framework will enable the Department to collaborate more efficiently with the public and across government agencies.

One example of how USDA is harnessing existing partnerships to achieve shared objectives is The President's Food Safety Working Group. This working group is a partnership between USDA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This partnership is designed to modernize food safety by building collaborative partnerships with consumers, industry, and the Department's regulatory partners. [Learn, participate, and stay informed!](#)

**Create incentives for employee and organizational collaboration.**

As we pursue more open government at USDA, increasing employee awareness of the value of collaboration is vital. The Department is working to educate, encourage, and incentivize employee contributions to its collaboration efforts.

USDA is exploring ways to collect and share a library of collaboration successes. Such a collection would serve to inform employees of typical collaboration efforts. It also would act as an incentive to employees to bring success to their own existing programs. In addition, USDA is dedicated to developing measurable performance standards for collaboration. This move would standardize the collaboration process and hopefully peak employee interest.

To incentivize the collaboration process, USDA is looking at such ideas as proposing a "Collaboration Award" and creating meaningful, tangible, formalized rewards for individuals and groups that show results from collaboration.

### **Harness the power of technology to support collaboration to enhance efficiencies and reduce process redundancies.**

USDA understands that it is not efficiently and effectively utilizing new capabilities that exist for improving collaboration. That said, the Department is investigating how to best utilize new media and social technologies to improve collaboration. USDA also is incorporating these tools into new collaboration efforts and creating new processes and policies to ensure their effective use.

The Apps for Healthy Kids is just one Department program that utilizes new technologies to encourage collaboration. The program, which is a part of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move initiative, is offering \$40,000 in prizes to create innovative, fun and engaging software tools and games. These tools and games encourage children directly or through their parents to make more nutritious food choices and be more physically active. Apps for Healthy Kids stimulate the public's creativity and encourages the use of USDA and other official data to address their needs. [Lets move!](#)

Another example of new technologies that encourage collaboration is Quick Stats. Quick Stats is USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) online self-service tool to access complete results from the 1997, 2002 and 2007 Censuses of Agriculture and other annual surveys. U.S., State and county agricultural information, published by NASS, is available in an online database via Data.Gov. under the Tool Catalog. This new tool allows custom extracts based on commodity, year, State, and other selection criteria and produces an output file compatible for updating databases and spreadsheets for selected commodities or geographic areas.

The Department is also exploring various ways to use technology to aid existing collaboration efforts. For example, USDA is discussing the idea of establishing an electronic/virtual clearinghouse on the Department Web site. The clearinghouse would direct stakeholders to provide feedback, comments, suggestions, or concerns on various agency projects, programs or policies. USDA also recognizes the potential benefits that could come from hosting online webinars addressing Department programs, policies, and issues for individuals nationwide. Webinars can bring USDA personnel and stakeholders together, regardless of geographic location. Similarly, live webcasts or



teleconferencing with stakeholders would enable real-time management of concerns and questions. They also could feature guests and experts that increase the richness of engagement. For geospatial information specifically, USDA is investigating the employment of geospatial tools. Such tools would better target public press announcements on funding opportunities to hard-to-reach and traditionally underserved populations that can benefit from Rural Development (RD) programs and services. RD could also use the tools to solicit feedback from local leaders and citizens to further improve communications.

On an internal level, USDA is exploring ways to maximize the use of social media tools and technologies to increase collaboration amongst employees and across agencies. One idea pertaining to this is online self-service meeting space reservations. Such a tool would employ Intranet resources to provide a list of all conference rooms available to employees for meetings, including their locations, reservation contact point, size, communications resources, and any special rules on availability. Thus, meeting planners could see, in real time, whether the room is available and reserve it online with an email confirmation and a copy to the person with the key.

### **5.3 Outcomes – Enhanced Partnerships and Results**

Collaboration leads to better service, which can result in lower taxpayer costs and a more efficient government. Collaboration saves time and money. By capitalizing on our successes and learning from our mistakes, we can accomplish our goals more efficiently. More participants in the collaborative process lead to the delivery of better service to taxpayers. Collaboration also will enhance our organizational culture and lead to greater job satisfaction for our workforce. Enterprise collaboration tools will reset the baseline for internal collaboration. Improving internal workflow and procedures will lead to enhanced collaboration, partnerships, and action with external stakeholders.

Government can bring together interested parties from every sector and individuals committed to solving a problem or offering assistance. We will embrace the role of convener to work alongside others to collectively solve problems. The most basic, but significant, benefit will be found in the increased understanding and confidence that citizens will gain. Increased understanding will lead to more exacting and relevant suggestions and input from all concerned as they realize each others' priorities.

## 6.0 Information Sharing

Having information on the Department's actions, policies, and processes available to the public is integral to open government. USDA has established practices for sharing information through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), Section 508, and Records Management processes. Together, these activities serve to keep the public informed of the Department's activities, and provide transparency and accessibility.

To ensure that the Department is complying with the spirit of the Open Government Directive, we will review all existing internal policy guidance and regulations relating to the dissemination of information to the public. Afterwards, we will consider public comment on this matter. This review will consider current legal interpretations of laws applicable to USDA that require special safeguarding of certain information, such as the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, and the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000. This review will ensure that the balance between privacy and openness is properly established from a public policy standpoint, and that procedures exist to guarantee its proper operation.

### 6.1 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

One of the most important aspects of open government is public accessibility to its information and records. Providing citizens access to records on USDA's activities, policies, and actions ensures that it is operating transparently and responsive to citizens' needs. While USDA strives to make as much of its information available as possible, it cannot publish all the information citizens might want to access. To accommodate specific requests for records and information, USDA has an established program, both at the Departmental and agency levels, to comply with FOIA requirements.

All USDA records, except those exempt from disclosure due to legal exemptions and exclusions, are available to the public upon request. The Department operates a public [FOIA Web page](#) that provides information on the process and procedures for members of the public to submit a FOIA request. This web page lists the process for the public to follow to start new requests. It also lists the Department's main FOIA contact and each agency's FOIA representative.

USDA maintains an electronic reading room for the public to view reports and records. Specific records are made available by request. Members of the public may make appointments with the Department's FOIA officer to use the electronic reading room. This capability reduces the need for paper-based FOIA transactions. It also reduces the time required for citizens to view the records they request.

The Department compiles annual reports detailing its FOIA requests. These reports are submitted to the U.S. Department of Justice and made available to the public. Several agencies currently have plans for reducing the backlog

of FOIA requests. An overall USDA FOIA Improvement Plan is also available for public viewing.

## 6.2 Section 508

USDA fully embraces the scope and intent of Section 508. It is actively committed to ensuring that our customers and employees with disabilities have equity in the use of electronic and information technology. Accessibility allows Department agencies and staff offices to attract and retain the best talent, and maintain a productive workforce. Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) provides the tools that help USDA achieve its goals. Compliance with Section 508 ensures that the Department can include persons with and without disabilities in using EIT tools to further its goals to fulfill its mission. Consequently, Section 508 compliance contributes directly to the effective utilization of USDA's workforce and the accomplishment of its mission. Specifically, it supports USDA's fifth strategic goal -- to operate an efficient, effective, and discrimination-free organization.

The Department's public channels of communication that involve electronic and information technology also benefit from Section 508. One example of a specific USDA program tightly bound to the Section 508 requirement for accessibility of electronic and information technology to the public is the eGovernment Program. The program's mission is to make the Department "electronically available any place, any time ... to transform and enhance the delivery of USDA's programs, services and information." Section 508 has specific requirements to make this program accessible. These requirements are designed to allow all persons, to receive Department services. Section 508 focuses both inside USDA and to its external public in its requirements for accessing electronic information.

## 6.3 Records Management

Maintaining access to records and integrity of Federal information is an important component of open government. Records serve as the evidence of USDA's actions. They must be properly managed and preserved. Maintaining these records allow the Department to be open about its prior actions and processes, and provide evidence where needed. USDA's Record Management Program complies with all Departmental regulations and Federal laws. The Office of the Chief Information Officer maintains all policies and procedures for the Department's records management processes. More information is available on the Department's [Records Management Web site](#).

## 7.0 Flagship Initiative

The USDA Open Government Executive Board has identified two projects for the Department's Flagship Initiative. The flagship initiatives are examples of open government in action at USDA, and serve as the best examples of embracing transparency, participation, and collaboration. The two initiatives for USDA are the Forest System Land Management Planning Rule and the Food and Nutrition Service's Healthy Kids Challenge. In addition, USDA is planning on further refining and developing other initiatives as candidates for future flagship initiatives.

### 7.1 National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced in December 2009 that the USDA Forest Service will begin an open, collaborative process to create and implement a modern planning rule to address current and future needs of the National Forest System, including restoring forests, protecting watersheds, addressing climate change, sustaining local economies, improving collaboration, and working across landscapes.

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 requires every national forest or grassland managed by the Forest Service to develop and maintain a Land Management Plan (also known as a forest plan). The process for the development and revision of the plans, along with the required content of plans, is outlined in the planning rule. The national planning rule provides the overarching framework individual forests and grasslands use to create and modify National Forest land and resource management plans.

The Forest Service has initiated a collaborative process to develop a new and enduring planning rule. Developing a new planning rule provides the opportunity to help protect, reconnect, and restore and sustain national forests and grasslands for the benefit of human communities and natural resources.

The collaborative nature of this planning rule development signals a renewed commitment by the Forest Service to collaboration, transparency, and participation. Opportunities for public involvement will be extensive throughout the process.

Through collaboration we will provide the public more points of access to the process than ever before. Our [planning rule Web site](#) provides the latest information and opportunities to participate in the conversation via our planning rule blog.

The development of a new planning rule is technically and legally challenging, and is a politically charged task with long lasting national implications for the management of National Forest System lands. The enhanced transparency, participation and collaboration envisioned in this Open Government Flagship Initiative will not guarantee political or scientific consensus on what the Rule should contain. However, we believe this effort

will increase agency credibility and public understanding of the planning rule and lead to a planning rule that endures over time.

### **Public Engagement**

Elements of the collaboration strategy to create a new planning rule include:

#### Science Forum

In March 2010, panels of scientists presented the latest science on topics relevant to the development of the planning rule. The synthesized results of the Science Forum will inform the National and Regional Roundtables (see below) and be available to the public on our planning rule Web site.

#### Regional Roundtables

Regional Roundtables in April 2010 will address selected principles from the notice of intent (NOI) as well as topics of regional importance.

The objectives of the Regional Roundtables are to:

- Capture the opinions of participants regarding approaches for addressing the NOI principles, including areas of agreement and disagreement and possible alternatives.
- Identify additional themes or principles that the planning rule should address that are not reflected in the NOI.
- Updated schedule and locations as well as opportunities to participate via webcasts are made available [on](#) the planning rule Web site.

#### National Roundtables

National Roundtables will use the information from the science forum to shape a series of dialogue sessions framed around the principles disclosed in the NOI. The first National Roundtable was in April 2010. The second continues this discussion in late April. In May of 2010, the third National Roundtable provides a synthesis of previous national and regional roundtable discussions.

#### E-Collaboration

The Forest Service is seeking to make it easier for the public to be engaged through the use of new media. The [planning rule blog](#) encourages virtual discussions of the planning rule. Questions are posted regularly to the blog to guide and encourage online dialogue. Additionally, the public is encouraged to follow the Forest Service on Twitter, at [www.twitter.com/forestservice](http://www.twitter.com/forestsservice). All national meetings are being broadcast via live webstream. Instructions on how to participate have been sent to every Forest Service employee. These broadcasts are 508 compliant and accessible to all Americans.

#### Formal Public Comment

Formal public comment periods will occur following publication of the Notice of Intent (now closed) and the proposed Planning Rule and Draft Environmental Impact Statement. During open comment periods, we will provide links for submitting electronic comments and information about other

options. Public inspection of comments received is available at <http://contentanalysisgroup.com/fsr/>.

#### Tribal Outreach and Consultation

There will be formal government-to-government consultation with the Tribes augmented by tribal engagement in the science forum and the national and regional roundtables. Additionally, there will be at least one National Tribal Roundtable.

#### Interagency Working Group

The Forest Service is organizing and convening a working group of regulatory and cooperating federal agencies to provide input to the rule writing and environmental analysis teams.

#### Internal Collaboration Working Group

The Forest Service is convening a working group of internal Forest Service staff from various levels and diverse program areas in the agency to provide input and review ideas for the rule writing team.

### **External Involvement**

The Forest Service is committed to developing a new planning rule that endures over time, and will use a collaborative and participatory method to accomplish this goal. By partnering with the US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, an independent federal agency, the Forest Service will build the best possible collaboration strategy for the planning rule.

Congress created the US Institute as part of an independent, non-partisan federal agency (the Udall Foundation) to provide neutral conflict resolution services concerning environmental and natural resource issues involving the federal government (20 U.S.C. 5604(8)). The U.S. Institute is authorized to assist federal agencies to resolve conflict and to minimize the use of litigation. (20 U.S.C. 5604(9)).

The Institute brings legitimacy to the process by providing:

- Independence: The US Institute operates as a neutral, third party, independent agency with the mission of assisting federal government agencies with collaboration and dispute resolution;
- Highly skilled support for collaborative activities;
- Independent synthesizing and reporting, and;
- Recognized expertise in the science and practice of conflict resolution.

The Institute brings credibility to the process by providing:

- An extensive portfolio of collaboration on land management issues with the Forest Service;
- Experience: Currently engaged in more than 25 projects with the Forest Service; and other federal agencies, such as Department of the Interior and the Department of Commerce.

- Working relationships with Council on Environmental Quality, Environmental Protection Agency, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries.

As an evolution of the planning rule initiative, USDA has identified a potential opportunity to broaden the usefulness of rule making with other agencies in the department. The USDA Policy Gateway would level the playing field and allow everyone to have a voice in the policy making process. USDA will carefully review and leverage from the USFS planning rule experience to develop its vision of a policy gateway. This policy gateway would provide a one-stop shopping service for anyone interested in a particular policy topic with information on the origin of the policy and its evolution, as well as training and education materials.

### **Participation and Collaboration**

Measurements would principally focus on improved participation and collaboration. These would be benchmarked against traditional forms of public involvement. The latter include Federal Register notices, postings in newspapers of record, letters or emails to participants in the planning rule making and environmental analysis. The extent to which our collaborative process creates many more opportunities for engagement and input to the rule making process would be assessed. Frequency and timeliness of responses to public input and collaborative public meetings would be evaluated. Effectiveness in public participation would be gauged by the multiple means of accessing the planning rule development and interactive communication through the web site and social media, such as the planning rule blog and use of Twitter for announcing updates.

Although the rule writing process will end with the publication of the final rule, our commitment to participation and collaboration will continue. The Forest Service has a long history of engaging the public in forest-level decision making. Through the collaboration effort, we are building trust and relationships that we will continue to rely on for future decision making.

### **Schedule of Implementation**

This proposed Open Government Initiative coincides with the established two-year time frame for development of the new Planning Rule. The Final Rule and Record of Decision are scheduled for November 2011. Elements of this Open Government Initiative will undoubtedly need to be refined and modified to match up and support future stages of planning rule development.

### **Strategic Goals**

The planning rule initiative works to achieve the goals established in the *USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan: FY 2007–2012*. The goals met by the initiative are:

Goal 1. Restore, Sustain, and Enhance the Nation's Forests and Grasslands

(USDA Objectives 6.1, 6.3, 6.4)

The planning rule provides the overarching framework individual forests and grasslands in the National Forest System use in developing, amending and revising land management plans. The ability of the Forest Service to restore and enhance our national forests and grasslands is dependent on a stable and implementable planning rule. By embarking on creating a new rule using the principles of open government, we are making an effort to collaboratively create a planning rule that will stand the test of time and allow for the restoration and enhancement of the National Forest System.

*Outcome: National Forests and grasslands have the capacity to maintain their health, productivity, diversity, and resistance to unnaturally severe disturbance.*

Goal 6. Engage Urban America With Forest Service Programs

(USDA Objective 6.3)

With this collaboration effort, urban Americans have more opportunity to engage in the process than in any previous planning rule development. Through new media tools, webcasting and Regional Roundtables, Americans have access to participation, regardless of proximity to national forests.

*Outcome: Broader access by Americans to the long-term environmental, social, economic, and other types of benefits provided by the Forest Service.*

Goal 7. Provide Science-Based Applications and Tools for Sustainable Natural Resources Management

(USDA Objective 6.3)

Our collaborative process will be informed by the best available science. Information gathered from a two-day panel of scientists will be synthesized and shared on the planning rule Web site and will be shared to begin each national and regional roundtable.

*Outcome: Management decisions are informed by the best available science-based knowledge and tools.*

### **Performance Measures**

Performance measures would consider the improvement in public interaction and communication compared to traditional forms of public involvement mentioned elsewhere. Public responses and feedback through the multiple means of communication about our collaborative process would be monitored to assess public sentiment or favorable/unfavorable comments on the collaboration process in the flagship project. Ultimately, the degree to which broader support and acceptance of the final rule as a result of the transparency, participation, and/or collaboration realized through the initiative would be assessed.

The collaboration strategy for developing a new planning rule has the potential to become a model for not just future Forest Service rule writing, but for other Departmental Agencies. In the spirit of transparency, we have



our collaboration strategy posted on our planning rule Web site. Not only does this demonstrate our commitment to collaboration and participation to the American people, it serves as a resource for other Agencies.

## 7.2 Innovations for Health (Healthy Kids Challenge)

The Apps for Healthy Kids competition, launched on March 10, 2010, is part of First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* campaign to end childhood obesity within a generation. Apps for Healthy Kids challenges software developers, game designers, students, and other innovators to develop fun and engaging software tools and games that drive children to eat better and be more physically active.

The USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) partnered with the Food and Nutrition Service to administer the *Let's Move!* campaign's Apps for Healthy Kids, working closely with the White House Office of Science Technology and Policy (OSTP), and the USDA Office of Communications (OC) and the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). A third party company, ChallengePost, under contract to CNPP, runs the [Apps for Healthy Kids website](#).

The Apps for Healthy Kids competition is part of a larger, three-part initiative – Innovations for Healthy Kids. *Videos for Healthy Kids* and *Recipes for Healthy Kids* (working titles) are follow-on projects that will solicit PSA-type videos that motivate healthy eating, and school food service recipes that emphasize healthier foods, respectively. Both of these projects are still in conceptual phases. The *Video* competition will be a CNPP project; the *Recipes* competition will be administered by CNPP's sister agency, FNS. These projects are tentatively scheduled to begin in late 2010 or early 2011, in unison with the consumer launch of the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

### Background

Through the Open Government Initiative, the U.S. Government recently made available a rich variety of Federal datasets via Data.gov with the purpose of increasing public access to high value, machine-readable datasets. In mid-November 2009, the White House OSTP contacted CNPP to launch a series of "crowdsourcing" competitions, the first of which uses a CNPP MyPyramid dataset. This dataset, highlighted on Data.gov during its launch in early December 2009, provides information on total calories, calories from "extras" (solid fats, added sugars, and alcohol), and MyPyramid food groups for over 1,000 commonly eaten foods. With these critical components, the Apps for Healthy Kids competition was born.

### Development

CNPP worked with the White House OSTP and USDA's OC and FNS to design the competition – prizes, judges, rules, timeline, etc. (This information is

available at [www.AppsforHealthyKids.com](http://www.AppsforHealthyKids.com).) With the target of reducing the public health problem posed by the epidemic of childhood obesity, the broad goal of the Apps for Healthy Kids competition is to motivate the public to create innovative, fun, and engaging tools and games that encourage children – directly or through their parents – to make more nutritious food choices and to be more physically active. Submissions must use the USDA nutrition dataset and may be any kind of software tool or game - for the web, a personal computer, a mobile handheld device, or any software platform broadly available to the public. Apps and games must be built around educational messages that emphasize one or more key nutrition concepts from the government's principal sources of nutrition guidance and education (Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid).

To inform the development of the competition, the OSTP and USDA's CNPP sought input from 31 experts who offered their knowledge and experience related to game design, entertainment technology, social media, and skill contests at a workshop held at the White House Conference Center in February 2010. Experts included representatives from the following government and non-government groups/organizations: White House Office of Science & Technology Policy; White House Domestic Policy Council; USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, USDA Food and Nutrition Services, Office of Information Technology; USDA Office of Communications; Digitalmill; Intel Foundation; Zynga Game Network (creator of FarmVille); International Game Developers Association; Entertainment Software Association; E-Line Media; Global Game Jam; Carnegie Mellon University School of Design; Carnegie Mellon Entertainment Technology Center; Southern Methodist University Guildhall Program; Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; Games for Change, Technology Center, The Georgia Institute of Technology; Hot Frog Creative; Physic Ventures; New Wave Entertainment; The Studio @ New Wave Entertainment; University of California - Santa Barbara; Disney Online Kerpoof Studios; 1st Playable Productions; Beyond the Box Productions; University of Southern California Games Institute; HopeLab; Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop; and the MacArthur Foundation.

The OSTP sought additional input from the public through blog posts.

The OSTP and USDA's CNPP gathered an expert panel of judges. It will score submissions and select winners. The panel includes: Aneesh Chopra (U.S. Chief Technology Officer, White House Office of Science & Technology Policy), Mark DeLoura (Videogame Technology Consultant and Vice Chair, International Game Developers Association), Mike Gallagher (President and CEO, Entertainment Software Association), Robin Hunicke (Game Designer and Producer, thatgamecompany), Eric Johnston (Senior Software Engineer, LucasArts), David Lazarus (Senior Advisor to the Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture), Michael Levine (Executive Director, The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop), Mark Pincus (CEO, Zynga Game Network, Inc.), and Steve Wozniak (Co-founder, Apple Computer, Inc.). There will also be a public voting winner. Prizes include cash awards and a reception at the White House in September 2010.

Shortly before USDA was to launch the competition, the Office of the First Lady contacted CNPP. The Apps for Healthy Kids competition was officially adopted as part of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign. The competition and its website were launched by the First Lady on March 10 at the National PTA (Parent Teacher Association) conference in Washington, DC.

### **Information Required for Flagship Initiative**

An important and rich dataset used by USDA for its MyPyramid tools is now available for entrepreneurs to use their skills and creativity for help solve a very serious public health problem. The design and structure of the Apps for Healthy Kids competition addresses each of the three principles of President Obama's call for a transparent and open government: participation, collaboration, and transparency. The competition calls for Americans who have design and programming skills to participate with the Federal government in solving the problem of childhood obesity. This public engagement enhances the Government's effectiveness and improves the quality of its decisions. The White House and USDA are using their strengths to collaborate with experts in the gaming and technology industry, the nutrition and education fields, universities, etc., to achieve this overall goal. Collaboration actively engages Americans in the work of their Government. Lastly, from start to finish, the Apps for Healthy Kids competition has been executed transparently through active participation in its development and by gathering feedback from the public and experts in related fields, as this promotes accountability and provides information for citizens about what their Government is going.

The Apps for Healthy Kids competition engages the public and interested parties through the Apps for Healthy Kids website, exposure at professional meetings and conferences, and blogs and other online social media venues (Facebook, Twitter). The Apps for Healthy Kids competition has achieved significant reach, particularly online where a Google search of the term "apps for healthy kids" just 2 weeks after the launch resulted in an impressive 138,000 active web links.

For more information about USDA's MyPyramid Food Guidance System, a network of science-based, consumer tested, web-based, interactive and personalized nutrition guidance tools, and the Apps for Healthy Kids competition, please contact:

Dr. Robert Post, Deputy Director, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, USDA, 703-305-7600.

### **Chefs and Schools Healthier US Recipe Challenge**

In conjunction with Innovations for Health and as follow-on to Healthy Kids Challenge, the Chefs and Schools Healthier US Recipe Challenge will build on the existing groundwork and embody the core values of open government.

#### Background

Kids eat too few dark green and orange vegetables, legumes, and whole grains and schools are looking for ways to incorporate these foods into school lunch menus in a manner that won't result in a student uprising or drop in school lunch participation.

### The Solution

A national recipe challenge that brings together food service staff, chefs and students to develop nutritious, delicious and kid-approved foods that schools can easily incorporate into National School Lunch Program menus, bringing them one step closer to becoming a HealthierUS School Challenge Award winner.

### Why a Recipe Contest

The Challenge will produce recipes schools can use to implement new meal pattern requirements recommended by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), which include specific requirements for increasing the offerings of dark green and orange vegetables, dry beans and peas, and whole grains. A recipe contest provides schools with the flexibility to incorporate these "hard-to-sell" foods into their menus right away, allowing for their application under a number of menu planning approaches and giving consideration to regional and cultural food preferences. This approach focuses innovation and creativity on under-consumed foods and emphasizes the issues of acceptability, palatability and appeal of foods that, while they may look good on menus, often fail to be actually chosen and eaten by children when placed on the serving line. The sharper focus of a recipe contest avoids the issues of having to explain details of meal pattern requirements to contestants, applicability of menus developed under soon-to-be-outdated or yet-to-be-implemented meal pattern requirements, and complexity of judging a challenge that would involve criteria for both menus and related recipes. Following the recipe contest, FNS could invite schools to share how they have incorporated the winning recipes in their menus—thereby showcasing how the recipes are being used in different ways across the country.

### The Challenge Participants

Recipes must be submitted by a team that includes a Chef, School Nutrition Professional (i.e., school foodservice staff), and student (5-18 years). This "team approach" supports the White House's initiative to involve chefs in the movement to provide healthier food in schools. It also echoes the philosophy behind Team Nutrition and the HealthierUS School Challenge, which recognize that it takes a team to make changes to what kids eat in school. The relationships that are formed through the creation of recipes for this contest will ideally persist into other areas of the school menu and result in best practices on how chefs and schools can work together. On the recipe team, the chef would provide culinary expertise and ingenuity; the School Nutrition Professional would provide program expertise and an understanding of what can be realistically implemented in the school setting; and the student would ensure that the contest is kid-centric and results in foods that are appealing to youth.

Recipe Categories and Awards

First and second place awards and honorable mentions will be given to the best lunch recipes in the following categories: Whole Grains, Dark Green/Orange Vegetables, and Dry Beans and Peas (Legumes).

Additional Recipe Criteria

Recipes must utilize nationally available ingredients and include no more than 15 ingredients. Bonus points will be given to recipes utilizing USDA foods.

Recipes must be taste-tested in an elementary or secondary school participating in the National School Lunch Program.

School Nutrition Professional on the team must work with a National School Lunch Program

Recipes must be consistent with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and meet criteria for total fat, saturated fat, trans-fat, sugar and sodium.

Servings of whole grains, dark green/orange vegetables and dry beans and peas must be consistent with HealthierUS School Challenge criteria.

Timeline

Announce Challenge at School Nutrition Association’s Annual Nutrition Conference in July 2010 and at other upcoming events as appropriate.	
Early Summer 2010	Release Recipe Criteria
Early Summer-December 2010	Teams Develop Recipes and Test with Students
December 31, 2010	Recipe Entry Deadline
January-February	Initial Review of Recipes
March 6-9, 2011	Judging Held in Conjunction with School Nutrition Association’s Legislative Action Conference

June-July 2011	FNS Standardizes and Prints Winning Recipes
July 9-13, 2011	Announce Challenge Winners at School Nutrition Association's Annual Nutrition Conference. Release print and electronic versions of recipes in time for use during the upcoming school year.

### 7.3 Candidate Flagship Initiative Considerations

The collaboration strategy for developing a new planning rule has the potential to become a model for not just future Forest Service rule writing, but for other Departmental Agencies. In the spirit of transparency, we have our collaboration strategy posted on our planning rule Web site. Not only does this demonstrate our commitment to collaboration and participation to the American people, it serves as a resource for other Agencies.

With sufficient resources, leveraging from the USFS Planning Rule, EPA's Rulemaking Gateway, and other efforts, USDA is exploring creating a crosscutting model platform for transparent policy participation, collaboration, and education. Through an iterative, systematic, pilot-based approach, the USDA Policy and Education Gateway would provide a transparent way to facilitate collaboration and keep track of selected rulemakings, guidance documents, and issuances for employees, customers, and the general public. In its full implementation, it would provide a one-stop shopping center for anyone interested in a particular policy topic – with information on the origin of the policy and its evolution, as well as training and education materials. Feedback mechanisms would be strategically embedded. This would be the public facing site.

Through a role-based process, authorized USDA employees and authorized USDA contractors and cooperators would have access to a linked "internal" site with additional draft information on a particular topic and tools, so that they can add in their comments on drafts and share best practices to support USDA's mission. The working policy drafts could be housed on the internal site.

Currently, agencies publish information on proposed and final rules on Regulations.gov and the Federal Register. Individual customers can post or mail in comments, but have little opportunity to collaborate on actually developing a rule or to see each other's comments and build on them. Also, the supporting documents for the policy, such as the legal mandate and the training materials and press releases, are often housed in different places. Farmers and ranchers as well as employees and sister agencies need access to reliable program information quickly and with timely opportunity to share their knowledge and experience.

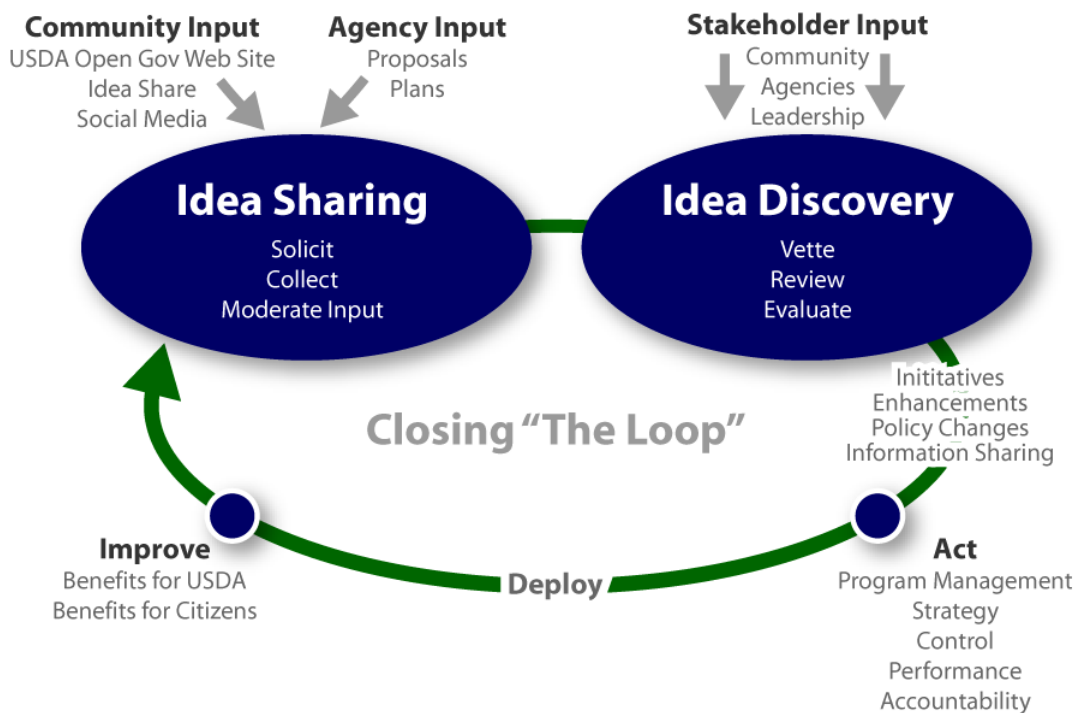
The USDA Policy and Education Gateway would level the playing field and allow everyone to have a voice through role-based access. This project furthers all four strategic goals as contained in the USDA FY 2010-2015 draft Strategic Plan by enhancing the way that programs are developed and implemented, to ensure that USDA truly is the "People's Department." The project also supports the Management Initiatives in the Strategic Plan, particularly in engaging employees and increasing access to USDA programs and services in an equitable manner that optimizes information technology. Through the Open Government Governance Board, the Policy and Education Gateway Workgroup will explore this concept and the resources needed to bring it into reality. The benefits of this project include:

- Demonstrates Leadership in transforming USDA culture to a more transparent, participatory, and collaborative, unified and service based Department.
- Supports all strategic goals and management initiatives in the USDA Strategic Plan as well as the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Initiative.
- Demonstrates cross-agency benefit as the gateway that would be used throughout USDA and could be readily transferable to other agencies.
- Uses feedback loops to continuously improve and uses performance metrics that complement USDA Strategic Plan.

## 8.0 Governance

Open Government demands an innovative open governance model. The model must facilitate the core values of transparency, participation and collaboration in such a way that fosters and facilitates real improvement in the way USDA serves the American people. At the heart of this model is the concept of closing “The Loop.” The Loop represents a framework of Open Governance at the Department. Closing “The Loop” represents the evolution of good ideas into benefits for citizens.

### USDA Open Governance Model



#### Idea Sharing

USDA’s open governance model begins with ideas. In the past, ideas tended to flow from internal stakeholders and a limited group of external stakeholders. Open Government forces the Department to rethink the way it processes ideas. USDA is moving toward an idea sharing and discovery model. This model makes significant improvements to the way we involve the external community and internal stakeholders. Idea sharing is at the heart of this new model. It includes innovative ways of soliciting, collecting, and moderating input from all stakeholders. Revamped processes and capabilities are required to facilitate these idea generating mechanisms. New processes and capabilities must enable ideas to flow across communities and agencies resulting in improved ideas as candidates.

#### Idea Discovery



Another important process, idea discovery involves creating capabilities for vetting, reviewing, and evaluating ideas. Idea discovery must support feedback, reaching conclusions, and community response.

**Act**

As ideas move forward, they enter a USDA program process that acts on them. The Department program process must open to receive validation and allow the community to see the idea take shape toward real improvement. This process also injects control and ensures performance and accountability. The USDA Open Government Steering Committee and the USDA Open Government Advisory Council together comprise the USDA Open Governance Board. The Open Governance Board is charged with ensuring the open government momentum is sustained, the appropriate cultural, technical, and policy infrastructure is effective, and the open governance model is successfully addressing the Department's open governance goals and objectives.

**Improve**

The improve process brings ideas into tangible benefits for citizens. Improve includes announcement, implementation, and education. Improve loops back to idea discovery, thus closing "The Loop."

**8.1 Next Steps**

Project planning is in progress for the development of a comprehensive USDA Open Government Project Plan that will include the alignment of the Management Initiatives identified in the USDA Strategic Plan. Details including project schedules, milestones and specific deliverables for the Open Government initiatives will be published in this plan and on the USDA Open Government Webpage as information becomes available throughout the planning phase. The project plan and milestone schedule will be available in June 2010.

## Appendix A: USDA Strategic Plan

The goals of each component of the open government plan are designed to align with the USDA Strategic Goals established in the *FY 2010-2015 Strategic Plan*. The open government plan goals allow the Department to move towards its overall strategic goals in an open and accountable way. USDA's strategic goals are:

- Assist rural communities to create prosperity so they are self-sustaining, repopulating, and economically thriving;
- Ensure our national forests and private working lands are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water resources;
- Help America promote agricultural production and biotechnology exports as America works to increase food security; and
- Ensure that all of America's children have access to safe, nutritious, and balanced meals.

In addition to these strategic goals, the strategic plan includes several management initiatives. The management initiatives are specific ways that Departmental management will work to move towards meeting the four goals. The management initiatives are:

1. Engage USDA Employees to Transform USDA into a Model Agency;
2. Provide Civil Rights Services to Agriculture Employees and Customers;
3. Coordinate Outreach and Improve Consultation and Collaboration Efforts to Increase Access to USDA Programs and Services;
4. Leverage USDA Departmental Management to Increase Performance, Efficiency, and Alignment;
5. Optimize Information Technology (IT) Policy and Applications;
6. Optimize USDA "Green" or Sustainable Operations;
7. Enhance USDA Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness to Protect USDA Employees and the Public; and
8. Enhance the USDA Human Resources Process to Recruit and Hire Skilled, Diverse Individuals to Meet the Program Needs of USDA.

The Open Government goals in this plan align with the Management Initiatives identified in the USDA Strategic Plan. The Management Initiatives represent a tactical approach to achieving USDA's strategic goals. The mapping of each open government goal to its matching management initiatives is presented in the following table:

## Transparency

Goal	Initiatives/Activities	Outcomes	Management Initiative Alignment
Continuously educate the American public about the Department's programs and decision-making processes	IT Dashboard Information Sharing	Greater transparency and openness to the public.	1, 3, 4
Prioritize data and release processes	Calendar for releasing data	Proactive movement towards transparency and data sharing.	1,3
Provide truly new, high-value datasets and information holdings	Data.gov USASpending.gov	Provides the public with the information they need on USDA's programs and activities	3
Utilize state-of-the-art, user-friendly technology to monitor, stimulate, and incorporate innovative uses of information	eRulemaking Recovery.gov	Providing this information to the public, USDA is accountable for its actions and use of taxpayer funds	1, 5

## Participation

Goal	Initiatives/Activities	Outcomes	Management Initiative Alignment
Expand and improve the participation processes and mechanisms	MyPyramid for Kids Web-based communication strategies, social technologies and new media	Enable the public to personalize their interaction with USDA Enable the public to contribute directly to subject matter discussions	3, 5
Guide the public involvement and outreach in participating in developing and implementing policy	Planning rule New Media and Social technologies	Improving policies	1, 3
Build on existing outreach efforts and expand those efforts to all constituencies, key stakeholders	Farmers Market and People's Garden Food Safety Mobile Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food	Reaching all constituencies	2, 3

	Tribal Relations/Consultation		
Improve education for employees on public participation processes	AgLearn participation training	Employees more effective in utilizing public feedback and input	1, 4

Collaboration

Goal	Initiatives/Activities	Outcomes	Management Initiative Alignment
Create a cultural, technical and policy environment that fosters partnerships in program and service delivery	GovDelivery.com Workforce development	More effectively and efficiently cooperate with internal and external partners	1, 3, 5
Harness the innovative ideas and know-how of the private and public sector as well as citizens to achieve our shared objectives and improve the lives of Americans	Food Safety Working Group	Enable USDA to collaborate more efficiently with the public and across government agencies.	1, 3, 5
Create incentives for employee and organizational collaboration	Library of collaboration successes. Proposed incentives for employees.	More employee involvement and awareness in collaboration programs.	1, 3
Harness the power of technology to support collaboration to enhance efficiencies and reduce process redundancies	Apps for Healthy Kids New media tools for collaboration.	New processes and policies for effective collaboration.	3, 4, 6

## Appendix B: Web Site Addresses for Links

Section Reference	Link Text	Web Address
1.2, 2.2	<a href="http://www.usda.gov/open">http://www.usda.gov/open</a>	<a href="http://www.usda.gov/open">http://www.usda.gov/open</a>
2.2	Education and Outreach Web site	<a href="http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?navtype=SU&amp;navid=EDUCATION_OUTREACH">http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?navtype=SU&amp;navid=EDUCATION_OUTREACH</a>
2.2	Open Gov Playbook	<a href="http://opengovdirective.pbworks.com/">http://opengovdirective.pbworks.com/</a>
3.2	IT Dashboard	<a href="http://it.usaspending.gov/">http://it.usaspending.gov/</a>
3.2	Discover more!	<a href="http://www.data.gov">http://www.data.gov</a>
3.2	See where your money goes!	<a href="http://usaspending.gov">http://usaspending.gov</a>
3.2	Track the money!	<a href="http://www.recovery.gov/Pages/home.aspx">http://www.recovery.gov/Pages/home.aspx</a>
4.2	Let's move!	<a href="http://www.mypyramid.gov/kids/index.html">http://www.mypyramid.gov/kids/index.html</a>
4.2	Be a part of People's Garden!	<a href="http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/?navid=PEOPLES_GARDEN">http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/?navid=PEOPLES_GARDEN</a>
4.2	Get to know your farmer!	<a href="http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/knowyourfarmer?navid=KNOWYOURFARMER">http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/knowyourfarmer?navid=KNOWYOURFARMER</a>
4.2	Learn more about USDA-Tribal Relations!	<a href="http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/tribalrelations/">http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/tribalrelations/</a>
5.2	Learn, participate, and stay informed!	<a href="http://www.foodsafetyworkinggroup.gov/Home.htm">http://www.foodsafetyworkinggroup.gov/Home.htm</a>
5.2	Let's move!	<a href="http://www.appsforhealthykids.com">http://www.appsforhealthykids.com</a>
6.1	FOIA Web page	<a href="http://www.dm.usda.gov/foia.htm">http://www.dm.usda.gov/foia.htm</a>
6.3	Records Management Web site	<a href="http://www.ocio.usda.gov/records/index.html">http://www.ocio.usda.gov/records/index.html</a>
7.1	Planning rule Web site	<a href="http://www.fs.usda.gov/planningrule">www.fs.usda.gov/planningrule</a>
7.1	Planning rule blog	<a href="http://blogs.usda.gov/usdablogs/planningrule/">http://blogs.usda.gov/usdablogs/planningrule/</a>
7.1	<a href="http://www.twitter.com/forestservice">www.twitter.com/forestservice</a>	<a href="http://www.twitter.com/forestservice">www.twitter.com/forestservice</a>
7.1	<a href="http://contentanalysisgroup.com/fsr">http://contentanalysisgroup.com/fsr</a>	<a href="http://contentanalysisgroup.com/fsr/">http://contentanalysisgroup.com/fsr/</a>
7.2	Apps for Healthy Kids Web site	<a href="http://www.appsforhealthykids.com">http://www.appsforhealthykids.com</a>
7.3	Regulations.gov	<a href="http://www.regulations.gov/search/Regs/home">http://www.regulations.gov/search/Regs/home</a>

		<a href="#">me.html#home</a>
7.3	EPA's Rulemaking Gateway	<a href="http://www.epa.gov/rulemaking">http://www.epa.gov/rulemaking</a>

## Appendix C: New Dataset Submissions

Dataset Catalog	Name	Description
Raw Data	Your Food Environment Atlas	<p>Food environment factors—such as store/restaurant proximity, food prices, food and nutrition assistance programs, and community characteristics—interact to influence food choices and diet quality. The Food Environment Atlas assembles statistics on food environment indicators to stimulate research on the determinants of food choices and diet quality and provides a spatial overview of a community’s ability to access healthy food and its success in doing so. The Atlas currently includes 90 indicators of the food environment in three broad categories—food choices, health and well-being, and community characteristics.</p> <p>Note: This data product was released on February 9 in conjunction with First Lady Michelle Obama’s initiative to fight childhood obesity. She unveiled the data product at a briefing at the White House on that day. The data product provides both interactive mapping and bulk data downloads.</p> <p>URL:  <a href="http://www.ers.usda.gov/FoodAtlas/">http://www.ers.usda.gov/FoodAtlas/</a></p>
Tool	National Agricultural Library Thesaurus (English)	<p>The Agricultural Thesaurus was first released by the National Agricultural Library in 2002. The thesaurus has in depth coverage of agriculture, biology and related disciplines. It contains over 78,000 terms, including 31,000 cross references and is arranged into 17</p>

Dataset Catalog	Name	Description
		subject categories. It is annually updated each January. There is a parallel Spanish version, called the Tesauro Agricola.
Tool	Tesauro Agricola (Spanish Version of the National Agricultural Library Thesaurus)	The Agricultural Thesaurus was first released by the National Agricultural Library in 2002. The thesaurus has in depth coverage of agriculture, biology and related disciplines. It contains over 78,000 terms, including 31,000 cross references and is arranged into 17 subject categories. It is annually updated each January. There is a parallel English version, called the National Agricultural Library Thesaurus.
Raw Data	Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Participating and Cost Data	<p>This dataset contains monthly participation and cost data for the current fiscal year for each WIC State agency.</p> <p>This dataset contains monthly data for the current fiscal year for each Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) State agency. There are currently 90 WIC State agencies: the 50 geographic states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Northern Marianas, and 34 Indian tribal organizations (ITO's). The dataset contains number of Pregnant Women, Breastfeeding Women, Postpartum Women, Total Women, Infants and children participating in the WIC program and the associated food and administrative cost. This data set is in great demand and is requested by different external entities (researchers, different states etc.)</p>