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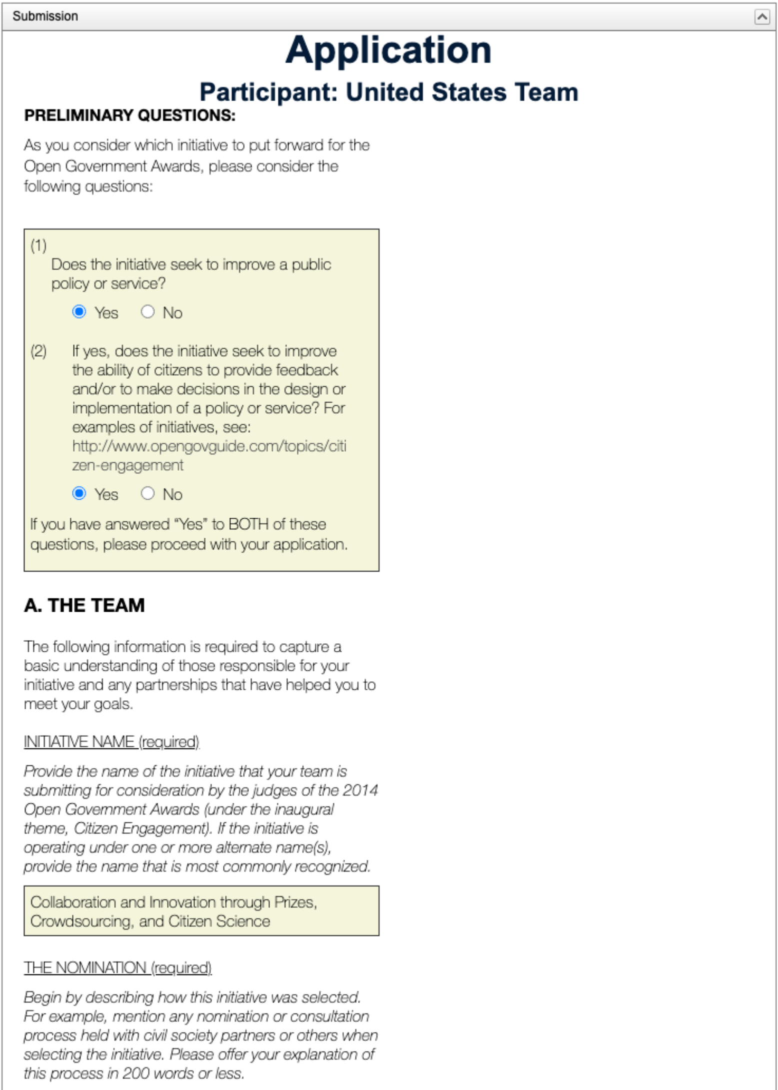

Application

Participant: United States Team

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS:

As you consider which initiative to put forward for the Open Government Awards, please consider the following questions:

(1) Does the initiative seek to improve a public policy or service?

● Yes ○ No

(2) If yes, does the initiative seek to improve the ability of citizens to provide feedback and/or to make decisions in the design or implementation of a policy or service? For examples of initiatives, see: http://www.opengovguide.com/topics/citizen-engagement

● Yes ○ No

If you have answered "Yes" to BOTH of these questions, please proceed with your application.

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 by the judges of the 2014 Open Government Awards (under the inaugural theme, Citizen Engagement). If the initiative is operating under one or more alternate name(s), provide the name that is most commonly recognized.

Collaboration and Innovation through Prizes, Crowdsourcing, and Citizen Science

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. Please offer your explanation of this process in 200 words or less.

The United States selected this initiative because it is an element of President Barack Obama's *Strategy for American Innovation*, an effort to advance national priorities by collaborating with civil society, including companies, universities, foundations, philanthropists, organizations, and everyday Americans. In completing the U.S. entry, 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.

GOVERNMENT POINT OF CONTACT (required)

Provide the name and title of a single point of contact for the purposes of communicating with your team. The person should be the most senior individual responsible for overseeing the application submission. Provide the phone number(s), email address(es), and physical address of your designated point of contact. You may provide alternate contact information, if it is a direct means for reaching the designated point of contact.

The United States Government point of contact for this entry is U.S. Chief Technology Officer Todd Park. Mr. Park is best reached through U.S. Deputy CTO Nick Sinai. The physical address is:

Todd Park
U.S. Chief Technology Officer
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CIVIL SOCIETY POINT OF CONTACT (strongly recommended)

We strongly encourage applicants to submit a joint application from a government agency and a civil society partner. If submitting a joint application, please provide the name and title of a single point of contact at the partner organization. If not, please be sure to focus on the "validation of claims" in Section B (see pg. A-3).

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OTHER PARTNERSHIPS (optional)

If you are partnering with one or more other government agencies, private sector entities, media, or other organizations, please list each partner. In 250 words or less, provide a brief narrative of the partnership, including the roles that each partner assumes in the initiative.

This entry involves collaborative projects across many U.S. Federal agencies, as well as civil society.

More than 50 U.S. Federal agencies have offered more than 330 prizes totaling $64 million from 2010-2014 to engage citizen solvers on Challenge.gov, a government-wide platform hosted by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, GSA, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) provide training to government employees on prize design and administration.

The National Archives and Records Administration is working with researchers, genealogists, historians, Wikipedians, and members of the public to make more of the 12 billion pages of permanent government records available online. Contributions include tags, transcriptions, indexes, images, articles, and comments.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) relies on citizen Internet users to measure their broadband performance and share that data. Mobile users download easy-to-navigate apps which provide data to the FCC to share, analyze, and report on for interested stakeholders and the public.

Since 2011, NASA has worked with more than 20,000 volunteers in dozens of countries around the world to create thousands of web and mobile applications to spark innovation in future space missions and to improve life on Earth.

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is the lead sponsor of the U.S.A. National Phenology Network which monitors the impact of climate change on plants and animals across the nation. Since 2009, citizens and professionals have contributed more than 3.5 million data points to the Network that are freely shared with the public.

B. THE INITIATIVE

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is prepared to celebrate a range of successful applicants to the Open Government Awards. This year's theme is "citizen engagement." To qualify for recognition, we need to understand the various elements of success for your initiative and its sustainability over time.

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 for the particular context in which you are working?

By harnessing the knowledge of the public, government can leverage crowd-sourced solutions to tough or seemingly intractable problems, yielding new insights and innovative solutions. In a 2009 speech, President Obama emphasized the importance of more inclusive and open government, directing the Administration to "find new ways of tapping the knowledge and experience of ordinary Americans."

In response to the President's call to action, a number of Federal agencies have launched open innovation efforts, offering citizens a way to participate in policy-making, improve government services, and offer solutions to tough problems. Such initiatives have harnessed the expertise, ingenuity, and creativity of the American public much more effectively today than ever before. Through prizes, crowdsourcing, and citizen science, Americans have greater opportunities to be active contributors in making their government more efficient and effective.

TARGET POPULATION (required)

In 100 words or less, please identify the target population who may benefit from this initiative. Highlight your understanding of the needs or *demands of the target population that were addressed by your initiative.*

Innovative efforts to solve problems through prizes, crowdsourcing, and citizen science allow the United States to engage a wide range of participants—including those across government, specific communities of practice, and the general public.

These initiatives are an important part of how the United States is incorporating the public as meaningful participants in the innovation engine of the United States. Foundations, universities, research institutions, and organizations collaborate alongside historians, scientists, consumers, and ordinary citizens to play an active role in solving problems, improving government services, and informing and creating policy.

INITIATIVE DESIGN (required)

In 350 words or less, describe your initiative's goals and objectives. Focus specifically on how the initiative was designed to meet those objectives. For example, identify stage(s) of the policy/service design or implementation when you solicited citizen participation. What kind of participation did you seek from citizens (e.g., feedback, consultation, joint decision-making, monitoring of activities, etc.)? Explain why this particular approach was best suited to achieve the initiative's goals. How did you encourage citizens to participate? Describe any innovations in the design of the initiative.

In the spirit of open and collaborative government, Federal agencies launched a wide range of initiatives using prizes, crowdsourcing, and citizen science to engage with the public. The America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010 provided broad authority to all U.S. Federal agencies to use prizes and competitions to spur innovation in creating solutions to problems including improving vehicle safety and building homes to withstand hurricanes.

The National Archives engages citizens to help unlock historical government records through crowdsourcing projects on the Citizen Archivist Dashboard. With more than 12 billion pages of paper records alone, there is no shortage of records to digitize or transcribe in the National Archives. The Archives is leveraging the power of crowds and external communities to contribute through online tools and in-person events.

The FCC works collaboratively with industry, academia, public interest organizations, and others to develop open and transparent platforms for measuring broadband performance through its Measuring Broadband America program. The program's FCC Speed Test App, a crowd-sourced smartphone application, measures volunteers' mobile broadband performance throughout the United States. Participants share information about their handsets and operating systems as well as speed and performance characteristics of the broadband connection measured by the app.

NASA's International Space Apps Challenge is an annual, international mass collaboration over a 48-hour period each year in cities around the world. The Challenge pairs openly available data supplied through NASA missions and technology with the talent and skill of passionate volunteers from around the planet in order to advance space exploration and improve the quality of life on Earth.

Thousands of citizen and professional scientists are working together through Nature's Notebook, a project of the U.S.A. National Phenology Network, which is funded primarily by USGS. Nature's Notebook collects biodiversity information to advance science, inform decisions, and communicate with the public about the changing environment. This information, on the timing of life cycle events such as tree-leafing and bird migration, is critical to manage wildlife, invasive species, and agricultural pests; to understand drought and wildfire risk; and to manage risks to human health and welfare, including allergies, asthma, and vector-borne diseases.

INITIATIVE OUTCOMES (required)

In 250 words or less, describe the intended outcomes and the actual outcomes that the initiative achieved. Who were the ultimate beneficiaries, and what benefits did they experience? For example, list any concrete improvements in policy, services, behaviors, or power relations between the government and citizens. Try to present your case from the perspective of the various stakeholders involved (e.g., your agency, citizens, Civil Society Organizations, media, et al.). If there are any baseline indicators or standards to measure the outcomes of the initiative, such as the breadth of depth of engagement, please describe them in detail.

While U.S. Government open innovation initiatives have benefited both citizens and government in countless ways, some concrete outcomes are highlighted below.

Citizen Archivist Dashboard: Since 2012, citizens have contributed millions of tags, metadata, transcriptions, video subtitles, and digital images to the project. More than 200,000 volunteers transcribed 132 million names from the recently released 1940 U.S. Census to enable the public's ability to search these records and find their ancestors.

Measuring Broadband America: More than 250,000 members of the public have been engaged throughout the project to provide speed testing data, comments, and feedback on improving Internet connectivity. The data, reports, and other products have benefited consumers as Internet service providers improved performance.

International Space Apps Challenge: In the third-annual challenge this year, more than 8,000 volunteers in 95 cities across 46 countries participated in 40 challenges supporting NASA's mission. In three years, more than 2,000 crowd-sourced solutions have resulted in methods to monitor air, water, and urban pollution, track environmental mishaps, alert citizens of health or weather-related disasters, and track the stars.

Nature's Notebook: Since 2009, citizens and professionals have contributed more than 3.5 million data points to *Nature's Notebook*, an application that makes data freely available to anyone. In 2013, data from the Network were used to improve models predicting seasonal activity of tree species in the United States, which has implications for local activities and economies, such as maple syrup production, honey production, allergy seasons, bird migrations, and harvesting native herbs.

INITIATIVE SUSTAINABILITY (required)

In 200 words or less, please describe any plans for scaling up and/or sustaining the initiative in the future. Base your description of the strategy on 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 intend to manage those risks on a regular basis.

The United States continues to expand upon open innovation efforts by providing training to government employees on best practices and implementation of such programs. An "innovation toolkit" documents and promotes the use of tools available to agencies to drive innovative results.

Additionally, many efforts have turned into lasting working relationships between government and civil society. For example, through the National Archives' collaboration with Wikipedia, Archives' records have already been incorporated into more than 4,000 Wikipedia articles. The Space Apps Challenge has spurred innovation on an international scale, creating new open source apps and catalyzing new job opportunities, start-ups, and funding. Finally, the USGS is working to leverage the protocols and systems in *Nature's Notebook* for other government agencies such as the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as non-governmental organizations, to manage their own projects.

VALIDATION OF CLAIMS (required)

While it is strongly encouraged that each initiative includes partners, such as Civil Society Organizations, private sector agencies, media entities, etc., it is not a requirement. However, you are required to secure and upload documents from one or more credible nongovernmental actors who can attest to the veracity of any 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.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 2011 *Strategy for American Innovation* reminds us that “Great ideas can come from many corners.” Government can harness American ingenuity and creativity by providing ways for civil society to be active participants in public-private collaborations and open innovation methods such as incentive prizes, crowdsourcing, and citizen science.

U.S. Federal agencies have long worked to harness the ideas and expertise of the American people to solve pressing societal problems, improve the effectiveness of government, and stimulate economic growth by institutionalizing the use of innovative methods including prizes, crowdsourcing, and citizen science. While this entry features only a few examples, Federal agencies have connected with various dimensions of civil society including businesses, academics, foundations, and philanthropists to design and offer programs for collaboration with the public to achieve results that the government alone cannot.

These efforts pursue compelling and audacious yet achievable goals that harness science, technology, and innovation to solve important problems in areas of national priority including energy, health, infrastructure, agriculture, education and workforce development, and food and nutrition. The successful outcomes resulting from these efforts have led to commitments by government and civil society to expand their use of open innovation approaches. For example, Federal agencies offered 85 percent more prizes to solve challenges in fiscal year 2013 than in the year before, solidifying the United States a leader in this space.

VIDEO SUBMISSION (recommended*)

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:

- Include the following:
    - 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?
- Hone your content:
    - Keep your description and language simple.
    - Demonstrate passion through your words and enthusiasm.

*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. We hope that this option offers a new and inventive way in which you can best express the results of your work.