

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Department of General Services



Open Government Report 2014

To institutionalize a culture of transparent and open government, accountability, and to expand opportunities for resident participation and collaboration, this Report describes how the Department of General Services has and will continue to develop and enhance transparency, public participation, and collaboration. In accordance with Mayor's Order 2014-170, this report addresses the following topics:

1) **Transparency**

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to be more transparent. Please include a description of:

- *How and to what extent your agency shares information with the public, e.g. publication of information in the District register and on the agency website, press releases, and documents in the agency's FOIAXpress reading room.*

Response:

The Department of General Services is committed to making information available to the public and promoting transparency in all operational areas of the agency. The agency posts in the DC Register all notices for all public hearings related to the disposition of public assets and conducts public hearings related to real estate dispositions as well as construction activity at schools and other municipal facilities. The agency has complied with the Open Government website requirements mandated by the Executive Office of the Mayor and currently includes links to salary information, DGS contract award actions, purchase card transactions, budget information, minutes to meetings, organizational charts, performance plans, prior FOIA reports, and staff manuals and instructions.

In addition to mandated information, the DGS website includes a variety of other valuable information for the public, including a means to search for information related to District real property assets and specific District facilities (i.e. recreational facilities and athletic fields). The public can find on the DGS website all information related to all solicitations for goods and services as well as for the use of real estate. The website includes links to DGS' most recent press releases as well as social media activity.

The agency also now posts some documents of interest to the public in the agency's FOIAXpress reading room and currently has nine (9) documents of interest posted in our reading room. We anticipate increasing these numbers as we become more acclimated with FOIAXpress.

The District, through the efforts of DGS, has pioneered the most transparent building energy consumption database in the country. Commercial and municipal buildings are the city's biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions and consume a hefty energy budget. Build Smart DC (buildsmartdc.com) provides transparency and accountability by detailing, for nearly every public building: energy costs, raw daily energy usage, building performance comparisons, efficiency project efficacy tracking and by simply providing a substantial and unique pool of information from which stakeholders can learn and build.

- *How the agency meets its obligations pursuant to the District's Freedom of Information Act and Open Meetings Act.*

Response:

The Department of General Services complies with the requirements of FOIA by responding to every request in a timely and complete manner. During fiscal year 2014, DGS received and responded to 98 requests, which included approximately 267 staff hours. DGS, like many other agencies, recently adopted FOIAXpress as the means to track FOIA requests. FOIAXpress enables the public and DGS to track the status of each request. In addition to FOIAXpress, the agency tracks the time and costs associated with each request.

- *Steps your agency will take to increase public access to information.*

Response:

- ✓ The agency will continue to provide the vast variety of information currently offered through the agency's website, as well as continuing our practice of providing quarterly outreach events and posting all contract awards (including large and small purchases) online.
- ✓ The agency is currently standardizing its real estate forms and other transactional documents. These forms will be available online and solicitations will also include standard forms or provisions for transactions.
- ✓ Smart DGS – SmartDGS is the web-based application available to DC employees to report issues within District facilities. The agency will continue to promote the use of SmartDGS as a means to receive and track public and employee requests for services within District facilities.

- *How your agency has taken or plans to take steps to make more of its data available to the public.*

Response:

The Department of General Services is working closely with the Office of the City Administrator (OCA) and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to identify a significant number of datasets that OCA and OCTO expect to publish online later this year. If no dataset from DGS is selected to be included in this 2014 release, we will continue to work with OCA and OCTO to identify datasets appropriate to publish in 2015. In the future, requirements for open data reporting will be provided by the Chief Data Officer.

2) **Public Engagement and Participation**

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to enhance or expand opportunities for the public to participate in agency decision-making. Please include a description of:

- *How your agency provides online access to proposed rules and regulations and secures public input on them. Please list links to specific websites.*

Response:

DGS did not promulgate rules or regulations during 2014. If the agency elects to publish proposed rules or regulations, the agency will make such information available on its website and create a separate email account or other platform to receive public comments.

- *How your agency shares information and resources to keep the public properly informed, e.g. community meetings, public hearings, FAQs, and ways the public can provide input such as Twitter, grade.dc.gov, email contacts.*

Response:

DGS currently devotes considerable effort to ensure that community stakeholders are engaged in the execution of large construction projects and significant real estate transactions. This engagement includes multiple community meetings with community stakeholders, ANC Commissioners and contractors/construction/design professionals and also the distribution of project documents to stakeholders upon request. DGS is actively engaged on social media to provide information as well as to gather feedback and concerns related to agency activities. Community meetings are conducted in connection with any disposition of District real property and these meetings include discussions of transaction terms and anticipated community benefits. As another example, the agency meets with the Eastern Market Advisory

Council monthly to address any concerns related to the management and operation of the Eastern market. The minutes from these meetings are posted online.

- *How your agency identifies stakeholders and invites their participation.*

Response:

DGS is a member of sixty-seven (67) local listservs, which represent over 33,000 District residents. Being an active member of local listservs has allowed the agency to continue to proactively identify and communicate the agency's brand as well as invite the participation of the community and stakeholders by engaging residents on upcoming DGS initiatives, events and projects.

Monitoring the listservs also provides the team an opportunity to hear what the DGS concerns are in the community in real-time and respond in a more timely fashion. Upon receipt of concerns the team works with sister agencies and/or internal DGS staff to provide timely responses to resident's concerns.

- *Steps your agency will take to improve public engagement and participation including any new feedback tools or mechanisms the agency is considering.*

Response:

In FY14, DGS will continue to implement and use web-based social networks and programs such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Instagram, Vine and Pinterest to maximize outreach, solicit feedback and enable consistent communication.

We will continue to grow our online presence on social media networks by encouraging additional DGS employees to establish Twitter accounts as a method to reach their prospective audiences.

All of our social media networks are used to provide residents with information on upcoming ribbon cuttings, ground breakings, community meetings, DGS public hearings, DGS initiatives and DGS solicitations to name a few. The Twitter and Facebook accounts continue to be an avenue for residents to provide positive and negative feedback to DGS in real time.

3) **Collaboration**

Describe the steps your agency has taken or plans to take to enhance or expand cooperation among departments, other governmental agencies, the public, and non-profit and private entities in fulfilling its obligations. Please include a description of:

- *How your agency currently collaborates with the above parties. Please list links to specific websites if appropriate. Steps your agency will take to improve collaboration with the above parties including any new feedback tools or mechanisms the agency is considering, e.g. prizes, competitions, and other innovative methods.*

Response:

DGS has implemented SmartDGS, a web-based application available to all District employees as a vehicle to report issues within District facilities, and encourages employees of other agencies throughout the District to utilize SmartDGS to report and track facility issues.

DGS works closely with other agencies throughout the District of Columbia government to identify space and to address real estate needs. This collaboration includes meeting with agencies to determine programming needs, space requirements, proper disposition of underutilized real property and minimum suitability requirements for agency space. Agencies are actively involved in the process of selecting prospective properties for agency use, from selection of property to construction of tenant improvements.