

CTG Online News

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CTG Tests Open Government Decision Making Tool with Federal Agencies

CTG, in partnership with the US General Services Administration (GSA), recently tested their open government portfolio planning tool with teams from seven federal agencies in a workshop held at the National Academy of Public Administration in Washington, DC. The tool focuses on identifying the public value of each agency's open government initiative from a stakeholder perspective to help support agencywide decision-making. The development of the tool by CTG is part of a larger exploratory research grant on open government funded by the US National Science Foundation.



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"Linking agency missions, affected business processes, and stakeholder interests to the open government principles can be challenging. This tool and overall approach helps agency decision makers identify the public value of each project so that they can maximize their open government portfolio," said Theresa Pardo, CTG director.

The concept of the tool evolved from discussions with GSA's Office of Citizen Services, as part of their work to support federal agencies' early initiatives to meet the Obama Administration's Open Government Directive. From the initial research, CTG identified that agency open government leaders wanted to know how to better understand and articulate the value of open government efforts to a range of stakeholders and interests. Subsequently, CTG designed a tool to help agencies systematically identify the public value for each of their initiatives, using CTG's public value framework.



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According to CTG's Meghan Cook, who is also a member of an external advisory group working with the US Office of Personnel Management on their agency open government program, "this tool guides agencies through a practical process of identifying and communicating how the portfolio's stated open government goals link to agency activities and missions. By identifying value created in terms of social, strategic, quality of life, economic, ideological, stewardship, and political contexts for each stakeholder group, the agency can use this information to support their overall agency investment decision making."

CTG invited federal agency teams to bring information about their open government efforts to the workshop to help test the tool and really "kick the tires." The workshop was designed so that at each step of the process, teams could offer real time advice and feedback on the tool. The teams consisted of leading federal practitioners from the US Office of Personnel Management, US Department of Transportation, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, US Merit Systems Protection Board, US Environmental Protection Agency, US General Services Administration, and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Throughout the workshop, participants provided suggestions for refinements and enhancements on the process, content, and applicability of the tool. CTG will incorporate the workshop feedback and release a final public version of the tool in early 2011.

In parallel to this work, CTG is developing a large scale research proposal to NSF that will address some of the most challenging questions raised about open government that have emerged during this project. Opening government, although not new, still presents many unanswered questions that deserve serious study and investigation.

The CTG research team that traveled to DC to test the tool with federal agencies included Theresa A. Pardo, director; Anthony M. Cresswell, deputy director; Meghan E. Cook, program manager and Open Government Project Lead; Natalie Helbig, program associate; Jana Hrdinová, program associate; and Teresa M. Harrison, CTG faculty fellow from the UAlbany Department of Communication.

More information on CTG's Open Government Portfolio Planning Tool.