

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**



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 Office of the Attorney General (OAG) 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.*

OAG is committed to a transparent, open form of government. District agency websites are required to make certain records available online to the public, if those records exist. Our website includes links that show information related to (1) Employee salary information; (2) statements of policy (OAG's privileged and confidential legal opinion letters to client agencies are exempt from disclosure. There are, however, some opinion letters to the ANCs that are available on our website); (3) Formal, published, OAG/Corporation Counsel Opinions; (4) OAG's Performance; (5) OAG's Budget; (6) District-Wide Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) reports; and (7) OAG's Organizational Chart. We also provide links for the public to provide feedback to the agency. We also post our press releases and agency testimony on our website.

OAG's FOIA requests are issue specific – we do not have categories of records that are frequently requested. When appropriate, we post documents in OAG's FOIAXpress reading room.

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

OAG meets its obligations to the District's FOIA statute by responding timely to FOIA requests and by providing, when appropriate, as many requested records as possible. We have a link on our website for the public to submit FOIA requests via FOIAXpress; we also provide the name and contact information of the agency's FOIA officer.

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

OAG will continue to process FOIA requests via FOIAXpress and upload as many records as possible in the public reading room. We will also continue to post our press releases and agency testimony on our website. In addition, OAG anticipates discussions with the incoming elected AG (after November 4th) to discuss his/her views on this subject, with a goal of making this now-independent office a leader in this area.

- *Steps your agency will take, including an implementation timeline, to webcast live and archive on the internet board or commission meetings. (This question only applies to agencies that are overseen or advised by a board or commission that is subject to the Open Meetings Act.)*

OAG is not overseen or advised by a board or commission that is subject to the Open Meetings Act.

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

OAG-specific data is provided annually to the Council and the public in OAG's responses to performance oversight and budget hearing questions. In addition, OAG 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 OAG 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.*

OAG, through its Legal Counsel Division, provides legal advice and assistance to other District government agencies on their proposed rules and regulations. Since the legal advice we provide is legally privileged and confidential, we do not post it on our website. Additionally, much of OAG's responsibility is to provide legal support and advice to other agencies, thereby allowing fewer opportunities for it to directly engage members of the public.

There are, however, programs (child support collections, establishment and enforcement of support orders; juvenile justice and consumer protection, for example) that do directly involve DC residents. These interactions often provide informal opportunities to hear from the public as well.

- *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.*

OAG puts out press releases on significant matters we are handling, which are made available on OAG’s website. In addition, we provide website links to materials related to a variety of topics including: (1) Driving Under the Influence; (2) Ethics Standards; (3) Housing Code Violations; (4) Legal Services Rules; and (5) OAG/Corporation Counsel Opinions. Finally, we provide two ways for the public to provide feedback – they can email OAG or fill out the “Ask the Attorney General” form and submit anonymously.

In addition, OAG promptly answers questions of local and national media, including bloggers, as well as private citizens, although we do not provide legal advice to private parties. This includes making available our court filings that might not be easily obtainable elsewhere.

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

As an agency that supports others in the city government, our efforts are often derivative, meaning that our legal advice and litigation support often enables other agencies with more direct contact with the public to better identify stakeholders and engage them. Also, in those instances where the OAG is proposing legislation or supporting legislation proposed by the Mayor or other agencies, our testimony before the Council and legal sufficiency reviews often spark the interests of other stakeholders in the subject legislation.

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

As noted, OAG anticipates discussions with the incoming elected AG (after November 4th) to discuss his/her views on this subject, with a goal of making this now-independent office a leader in this area.

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.*

OAG is the legal arm of the District government. Our main obligation is to represent the municipal corporation of the District of Columbia to ensure that it receives the best legal advice and representation and at the same time seek justice and pursue the rule of law in the best interest of the residents of the District of Columbia. To that end, we represent the District, its officials and employees in both the local and federal courts in the city's affirmative and defensive litigation. OAG pursues consumer protection and anti-trust matters, oversees child support enforcement and collections, and handles abuse and neglect cases for child and adult victims who are the city's legal responsibility.

We also represent the District in its juvenile prosecutions, pursue criminal convictions for some adult misdemeanor offenses, including traffic and impaired driving cases.

In addition, we give legal advice to District of Columbia government officials on a broad range of topics, including real estate, economic development and zoning issues as well as on constitutional matters and other legal questions. We work closely with the Mayor, agency directors, and agency counsel to ensure that we provide the best possible legal advice and litigation support, understanding that aspects of this often serve a risk-management benefit for the city government as well.

- *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.*

As noted, OAG anticipates discussions with the incoming elected AG (after November 4th) to discuss his/her views on this subject, with a goal of making this now-independent office a leader in this area.