

Application

Preliminary Question

In which language are you submitting the application (check one)?

Please note that each country has the option of either submitting an application in English, or in their native language if they are unable to pay for translation into English. For applications submitted in the native language, OGP will pay for the translation into English before passing on to the judges.

English
 Native language (please mention)

If you are submitting in your native language and it is non-Latin based language, you will have the option of uploading a PDF file at the end of this application. Please follow the questions and word limits mentioned in the application template.

A. THE TEAM

The following information is required to capture a basic understanding of those responsible for your initiative and any partnerships that have helped you to meet your goals.

INITIATIVE NAME (required)

Provide the name of the initiative that your team is submitting for consideration of the 2015 Open Government Awards. If the initiative is operating under one or more alternate name(s), provide the name that is most commonly recognized.

Open311: A Transparent and Participatory Approach for Service Delivery

THE NOMINATION (required)

Begin by describing how this initiative was selected. For example, mention any nomination or consultation process held with civil society partners or others when selecting the initiative.

[100 words]

The United States selected this initiative because it fits directly with President Barack Obama's Open Government Initiative, promoting transparency in government, public participation in government decision-making and activities, and collaboration to make government more efficient and effective. In determining the U.S. submission, the Administration consulted with experts on the subject from inside and outside of government, as well as with civil society through an in-person Open Government Working Group meeting, the online U.S. Open Government Discussion Group, and outreach to members of the public. The United States worked closely with city governments and city stakeholders in developing this submission.

Is this initiative included in your country's OGP National Action Plan?

(Applicants can choose initiatives from within OR outside their OGP National Action Plans)

Yes No

GOVERNMENT POINT OF CONTACT (required)

Provide the name, title, phone number(s), email address(es) and mailing address of a single point of contact for the purposes of communicating with your team. The person should be the senior most individual responsible for overseeing the application requirements.

Please also provide the name and professional title of the government official responsible for implementing the initiative, if different from above.

The United States Government point of contact for this entry is U.S. Chief Technology Officer Megan Smith. The physical address is:

Megan Smith
 U.S. Chief Technology Officer
 Office of Science and Technology Policy
 Executive Office of the President
 1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
 Washington, DC 20502
 Tel: +1-202-456-4444
 opengov@ostp.eop.gov

TYPE OF APPLICATION (required)

We strongly encourage applicants to submit a joint application from a government agency and a civil society organization. Only submit a joint application if a civil society organization was involved in either designing, implementing or monitoring the initiative jointly with the government.

Is this a joint application?

Yes No

If yes, please fill out the "civil society point of contact" field below.

CIVIL SOCIETY POINT OF CONTACT

Please provide the name and title of a single point of contact at the organization. By providing these details you acknowledge that you are jointly applying with a civil society organization for the 2015 Open Government Awards.

OTHER PARTNERSHIPS (optional)

If you are partnering with one or more other government agencies, private sector entities, media etc., please list each partner. In 250 words or less, provide a brief narrative of the partnership and the role each partner plays in your initiative.

The concept of an open approach to report non-emergency complaints began in Washington, D.C., and evolved into the cities of San Francisco and Boston, and with civil society industry organizations including SeeClickFix and Connected Bits. The collaborators began calling the approach Open311 and it became the model for websites and mobile applications for citizens to report complaints. Additional support came from several foundations including the Knight Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. This collaboration was facilitated by civil society organizations like OpenPlans, which spent more than a decade building digital platforms for people to collectively shape their cities and build a sense of community, and Code for America, a civic technology organization that works with cities to improve technology inside government.

The City of Chicago became a leading implementer by showcasing a number of both simple and sophisticated applications, including those hosted by the city and those run by third parties. The City of Bloomington, Indiana, joined the collaboration, bringing the perspective of a smaller city, and has helped build an open source ecosystem. The City of New Haven, Connecticut, has also been a laboratory for civic engagement using Open311 technologies in a smaller city.

B. THE INITIATIVE

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is prepared to celebrate a range of successful applicants for the Open Government Awards. This year's theme is Improving Public Services through Open Government. Please visit here for more clarification on the theme. To qualify for recognition, we need to understand the various elements of success of your initiative and its sustainability over time. Please answer the following questions:

PROBLEM DEFINITION (required)

In 200 words or less, please identify the specific problem your initiative intended to solve. Why was this problem important to solve at a particular time and what were the challenges posed by your national (or local) economic or political context?

U.S. cities have approached public service delivery in wide-ranging ways. Some have dedicated call centers where citizens can reach out to city government with questions or concerns about local issues such as potholes, food-borne illnesses, or garbage, while others have simple online forms. Regardless of how well-resourced these systems are, they have historically operated as black boxes or isolated interactions.

When a citizen is unable to see whether government is responding to a complaint — or whether it has even been received — it does little to instill confidence in government. Additionally, new technology and social media have changed expectations for customer service delivery and collaborative problem-solving. There is an opportunity to upgrade the old-fashioned comment box to a more modern solution that can foster trust and understanding between citizens and their government and harness the energy of civic engagement.

Open311 is a transparent, participatory way for governments to deliver services to citizens. It improves trust between citizens and their government to see complaints filed in the open and provides a simple and consistent way to contact government, to complain, and get something fixed. Perhaps more importantly, it provides a platform to build community through collective problem solving.

INITIATIVE DESIGN (required)

In 250 words or less, describe your initiative's goals and objectives. How did it aim to improve public service delivery, who was it intended to benefit (specify the target population), and why was it important to use open government approaches to achieve this goal? If your initiative was designed to improve access or services for disadvantaged or marginalized groups, provide details on this here. Describe any innovations in the design of the initiative.

Open311 is designed to standardize the model for feedback and participation in government service delivery, turning isolated interactions into a public forum. Its name comes from the commonly used 311 phone number that residents can dial in some larger cities to report non-emergency complaints. Like telephone networks that host traditional 311 phone numbers, Open311 is common infrastructure underlying many different systems. Open311 is designed as an open platform comprised of standardized protocols, like the Internet or email, which means that it is not one product or one tool, but the platform that connects many different solutions as cohesive public infrastructure.

At its core, Open311 can be integrated either online through a city's website or via a smartphone application. Both interfaces are user-friendly and built for the average citizen. The ultimate goal is to make these interactions as accessible and seamless as possible so a citizen does not hesitate to report a problem or join a conversation with neighbors.

Cities integrate the Open311 model into their websites and provide access through Open311 apps using a standardized application programming interface (API). This API also allows third parties to integrate the Open311 platform into their own websites and apps so users can access Open311 in the way they feel most comfortable and be confident that their voices will be heard by their government.

The Open311 approach benefits both government and citizens by shedding light on a previously opaque process and assisting with the shared goal of providing needed services as efficiently as possible.

INITIATIVE OUTCOMES (required)

In 450 words or less, explain how your initiative was able to demonstrate one or more of the following results:

- Citizens have better access to information on the public services to which they are entitled, and/or information on the performance of public service providers
- Governments are better at asking for and responding to feedback or complaints by citizens on the quality of public services
- Citizens have ways to actively participate in the design and delivery of public services
- Citizens have mechanisms to monitor and oversee public works and services

Initiatives should also provide evidence if the initiative was able to expand access to public services to a larger population than before or if the quality and efficiency of public services has improved.

If there are any baseline indicators to measure the outcomes of the initiative, please describe them in detail. If the initiative was included in the OGP Action Plan, please describe how this did (or did not) contribute to the initiative's success.

In line with the principles of open government and the U.S. Open Government Initiative, this approach to public service delivery has increased access and transparency, benefitting both citizens and government by speeding interactions, improving efficiency, and increasing accountability, building the public's trust in government and improving relationships between government and citizens.

Using an Open311 approach allows citizens to have real-time access to monitor and oversee government's receipt of and response to complaints. Through New Haven's Open311 platform, for example, a concerned passerby reported an abandoned dog, which led to robust community interaction: a local elected official commented on the thread encouraging action, a police officer reported that help was on the way, and the original passerby declared the problem solved. This all happened in real time on a website that anyone can access and, afterward, New Haven reported that some of the 2,000 people who viewed the thread became more engaged with civic issues and even began volunteering.

Open311 has been the subject of several studies analyzing impact and social dynamics. A Harvard Business School study found that when citizens had more insight into public services, their attitudes towards government and government service delivery improved significantly. The platform has also expanded the reach for residents to submit complaints to their governments. A study published in the Public Administration Review showed that lower-income residents as well as young, college-aged individuals were more likely to use the Open311-enabled smartphone app than the traditional phone number or website. The City of Boston has seen an increase in service reports since launching an Open311 app, while seeing a reduction in repeat calls. And San Francisco's Open311 cases now account for 25 percent of the city's service requests.

Open311 has also created new ways for cities to interact with their residents. In Chicago, the city proactively tracks complaints of food poisoning or food-borne illness publicly posted on Twitter. The city replies to tweets with a link to a web form where the illness can be reported, routed through the city's Open311 system, and shared with the Chicago Department of Public Health.

And because Open311 data is all publicly available, users can take that open data and visualize common complaints in creative ways like New York University's Furman Center's word map or Visualizing.org's heat map both did for New York City.

Open311 also has provided smaller cities that otherwise would not be able to support a call center or real-time reporting system, like Bloomington, with a way to provide real-time reporting and service delivery by leveraging the same approach as larger cities.

INITIATIVE SUSTAINABILITY (required)

In 200 words or less, please describe any plans for scaling up or sustaining the initiative. Base your description of the strategy on the information provided in the previous sections, such as how you intend to leverage your current success and increase your reach or capacity. Address any threats or operational challenges to your initiative and describe how you manage those risks on a regular basis.

Open311 was launched by the cities of Washington, D.C., and San Francisco and further developed as a collaboration among several companies and additional cities through coordination provided by OpenPlans and Code for America. Today, Open311 continues to grow both domestically and internationally. Technical development is organized like an open source project managed publicly on mailing lists and collaborative platforms like GitHub with support from a core team of individuals from government, industry, and civil society. This team is exploring the possibility of incorporating into an existing standards body. Yet, the fact that Open311 is an open platform has meant that its growth and adoption has been organic rather than centralized under one entity.

The Open311 ecosystem has been able to truly flourish with the support of industry and the integration of the platform into many existing efforts in cities. Internationally, Open311 has expanded with the support of the World Bank and the European Commission. The World Bank has included Open311 in several projects from the Philippines to Tanzania and the EU has used Open311 as the basis for several pan-European efforts.

VALIDATION OF CLAIMS (required)

While it is strongly encouraged that each initiative includes an implementing partner, such as a Civil Society Organization, private sector agency, media entity, etc., it is not a requirement. However, you are required to secure and upload documents from at least two credible nongovernmental actors, who can attest to the veracity of the claims made in your application.

You are only allowed to upload one file. If you have multiple documents, please zip them into a single file first. The file types that are allowed to be uploaded have an extension of .ZIP, .PDF, .DOC, .DOCX, .XLS or .XLSX.

United States validation letters 2015.pdf

C. THE PITCH

The following information allows each applicant to make their strongest (and final) case for consideration.

BEST CASE (required)

In 250 words or less, please present the most compelling facts for why your initiative should be recognized. This is an opportunity to distinguish your initiative, based on any factors that you have not had the opportunity to describe in the previous sections. What is your best argument for why your initiative has achieved a meaningful outcome? What elements of the initiative make it different and better than others that have been tried and tested? Be creative and concise.

The power of Open311 is that it allows people to work together on issues that are relatively small, discrete, and easily solvable. These tangible and relatable interactions become more visible and easier to participate in, creating new avenues for civic participation.

Open311 also has the potential to simplify the complexity of government by creating a common interface that could cover an increasing number of services. By providing a wide range of services in one place, citizens no longer must navigate from agency to agency, which can be a frustrating process. This unified approach also means that leaders in government and citizens alike can easily identify common problems and assess how well they are being addressed.

Open311 is a model for a more transparent and participatory way for the public and their governments to engage and build open ecosystems around service delivery. These open ecosystems have resulted in improved relationships and increased trust between citizens and their governments, and better service delivery to be sure that citizens are receiving the best their governments can provide.

Open311 has also helped foster sharing and reuse of tools in dozens of cities in eight countries across the world, from a city in Indiana sharing its open source Open311 system with other cities in the region to the Open311 platform for cities in Germany being reused in Mozambique. The United States has led this effort and will continue to promote improved delivery of public services in transparent and participatory ways such as through Open311.

VIDEO SUBMISSION or ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS (optional)

OGP does not offer a venue for applicants to meet our judges during the application process. In order to provide the opportunity for making a personal connection, you are encouraged to upload a short video to complement your application. You may also depict an individual participant in your initiative and describe his or her experience. We do not need to know actual names or personal details. Take this opportunity to tell a story, to connect with our panel of experts, so that they might better understand your attention to specific needs.

Video submissions should follow these guidelines:

Maximum length of 3-4 minutes.

Please focus on personal presentations; it's not necessary to develop a sophisticated or polished video.

Here are some logistical and technical suggestions:

Video cameras, digital cameras, and phones are easy ways to record a video.
 Laptop and desktop computers can typically record video through Skype or other software.
 If possible, set to a low resolution to reduce file size. This will enable an easier video uploading process.
 If you are having difficulty uploading the video file, try logging out of the application and logging back in using another Internet browser.

Here are general suggestions for delivering a high-quality video pitch:

Introduce yourself and your initiative. Focus on describing your intended benefits and/or services and how they have been effective. What is unique about your initiative, partners, or technical approach? Keep your description and language simple.

* NOTE

If the burden of developing a video presentation is either prohibitive or might not reflect the best characterization of your initiative, then you are not required to submit one, and the judges are instructed not to discount your application because it may not include a video. You may upload additional documents instead, such as proof of implementation and results if you wish. This could take the form of evaluation or audit reports, citizen surveys, media reports etc. that would provide additional validation for judges. We hope that this option offers a new and inventive way in which you can best express the results of your work.

You are only allowed to upload one file with a maximum of 3 pages. This file must be in English or in your native language. If you have multiple documents, please zip them into a single file first. The file types that are allowed to be uploaded have an extension of .ZIP, .PDF, .DOC, .DOCX, .XLS or .XLSX.

Full Submission Of non-Latin Based Native Language

If your language is Latin based, DO NOT use this upload field. Please use the application above.

You are only allowed to upload one file with an extension of .PDF