



Beyond the Tools: Connecting Citizens and their Governments

Aspen, Colorado • July 10-13, 2013

Tentative Agenda

(as of July 1, 2013)

The **2013 Forum on Communications and Society (FOCAS)** follows on the work of the Aspen Institute and the Knight Foundation in encouraging an informed citizenry engaged in self-governance at all levels of government. Much attention has focused on the creation of tools to encourage and ease this process. Indeed, through Knight News Challenges and other activities, makers are creating innovative approaches to citizen engagement tools and measurements. The FOCAS will bring together representatives of the maker community with public officials, citizen leaders and others who will be implementing the new tools and apps for citizen engagement. The aim is to enhance the relationships among localities and their publics in advancing participatory governance. The Forum will also look for ways to institutionalize the innovative techniques and talents for open governance in the future, looking specifically at how the advances such as the Open Data Institute in the United Kingdom can find an analogue in the U.S.

Thursday, July 11, 2013

8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks: Goals of the Forum

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Session I. Problems of Governance: A Status Report

The Forum begins with an analysis and discussion of developments in open governance. We begin with a mapping of what open governance services are occurring in the U.S. and how they relate to each other. Participants will then consider where federal, state and local governments, private enterprises and civic entities are in meeting the goals of open governance as they relate to an informed and engaged citizenry. What tools are being created that improve citizen-government interaction? What tools are needed? What are open governance needs beyond those tools? The session will then look at how the U.K. addresses these problems and issues, particularly with its Open Data Institute (ODI).

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Session II. Cultural and Institutional Barriers to Open Governance

Participants will then turn to the cultural constraints to innovations in open governance. How do the different levels of government in the U.S. differ in this regard? And how can the Federal Government, in addition to gaining advances in this field, encourage states and localities to advance – or is the question better posed in reverse? How can localities promote reforms they are seeing at their level to be adopted at the state and federal levels? What is the role of non-governmental groups?

2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Working Groups: Moving from Tools to Institutions

After lunch, participants break into working groups with the aim of diving deeper into ways to encourage innovation in the open governance field and fostering demand and effective use of those tools.

The Working Groups are divided by general functionality. Each will refine what are the needs they are addressing, i.e., what problem they are solving, and what needs to happen to bring about the desired outcome? In each case the group should consider how to nurture start-up solutions, how to stimulate citizen demand for the product or service, and how government will react. Each group should then explore ways to institutionalize their answers. That is, what structure(s), funded by whom, can foster ongoing innovation in this field?

The three Working Groups are:

- A. ***Services: Citizen-Government Interaction for Performing Governmental Services***
(e.g., policing, taxation, social services)
- B. ***Interaction: Citizen-Government Interaction for Legislative or Regulatory Activities***
(e.g., virtual hearings, petitions, rulemaking) use of government info for other pro-social purposes)
- C. ***Data: Citizen-Government Cooperation to Improve Citizens' Lives***
(e.g., public-private platforms that enhance lifestyle based on government generated information.

Friday, July 12, 2013

8:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Session III. Road Testing the New Solutions: Working Groups Progress Reports

In this session, the Working Groups will present progress reports on what they are suggesting and how they are going about it. Specifically, each report will address how the group's recommendation will bring about transparency, innovation or governmental effectiveness. Who would need to do what to make it happen? What institutions, current or proposed, could make it happen?

10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Session IV. Institutions to Foster Innovation: A Closer Look at ODI

What institutions can foster ongoing innovation and spur citizen demand in the open government space? This session will take a closer look at the Open Data Institute in the United Kingdom for encouraging innovation and spurring demand for participatory governance. Given the initial reports from the Working Groups thus far, what are specific issues for institutionalizing these practices in the United States? Specifically, what are the advantages and constraints posed by American-type funding models, governmental attitudes and citizen cultures? What can we learn from other countries?

2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Working Groups (continued)

Each Working Group will refine its proposals and prepare a bulleted report on the best one or two recommendations.

Saturday, July 13, 2013

8:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. Session V. Reports of the Working Groups

Each group will present its single most important recommendation or two and how to bring them to fruition. What next steps are necessary to make the tools in their class successful?

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Session VI. Policy Options Ahead

Proposals from the Working Groups and other discussion at the meeting should result in recommendations for new tools and institutions (or institutional functions) that will foster greater transparency, innovation and accountability of governments at the federal, state and local levels. How will they increase innovations and stimulate demand for open data and open governance? What investments or policies will bring about these recommendations?