

PNW Open Government Event
Monday, July 15th, 2024 - 2024 - 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM PT - Hybrid

Meeting Overview

Agenda:

The agenda for the session is as follows:

Start at 10:00am PT

- 5 Min - GSA/WashCOG/Sarah - Welcome
- 8 min - [David Cuillier](#) (in person) - Why is Open Government important
- 8 min - Morgan Damerow (in person) - Washington State Attorney General's Office Open Government Ombuds
- 8 min - [Mike Fancher](#) (virtual) - WashCOG presentation
- 8 Min - [Sarah Schacht](#) (in person) - Connect local issues at the national level
- 8 min - [Dan York](#) (in person) - GSA Open Gov Presentation
- 8 min - [Clora Romo](#) (virtual) - OGP local program
- 8 min - Q&A

Lunch 11:00-Noon PT (Participants find their own lunch in the local economy)

Afternoon Agenda: Start at Noon PT

- 10 min - Reconvene / Introduce Activity
- 30 min - Small Group Discussions Activity
- 20 min - Small Group Briefs Outs
- 15 min - Review Common Themes
- 15 min - Closing - Thank You's

Key Resources:

- Open Government Secretariat email box - opengovernmentsecretariat@gsa.gov
- WashCOG website - <https://www.washcog.org/who-we-are>

GSA/WashCOG/Sarah - Welcome:

- Daniel York, Julie Bunting, and Sarah Schacht welcome participants to event on Whidbey Island, WA
- This event will be open to the public and is being recorded. A copy of who attended the event (both in person and virtually), the agenda, notes taken from the event, and the recording of the event will all be posted publicly to the open.usa.gsa website.
- Emphasis on the event being a listening session open to public feedback.

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- Diverse lineup of speakers from various sectors including state, federal government, academia, and civil society.
- Morning session includes both virtual and in-person participation; afternoon session limited to in-person only.
- Small group activities for the afternoon are planned to generate collaborative solutions.

David Cuillier - Why is Open Government important

- Dr. David Cuillier, from the Brechner Freedom Information Project at University of Florida, emphasizes long-standing commitment to public records access.
- Highlights the importance of government transparency across political and societal spectrums.
- Cites research showing transparency reduces corruption, improves public safety, and benefits society economically.
- Expresses concern over declining transparency in the U.S. government over recent decades.
- Points out the U.S. FOIA ranking 78th globally, indicating weakening transparency laws.
- Discusses challenges with increasing delays and backlogs in public records requests at federal and state levels.
- Acknowledges Washington State's strong performance in transparency but notes room for improvement.
- Identifies digital challenges and diminishing advocacy as factors contributing to transparency decline.
- Proposes solutions including better technology, stronger coalitions, robust journalism, and effective legal frameworks.
- Advocates for mandatory training and penalties to enforce transparency laws effectively nationwide.

Morgan Damerow - Washington State Attorney General's Office Open Government Ombuds

- Morgan Damaro from Washington State Attorney General's office, serves as the Open Government Ombuds.
- Discusses role in supporting transparency through the Public Records Act and Open Public Meetings Act.
- Mentions collaboration with WashCOG and advocacy for transparency coalitions.
- Emphasizes role in educating public and local governments on accessing public records.

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- Leads the Public Records Consultation Program, including initiatives like the Public Records Boot Camp.
- Provides options-based legal advice to state agencies on public records compliance.

Mike Fancher - WashCOG presentation

- Mike Fancher is President of the Washington Coalition for Open Government (WCOG).
- WCOG formed in 1972 to support Initiative 276, the Public Disclosure Act, emphasizing people's right to know.
- The coalition is nonpartisan and includes diverse political affiliations and interests.
- WCOG aims to address the erosion of open government principles since 2002.
- WCOG published a report highlighting legislative, administrative, and training failures impacting public access to records.
- The coalition advocates for improved transparency through litigation, legislation, education, and public engagement.
- Emphasizes the importance of open government as a fundamental civic right and infrastructure issue.
- Currently litigating against legislative privilege claims to uphold public access rights.
- Calls for public activism to reinforce open government principles and accountability.

Sarah Schacht - Connect local issues at the national level

- Sarah Schacht wears two distinct hats: one of which is in the area of open government technology for over 20 years, developing data standards and innovative tools.
- She has been involved in global open government partnerships, advising on transparency and citizen communication with lawmakers.
- Additionally, she operates a commercial building in Oak Harbor, Washington, an area facing economic challenges with limited local government resources.
- Her local experience reveals disparities in accessing federal funding and implementing open government practices.
- She advocates for integrating open government technologies and capacity-building strategies in federal National Action Plans.
- She highlights the disconnect between high-level policy discussions in places like DC and local governance realities in communities like Oak Harbor.

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- She proposes funding opportunities and support for local and state governments to enhance transparency and governance effectiveness.

Dan York - GSA Open Gov Presentation

- The Open Government Partnership (OGP) was founded in 2011 to enhance inclusivity, participation, transparency, and accountability in global governance.
- The US is a founding member and currently serves on the Steering Committee of OGP.
- OGP comprises 75 nations and 104 localities globally, impacting roughly 2 billion people.
- Members must demonstrate a baseline of openness to join and commit to National Action Plans collaboratively developed with civil society.
- At the federal level in the US, the OGP involves several entities: White House, Office of Science and Technology Policy, GSA, State Department, and USAID.
- GSA responsibilities include domestic implementation, managing action plans, and holding events with the public / civil society.
- The new Open Government Federal Advisory Committee plays a crucial role in advising and ensuring transparency.
- Ongoing efforts include developing and implementing the 6th National Action Plan, with updates and public engagement every six months.
- Initiatives aim to build trust, involve civil society, and receive feedback to enhance open government practices.
- The US Open Gov team emphasizes partnerships with civil society to advance open government goals nationally and globally.

Clora Romo - OGP local program

- Clora Romo from OGP Local shared insights and challenges at the event.
- Importance of open government at the local level due to global challenges like climate change and social inequality.
- Emphasized rebuilding trust in institutions and fostering inclusive political participation.
- Highlighted the role of local governments in addressing these challenges directly with communities.
- Open government principles aim to enhance transparency, accountability, and citizen participation.
- Mentioned the transformative impact of open government through collaboration and co-creation of policies.
- Examples of impactful reforms in Madrid, Bakota, and Bangai related to transparency, gender equality, and healthcare.

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- OGP Local program supports members with resources, technical assistance, and peer learning opportunities.
- Introduced the OGP Challenge to advance reforms in key policy areas over the next 5 years.
- Encouraged participation and engagement through local events and community initiatives.

Q&A

- Question: Is Washington State's definition of open government different from the federal government's definition?
 - Washington State's definition emphasizes broad access to public records, interpreted liberally to ensure transparency.
- Question: How is participation defined in Washington State open government?
 - Participation includes extensive opportunities for public involvement in boards and commissions, with recent initiatives to support low-income participants.
- Why is there a decline in FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) success rates?
 - Possible reasons include increased government secrecy and fewer legal challenges from media outlets due to economic constraints.
- Question: What are the criteria for joining OGP Local?
 - Membership is based on demonstrated commitment to open government principles, not solely on population size.
- Question: How is AI being integrated into OGP efforts?
 - AI is considered for tasks like redacting public records to streamline access and improve transparency.
- Question: How much government data is digitized in the United States?
 - While exact figures aren't available, usafacts.org is a significant repository for government data but challenges remain in data accessibility and format.

Lunch

Reconvene / Introduce Activity

- The in person group was organized into 3 groups of 5 participants each.
- Each group will receive different questions to discuss.
- The 10 questions are
 - Anti-corruption
 - Q1: What innovative practices can state and federal governments implement to increase transparency and reduce corruption?

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- Q2: How can civil society organizations contribute to monitoring and preventing corruption in government projects?
- Civic Space
 - Q1: How can state and federal governments collaborate to promote greater public participation in decision-making processes?
 - Q2: How can local governments ensure that civic space remains open and accessible to all citizens?
- Public Service Delivery
 - Q1: What role can technology play in improving public service delivery at both the state and federal levels?
 - Q2: How can governments ensure that public services are inclusive and accessible to marginalized communities?
- Digital Governance
 - Q1: State and local government agencies contend that they often don't have the staff or funding to adequately deal with public records requests. Besides funding, what pros and cons do you see in setting up a statewide digital portal, accessible to the public, that all governments within the state could use to automatically upload many of the documents produced in daily government business?
 - Q2: What should be done with records such as emails, texts and chat programs such as Microsoft Teams, that may need some redaction in the limited cases where the law protects certain information from being publicly distributed?
- Open Government
 - Q1: What are the most effective ways to promote a culture of openness and transparency within local/state government institutions?
 - Q2: How can data, and what data sets specifically, can be used to improve government accountability and decision-making?
- The group will use Mural to capture their discussions
- After 30 minutes, the groups will reconvene to share their insights and conclusions.

Small Group Discussions Activity

- Each group went to a separate part of the building and worked through different questions.

Small Group Briefs Outs

- See Mural Board for work product of each group

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- Group 1 - Led by Alexis Masterson
- Group 2 - Led by Sarah Schacht
- Group 3 - Led by Daniel York

Review Common Themes

- Utilization of Technology:
 - Emphasize digital tools for efficient data management.
 - Implement AI for enhanced decision-making and recommendations.
 - Ensure transparency in data-sharing practices.
 - Leverage technology to automate and improve processes.
 - Ensure compliance with data standards and interoperability.
- Governance and Policy:
 - Promote transparency.
 - Enforce penalties to deter misconduct and corruption.
 - Update policies to align with technological advancements.
 - Depoliticize corruption and promote accountability.
 - Provide comprehensive training for effective governance.
 - Foster collaboration among governments and stakeholders.
 - Highlight impactful case studies and lessons learned.
 - Provide funding to help states improve transparency
- Community Engagement and Representation:
 - Foster civic engagement through education and participation.
 - Promote representation and diversity in decision-making.
 - Support local government processes and reduce politicization.

Closing - Thank You's

- Wraps up a productive session, acknowledging it's over time but praising the great conversation.
- Emphasizes the importance of diverse voices and perspectives gathered, suggesting future follow-up discussions or community engagement.
- Sarah proposes sending out an email to gauge interest in further conversations or involvement in national and local governance initiatives.
- Daniel York, WashCOG, and Sarah Schacht thank the speakers and participants, and encourage ongoing engagement with government processes at various levels.

Full Attendee List:

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Virtual:

First and Last Name	Organization
Alexis Masterson	U.S. General Services Administration
Arthur Brunson	U.S. General Services Administration
Cheri Freedman	Oregon Gov
Clora Romo	Open Government Partnership
Daniel York	U.S. General Services Administration
Deyanira Murga	Security NextGen
Dylan Hayden	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Jennifer Goode	U.S. Dept of Commerce
John Dierking	California State Gov
Kathy Gill	N/A
Kayla Lester	U.S. Dept of Treasury
Laura Szakmary	U.S. General Services Administration
Madhavan Pallan	N/A
Malgorzata Rejniak	Cornell University
Michael Fancher	Washington Coalition for Open Government
Monnicia Jackson	City of Houston TX
Pascal Schuback	N/A
Pepe García	Open Government Partnership
Ryan Wold	U.S. General Services Administration
Sarah Schacht	Data Foundation
Sasha Anderson	University of California, Berkeley
Scott Gibbons	U.S. Dept of Labor
Soon Lee	Ballmer Group
Stephen Buckley	Int'l. Assn. for Public Participation (U.S.)
Tige Nishimoto	TCG, Inc.
Yvette Gibson	U.S. General Services Administration

In Person:

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First and Last Name	Organization
Alexis Masterson	U.S. General Services Administration
Alicia Crank	Seattle CityClub
Colette Weeks	Washington Coalition for Open Government
Corinna Turbes	Data Foundation
Daniel York	U.S. General Services Administration
Deyanira Murga	Security NextGen
Dr. David Cuillier	University of Florida
Jed Sundwall	Radiant Earth
Julie Bunting	Washington Coalition for Open Government
Kathy Gill	N/A
Lyn Whitley	League of Women Voters Whidbey Island
Morgan Damerow	Washington State Office of the Attorney General
Peggy Watt	Western Washington University
Sarah Schacht	Data Foundation
Soon Lee	Ballmer Group
Sumedh Supe	N/A