

U.S. Small Business Administration OPEN GOVERNMENT REPORT

FY 2014



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Introduction

Because the benefits of an open government are so obvious and compelling, President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government on his first full day in office.

As public servants working at SBA, we know that even with the best of policies and personnel, the public cannot be well served by a distant or inaccessible government. Therefore, we enthusiastically embrace the tenets of open government; transparency, collaboration, and public participation to engage our customers, stakeholders, and broader public citizenry.

These principles inform everything that we do, and we are always reaching out to the public and encouraging them to reach out to us through use of our online tools, access to SBA-hosted public events, and public information initiatives like our preemptive FOIA program.

We have made great strides in open government over the past two years, and we have laid a solid foundation to ensure that open government is not just a program at SBA, but it is the way we do business every day.



Paul Christy
Chief Operating Officer
SBA Open Government Executive Sponsor

Purpose of the Open Government Plan

SBA's Open Government Plan details our efforts to fulfill the President's promise of an open and transparent government for the American people.

My Administration is committed to creating an unprecedented level of openness in Government. We will work together to ensure the public trust and establish a system of **TRANSPARENCY**, public **PARTICIPATION**, and **COLLABORATION**. Openness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government.

—PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

SBA's Flagship Initiative

Open Data

SBA's Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) established an Open Data Working Group (ODWG) to lead the agency's open data efforts. This working group is comprised of representatives from all SBA Program Offices and functional areas, with support from OCIO.

The primary objective of this working group is to define a process to implement and execute Executive Order 13642, "Making Open and Machine Readable the New Default for Government Information" and OMB M-13-13 "Open Data Policy—Managing Information as an Asset."

The ODWG is working towards the approval of the standard operating procedure to set clear objectives, procedures, and governance of its open data activities. This working group approved the ODWG Charter on April 17, 2014.

SBA has published the following 10 data sets at www.sba.gov/data:

- Dynamic Small Business Search
- Lender Search
- Business License and Permit Search Tool
- Loans and Grants Search
- Recommended Sites
- US City and County Websites
- Content Share
- Small Business Program Finder
- Green.sba.gov
- SBA District Offices

The ODWG recently updated the Public Data Listing and the Digital Strategy page at www.sba.gov/data to report data sets newly added during the open data activities quarter ending May 31st 2014. We maintain an ongoing Enterprise Data Inventory to catalog a current list of SBA's data assets. All of SBA's open data activities are reported to OMB as a part of a quarterly progress update. Additionally, as a part of the ODWG's data publication process, we submit updates of ODWG's publishing activities to OMB's website, the OMB Max Portal.

ODWG is currently engaging SBA program offices to identify operating data sets that may be suitable to be published as a part of the open data project. As the data sets are assessed by a cross-section of SBA programs to determine data ownership, security issues, privacy implications, proprietary issues, etc., the data sets that are cleared for public use will be added to the open data catalog and updated with OMB per the established compliance mandates.



2012 Flagship Update

BusinessUSA

Over the last several years, the government has conferred with thousands of business owners to hear what works and what doesn't when they deal with the federal government. Entrepreneurs, especially small business owners, stated that they do not have the time or resources to navigate the complex maze of government agencies and need a one-stop-shop where they can locate all the assistance needed during every stage of business development.

On October 28, 2011, the President issued a Memorandum entitled, ***"Making It Easier for America's Small Businesses and America's Exporters to Access Government Service to Help Them Grow and Hire."*** In response, BusinessUSA was initiated as an interagency effort, focused on improving the way business interacts with the federal government as a means to support growth and job creation.

The U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) were named as Co-Chairs to serve as the Executive Committee to coordinate the strategy, design, development, launch, and operation of BusinessUSA. This interagency team is supported by a group of federal agency partners including:

- Department of Defense
- Department of Veteran Affairs
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Housing and Urban Development
- Department of Health and Human Services
- General Services Administration
- United States Department of Agriculture
- Department of Energy
- Office of Management and Budget
- Department of State
- Export/Import Bank
- Overseas Private Investment Corporation
- Department of Transportation
- Department of Treasury, Department of Justice
- National Science Foundation
- United States Trade Development Agency
- Department of Education
- Department of Labor
- Department of Interior
- Department of Homeland Security, and
- National Aeronautical and Space Administration

To date, over 200 federal representatives have contributed to achieving the goals of the Presidential Memorandum.



BusinessUSA helps businesses and exporters of all sizes find information about federal programs without wasting time and resources navigating the federal bureaucracy. It streamlines and coordinates federal program assistance through easy-to-access points via the BusinessUSA.gov website and 1-800-FED-INFO contact center. These central points of access are capable of providing a full range of government programs and services including:

- development and training options
- financing choices
- federal contracting
- procurement opportunities
- international trade
- exporting guidance
- business patent and trade assistance
- disaster relief assistance
- services for veterans
- women-owned and minority businesses
- events
- workshops
- services available through state, regional and local organizations, and more

BusinessUSA is about providing great customer service and giving Americans the government they deserve. It is a “No Wrong Door” approach for businesses and exporters. BusinessUSA creates a common platform to match businesses with the services relevant to them, regardless of where the information is located or which agency’s website, call center, or office they go to for help. BusinessUSA’s easy to find access points enable customers to get the information they need, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through one central website. Customers can also communicate with staff via contact center and through email during normal hours of operation. Customers can use BusinessUSA’s online tool to request appointments with knowledgeable business development staff. They can also follow BusinessUSA through social media Twitter and Linked-In.

BusinessUSA fully embraces open government. It has published its quarterly performance through Performance.gov and discloses its investment development plans through the OMB Exhibit 300 reporting process. Moreover, BusinessUSA is one of several smarter, more efficient government initiatives. It uses existing technology and augments that technology only when needed. It leverages shared resources as a form of cost sharing, savings and/or avoidance. It has primarily leveraged web-hosting, development, security, operations and contact center services from GSA. It also leverages cloud-based solutions to improve operational effectiveness. It uses Application Program Interfaces (APIs) to capture content electronically and represent agency-originated information. It embraces the federal digital strategy and integrates Software-as-a-Service, Platform-as-a-Service, and Infrastructure-as-a-Service into its enterprise architecture. This approach minimizes the need to purchase costly hardware and expensive technology operational solutions. It uses technology to identify existing programming codes that can be adapted (at little to no charge) to meet product development needs. To date, BusinessUSA has been able to recycle and reuse over 80% of programming code. It practices an



“agile” approach to the development of technology. This approach has contributed to clearer objectives, shorter development times, frequent release schedules, better tools and a responsive website design (for mobile and desk top device usage).

Further, BusinessUSA has been recognized for its outstanding leadership and innovation when it comes to using recycled code in the development of its online products and tools. It was presented with the *Igniting Innovation—Reduce, Reuse, Recycle 2014 Award* by the American Council for Technology–Industry Advisory Council (ACT-IAC), a public-private partnership in the government IT community. ACT-IAC selected BusinessUSA from a pool of over 80 candidates representing various governmental agencies and private industries.

Since the release of the BusinessUSA.gov website on February 17, 2012 through April 18, 2014, there have been nearly 1.8M visits, with over 5.1M pages viewed, approximately 89K content subscribers, and roughly 29K Twitter followers. BusinessUSA greatly expanded the number of business-facing resources (programs, services, tools, and data) in one central location from 297 at launch to more than 6,900 federal, state and local resources. In addition, it has promoted nearly 200 success stories and 49,000 local business-related events from partners through “really simple syndication” feeds.

BusinessUSA is focused on expanding its social media campaign to attract attention from entrepreneurs and small businesses. Through these efforts, it anticipates continued growth in the number of social media followers, customer contacts, and customer referrals to federal partner agencies.

Eliminating the necessity to navigate federal bureaucracy, BusinessUSA is helping to transform businesses into globally competitive enterprises by providing an efficient one-stop-shop experience for America’s business entrepreneurs.

Business.gov Web Services

As a direct result of SBA’s efforts to provide easily accessible data sets, the agency launched the first of many web services, with the intent of collaborating with businesses to build web applications and solutions. Web Services refers to open software systems designed to support machine-to-machine interaction over a network. The BusinessUSA.gov web services use an API to enable this interaction. The API is free of charge, does not require registration, and allows for unlimited calls. Data provided by BusinessUSA.gov to users determines which new features and content the agency will provide to help the nation's small businesses start, grow and manage their operations.

BusinessUSA.gov’s APIs allow the end user to access information from:

- active keyword searches
- programmatic content and services available on BusinessUSA.gov
- events that are entered or pulled through a machine-readable feed
- success stories
- articles
- data and tools

Additionally, as part of the Federal Digital Strategy and Open Government initiatives, BusinessUSA.gov takes data sets and APIs from other federal agencies in order to provide accurate, real-time government information and data on the live site. Below is a list of APIs that BusinessUSA.gov is accessing and uploading:

Parature Knowledgebase (help.business.usa.gov)

Description: Users of the BusinessUSA website site can submit questions/tickets/stories/etc. This information is indexed into a knowledge base hosted by Parature. The BusinessUSA site then consumes this user-submitted information (and responses) into the BusinessUSA website, and makes it searchable by BusinessUSA's search engine.

FedBizOps

Description: FedBizOps.gov has a massive database of solicitations, presolicitations, awards, etc. We consume solicitations from this site into BusinessUSA in order to presents users with related/desired information.

FBOOpen.gsa.gov

Description: FBOOpen is an API that provides an outlet to search and sift through data in the FBO.gov site. We use this API to pull information from the FBO.gov site live to present the user with desired information. (We use this API rather than searching through the massive amount of content consumed by the previous data-source mentioned above in order to reduce processing usage on our server.)

Grants.gov

Description: We pull content from Grants.gov in order to display grants on our site through our search engine, and in order to present the users with information about Green-[Energy] related grants in our 'Find Opportunities for Green Businesses' wizard.

Challenges.gov

Description: We pull information about open government challenges from Challenges.gov with to share with our users in our search results page, and our 'Find Opportunities for Green Businesses' wizard.

WhiteHouse.gov

Description: We consume blogs from the whitehouse.gov website that are tagged with "Small Business" or "Economy", and then display this information on our blogs page, and in our search results.

Trade.gov

Description: Trade.gov offers multiple APIs in which we consume content from the Trade Developer portal.

Api.trade.gov–Market Research Library API

Description: We consume content from this API and store it in our database under our "data" content-type for the purposes of displaying desired information on our search results page.



Api.trade.gov–ITA Office Locations API

Description: We consume content from this API and store it in our database under our “Resource Centers” content-type for the purposes of displaying desired information on our “Request an Appointment,” “International Offices,” and search results page.

Api.trade.gov–Trade Events API

Description: We consume and store content as events in our system from this API in order to show these events on our events page, as well as various other locations on our site.

Api.trade.gov–Trade News & Articles API

Description: We consume trade articles from this API, and store them as content in our CMS so that users may find related information they are looking for through our search engine.

SBA.gov

Description: We consume this content from SBA.gov in order to show upcoming events information to users based on their geographical location in several areas of the site, as well as populate information in our event listings page and request an appointment page.

SBA.gov–Articles

Description: We consume articles from SBA in order to present this information to our users in our search results page and in Parature’s Knowledgebase.

SBA.gov–Lenders

Description: We receive an updated dump of lenders data from SBA.gov and import it into our database every few months.

SBA.gov–Training Materials

Description: We site-rip ‘learning center’ content from SBA.gov to populate data within our training materials page, and to show these resources on our search results page.

Commerce.gov Blogs

Description: We consume blogs from the commerce.gov to display this information in our blogs page and in our search results.

CareerOneStop.org (myskillsmyfuture.org)

Description: CareerOneStop offers multiple APIs which are used heavily in our “Hiring Employees” wizard. Based on the path taken in this wizard, the results are populated using these APIs.

OSTI.gov (Department of Energy/DOE-patents)

Description: We consume patents related to green energy from [what appears to be] a microsite on osti.gov to present this information to the user in our “Find Opportunities for Green Businesses” wizard.



Other Initiatives

Records Management

The SBA Records Management public link is available at http://www.sba.gov/about-sba/sba_performance/open_government/information_quality/sba_records_management.

The link takes the public to a high-level description of the SBA records management program and staff responsibilities. It also takes the user to links to 44 U.S.C. Chapter 31, the basic laws and authorities of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and to the SBA Policy and Handbook of the SBA Records Management Program.

Complying with the November 2011 Memorandum, “Managing Government Records”

In accordance with the requirements in sections 2(b)(1) to 2(b)(3) of the Presidential Memorandum on Managing Government Records, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Small Business Administration submitted on March 26, 2012, SBA’s response. In accordance with section 2(a)(3), SBA designated the COO as the Senior Agency Official (SAO). In November 2012, SBA notified NARA that the SAO designation was assigned to the new Deputy Chief Operating Office/Chief Administrative Officer (DCOO/CAO). In accordance with Directive Area 2.1, this designation was reconfirmed on November 5, 2013. In December 2012, SBA notified NARA that the SBA position of Records Officer had been filled.

SBA’s Records Management Activity in Relation to the August 2012 Managing Government Records Directive

As described in the Government Accountability Office (GAO) Entrance Conference in April 2014 in response to GAO Engagement 311511, the SBA Records Management Division (RMD) is responsible for managing several agency-wide programs. With a staff of four, the RMD is responsible for all SBA Standard Operating Procedures (163), Paperwork Reduction Act/Information Collection packages (70), forms (over 400), and Federal Register notice and rulemaking activities, as well as the agency-wide records management program. The SBA RMD Director, who also serves as the SBA records officer, provided verbal and written responses to the GAO Engagement on Directive Areas 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5.

Directive Area 1.1: SBA is in the process of developing a plan in the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) for the management of electronic records in an electronic format and for transitioning from paper-based records management to electronic records management where feasible and legally authorized. SBA intends to incorporate into its plan the management of SBA’s permanent electronic records in electronic formats. SBA will identify and analyze services, resources, recordkeeping practices, milestones, and electronic formats specified and accepted by NARA. SBA is developing a records scheduling plan that will include interviews with program offices, the identification of current records creation and recordkeeping practices, and the updating of its records schedules to include media neutral records disposition instructions.

Directive Area 1.2: SBA reported in the Senior Agency Official Annual Report to OMB and NARA on SBA’s status of managing permanent and temporary email records in an accessible



electronic format. The agency is in the process of developing a plan for the management of email records and the identification of permanent and temporary email records. It is also in the process of defining the “high level officials” of the agency and developing a records disposition schedule for the permanent retention of high level official records created and received in all formats. Comparable to the NARA “Capstone” initiative, SBA entered into a memorandum of agreement with NARA in 2013 concerning the transfer to NARA of a sample of the previous SBA Administrator and Deputy Administrator emails for analysis. SBA is in the process of transferring the sample emails to NARA.

Directive Area 2.2: Through the SAO, the SBA records officer provided a two-part response to NARA per NARA’s requests with regard to requirement 2.2. The records officer responded to the NARA request to report about all permanent records in SBA facilities that are 30 years old or older by stating that there are no known 30-year old permanent records in SBA facilities. This was reported by the NARA revised deadline of January 31, 2014. In addition, NARA sent to agencies on May 30, 2013 a spreadsheet of permanent records 30 years old or older maintained in NARA Federal Records Centers. NARA identified 20 cubic feet of SBA records in seven accessions in the Washington National Records Center (WNRC). Records in four accessions were eligible for transfer to the National Archives in 2010 and three accessions will be eligible for transfer in 2015. The SBA records officer will work with the appropriate program offices on the transfer of the records.

Directive Area 2.3: The creation and maintenance of a list of permanent records will be part of the SBA records management program’s comprehensive records scheduling initiative.

The agency records officer is in the process of taking the NARA on-line courses to receive the NARA certificate and the RO anticipates the completion of the courses by the end of FY14.

The agency’s records management analyst is taking the NARA classroom courses and anticipate completing his certificate by the end of CY14.

Directive Area 2.4: On March 11, 2013, the SBA Chief Operating Officer issued a memo to the Administrator, Deputy Administrator, and the Chief of Staff, reminding them of their legal records management responsibilities and the policy of SBA, especially with regard to the departure and transition of senior executives.

The SBA records officer joined SBA in December 2012. The records officer conducted in FY13 five training sessions that included the staff of the Offices of the Administrator, the SBA Center Directors, the headquarters correspondence managers, the staff of the Washington Metropolitan Area District Office, and over 100 administrative officers from across SBA. In addition, the records officer developed and distributed two brochures about records management and posted notices on the electronic bulletin board about the new secure shredding services implemented at headquarters.

So far in FY2014, the records officer has drafted training slides for an on-line training course to be taken by SBA high-level officials. The records officer discussed with the Office of Human Resources Solutions the addition of a records management segment as part of the in-processing of new employees. The records officer regularly participates in or provides advice

and guidance to the administrative officers and support staff in SBA field offices as part of the SBA Office of Field Operations meetings.

The SBA records officer is a member of the Federal Records Officers Network (FRON), an organization formed in FY13 to collaborate on records management matters and to provide consolidated federal records management information to the NARA Chief Records Officer. The FRON is in the process of developing government-wide training materials for senior officials and all federal staff and making the training materials available on the OMB MAX portal. The SBA records officer will participate in the FRON development of training materials and will identify with SBA senior management the methodology for making records management training available to SBA senior officials and staff.

SBA may face as a challenge the internal review and approval process of training materials and may face as a challenge the technical capability of SBA's IT infrastructure in making the training available to all staff. SBA is considering methods for making the training available, as well as the tracking of the training completion rates.

Directive Area 2.5: The SBA records officer coordinated with the NARA account representative by requesting a report of all temporary, permanent, and unscheduled records of SBA stored in the NARA Federal Records Centers (FRC). For more than 20 years, until the end of FY13, SBA ran one records storage facility, located in the Washington D.C. area. In FY13, the last option year of the records storage contract, SBA entered into an interagency agreement with NARA's Washington National Records Center (WNRC) for the move of 5400 cubic feet of SBA records to the NARA Philadelphia FRC. No unscheduled records were identified. With regard to the number of unscheduled records that are stored at NARA facilities, the SBA records officer received the NARA FRC unscheduled records report, identifying 55 cubic feet (21 accessions) of unscheduled records in the Chicago and Philadelphia FRCs out of the over 49,000 cubic feet of SBA records in the NARA FRC system. The report identifies the records as consisting of audit case files. The SBA records officer will work with the SBA Chicago and Philadelphia offices on identifying the content and disposition of the records.

To schedule records of all media by the December 31, 2016 deadline, SBA hired a new records officer in December 2012 and a records management analyst in July 2013. With this new staff on board, SBA intends to develop by the end of FY14 a schedule of interviews to be held with each program office to analyze out-of-date and begin the process of developing new records disposition schedules. Draft records schedules are currently being developed for the Offices of the Administrator, the Office of the Inspector General, and the Office of Disaster Assistance. SBA expects to submit these three records schedules for internal review and clearance in FY14 and submission to NARA in FY15. Based on the interview schedule and the inventory of out-of-date scheduled records and unscheduled records, SBA will continue to submit records schedules for records of all media to NARA throughout FY15 and FY16. As part of the records scheduling initiative, the SBA records management program is updating its Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and will submit the draft SOP into internal clearance by the end of FY14.



SBA.gov—The Business Gateway

SBA.gov—the Business Gateway investment represents an important part of the US Small Business Administration’s digital strategy on providing information on and access to capital, counseling, federal contracting, disaster assistance, and entrepreneurial education. This includes:

- Access to agency reports and program information
- Online tools to support entrepreneurs and potential small business owners
- Distributed network of program, regional, and field office websites
- Digital communications and outreach targeting small businesses
- Dissemination of content through APIs in machine readable format

Transparency

The SBA.gov homepage has been redesigned to feature dynamic content that changes on a daily basis. This includes videos on a variety of small business and SBA program topics, announcements on in-person training events, and national webinars and live blog feeds. Blogs provide useful information on agency-level business, key announcements regarding programs and services, and small business-related content, all of which help drive traffic throughout the site. Approximately 10% of all page views on SBA.gov are driven by SBA’s blogs.

In addition, the “About SBA” section of the site has been revamped to improve online usability and access to key agency information. This includes information regarding senior leadership, open government, budget information, key agency reports, and press information, in addition to headquarters and field offices Web sites.

All content that is updated on the site is reflected in the API code that is published and made available to the public.

Participation

Through SBA’s online community, small business owners and those thinking about starting a business, can share information on a variety of topics to start and grow a business. SBA has integrated access to the community throughout the site in order to encourage online participation through the discussion boards. In addition, registration for the community has now been integrated with the small business plan tool registration process in order to provide a single point of access for those who would like to contribute and/or create a business plan. The small business plan tool allows site visitors to create and save business plans through a step-by-step process online. Both the community and small business plan tool drive retention on the site and present the agency with an opportunity to expose repeat visitors to new online features and tools.

In addition, SBA launched an events calendar tool that enables visitors to locate SBA and resource partner events in their states and local neighborhoods based on their individual requirements. Cross-agency small business events can now be added to the tool to improve access to pertinent small business events outside the agency.

The agency’s e-mail newsletter has experienced significant growth; over one million users have registered to receive weekly information regarding the SBA and small business topics, providing



us with a unique opportunity to reinforce our message of supporting small businesses in a variety of ways.

COLLABORATION

SBA launched a new National Small Business Week website which features live streaming of conference events along with Google+ hangout events, that allows the public to engage on a variety of small business topics. In addition, a National Winners Nominations Portal was launched to enable electronic submission of nominations packages and improve internal collaboration for judging winners.

Additionally, SBA has worked closely with the BusinessUSA.gov team to integrate online tools and features throughout both sites. For example, SBA added a toolbar that features BusinessUSA widgets and access to customer support. Moreover, SBA provided content share APIs for its small business content and calendar of events that BusinessUSA can customize for its site visitors.

Through a robust and integrated website analytics tool (Google Analytics), the Agency continues to set benchmarks, including online success rates, usage patterns, and customer feedback. These metrics are being incorporated to incrementally improve the website and online user experience.

For the last two years, SBA has continued to hold usability and focus sessions comprised of the Agency's diverse customer base as part of an ongoing dialog to make transactional and accessibility improvements to the site. In addition, site visitors are randomly given customer satisfaction surveys that enable us to delve deeper into key areas such as content, navigation, search, usability, online transactions, bounce rates, and other important elements. Over the last two years, satisfaction scores for SBA.gov have risen significantly, indicating success in planning and achieving incremental improvements in the site design, functionality, and online content.

FUTURE

Both SBA.gov and BusinessUSA teams will continue to collaborate on further integrating content and tools. In addition, though we have made significant strides in 508 compliance, we will continue to improve accessibility through the use of focus sessions and continued testing. And as the public becomes more engaged with online content through mobile technologies, SBA will make key agency content mobile-accessible to provide access to site visitors where and when they need it.

Whistleblower Protection

The Hotline Director for SBA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) is the designated Whistleblower Protection Ombudsman. Since assuming the position, the Hotline Director has collaborated with members of the Whistleblower Ombudsman Federal Working Group, SBA, and SBA OIG have met three of the five requirements under the OSC Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA) Certification Program. Plans are in place to ensure the completion of the certification process within the next three months.



The requirement that new employees be advised of their rights under the Whistleblower Protection Act has been coordinated with the Agency. Distribution of materials advising employees of their rights and remedies under the WPA is expected during the next scheduled orientation.

Information concerning the processes for making confidential disclosures to OSC, and the “Whistleblowing,” “Whistleblower Retaliation,” and prohibited personnel practice posters are posted prominently throughout SBA HQ and have been distributed to every field office.

Annual written notification of the WPA and OSC’s role in enforcing the laws will be published in the “SBA Daily,” an internal electronic newsletter distributed to all employees.

Whistleblower information is posted on the SBA OIG homepage, on our website; and our intranet. The requirement to provide a direct OSC link is underway, with an expected completion date within the next 60 days.

The SBA OIG has developed an online training module for managers and supervisors that will provide information and knowledge-based assessment questions to ensure managers and supervisors are aware of the whistleblower protection provisions of Title 5. The presentation has been reviewed by OIG Counsel, and it is currently under review by the Agency. Once approved, the Office of the Chief Information Officer will post the training module on the SBA intranet website as mandatory annual training for all supervisors.

Answer Desk

The Answer Desk staff members are the public face of the Small Business Administration. We are the focal point for inquiries from current and potential small business owners concerning SBA programs and other programs available for small businesses, whether federal, state, local, public, or private.

We take more than 50,000 phone calls per year, approximately 1,500 of which are non-English. We also handle almost 18,000 emails in a year.

We respond to our customers in a professional, well-informed manner, our operators are knowledgeable and friendly, and they take pride in determining the needs of callers and ensuring they provide the right answers.

We are available to our customers via phone, e-mail, and letter. The phones are open Monday–Thursday 9am–5pm (EST).

The Answer Desk will continue to do its part in furthering the open government initiative by:

- Providing direct links so clients can find the information they need at sba.gov
- Communicating with program offices on the number of inquiries that we respond to regarding their programs
- Reporting any recurring problems with their programs or web pages
- Providing agencies with answers on our programs and services or direction on how to get answers
- Using the events calendar to assist clients with resources in their areas
- Providing web chatting via sba.gov when funding is available



FOIA/Proactive FOIA

The Freedom of Information/Privacy Acts Office routinely encourages the proactive disclosures and postings of information that is of interest to the public. Examples are:

- News and Press Releases
- Disaster Press Releases
- Speeches
- Congressional Testimony
- Weekly Lending Reports
- Media and Press Contacts
- Regional and local Media
- Fiscal Year Budget Summary
- Press Release Archive
- Congressional Correspondence (redaction of sensitive information)
- Field Office Home Pages and staff directories
- Headquarters Program Offices Home Pages and contact information
- Annual FOIA Reports
- Quarterly FOIA Reports
- List of FOIA Public Liaisons and FOIA Service Center Representatives
- Frequently Requested Records
- Privacy Act Systems of Records
- Privacy Impact Assessments

We have published 52 pieces of Congressional correspondence this year, and since the program's inception in August 2012, we have published 316 such letters on our public webpage.

These letters cover every program and every aspect of what we do at the SBA, from our loan programs, to disaster assistance, to public events like Small Business Week. Every piece of Congressional correspondence that does not contain PII or other prohibited materials is posted within two weeks of fulfillment.

What We've Done: Open Government Accomplishments to Date

	Transparency	Participation	Collaboration	Status
Open Data	✓	✓	✓	Complete
BusinessUSA	✓	✓	✓	Complete
Records Management	✓		✓	Complete
SBA.gov	✓	✓	✓	Complete
Whistleblower Protection	✓		✓	Complete
Answer Desk	✓	✓	✓	Complete
FOIA/Proactive Disclosure	✓	✓	✓	Complete