Dear Candidate,

We are Open Pittsburgh and Code for Philly. We are part of a national movement of citizens, technologists, and public servants working together to improve the quality of life in the Commonwealth through the use of information and technology. Since establishing an open data policy in April 2012, Philadelphia has improved internal government efficiency and provided community groups with valuable data to better serve residents. In addition, Pittsburgh anticipates similar benefits after recently passing open data legislation in March 2014.

Democracy is rooted in a historic tradition of transparency and public service, and open data policy will bring that tradition into the 21st century. Open data benefits people, even if they don't use technology themselves. Residents become better informed by stronger journalism. Neighborhood groups and nonprofits have better access to resources to serve people in their community. Government departments increase efficiency through inter-departmental communication and data-driven decisions. Finally, open data enables commercial businesses to pursue new enterprises, which create new jobs and increase the tax base.

We hope the next governor of Pennsylvania will support an open data policy as part of a transparent, efficient, and innovative state government. Open data will enable our residents and communities to benefit from the wide range of valuable data our state government already maintains. A growing number of states, such as New York and Utah, and cities, including both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, have now passed open data legislation.

Included with this letter is a short questionnaire regarding open data. Please tell us your thoughts on the best open data policy for the Pennsylvania state government by April 22nd, 2014. We have sent this request to all gubernatorial candidates and will publish the responses prior to the primary election at http://opendatapa.wordpress.com/. If you are unfamiliar with open data, we have also provided a short FAQ. We are also happy to answer any questions at opendatapa@gmail.com.

Thank you for your consideration,

Open Pittsburgh & Code for Philly

PA Gubernatorial Candidate Questionnaire
Please note that your responses will be published on our website
(http://opendatapa.wordpress.com/) and shared with the media.

1. Many businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies view information as an asset. If elected, how will your administration increase access to this important asset for benefit of the Commonwealth?

2. Public information is often siloed within various state agencies, and not always easily accessible to residents or other units of government. How will your administration improve information sharing in Pennsylvania?

3. Open sharing of information and information technology has helped to improve the relationship between citizens and government. How will your administration use information and technology to better connect with citizens?

4. Many datasets controlled by the state are subject to disclosure under the Open Records Law. Do you support making the <u>default</u> policy that such datasets are proactively available online according to commonly accepted open data guidelines (see FAQ for details)?
   Please indicate Yes or No and explain your position.

5. Current laws protecting personal privacy would still apply to all information released under an open data policy. Beyond this protected information, what specific data sets do you feel should be restricted for public access?

6. Many cities and states around the U.S. are adopting open data policies and practices to share information with residents and other stakeholders. What are the 3 most important things you would do as governor to make state data "open"?

FAQ

What is Open Data?

Most often, 'open data' refers to the idea that data controlled by a government body should be accessible to citizens and other government bodies in a structured format. In an open structured format, computer programs can readily understand and process the data. For example, a CSV is an open structured format, while a PDF is not. Open data policies reduce cost and technology barriers, which limit citizens' access to government data. The nonpartisan Sunlight Foundation publishes best practices for open data policies (http://sunlightfoundation.com/opendataguidelines/).

What is an Open Standard?

In the context of open data, an open standard typically refers to a data format whose specification is freely available to be read and implemented by anybody. Data available in an open standard is often the most accessible to analysts, journalists, and programmers, as anybody can access the tools and information needed to work with that data. Because of this, open standards often support competitive markets of applications and organizations that perform similar services on similar types of data.

Do State reports provide access to state data?

Not to the level that open data does. A report published by the state represents a finished presentation of data. The report includes analysis, formatting and layout, and commentary that is meant to be read by people, and often meant to be read by a certain audience. While these presentations of data are valuable, they usually do not provide the raw, structured data required by others who wish to create their own analyses, presentations, or new applications.

Which states officially support open data?

The Sunlight Foundation (http://sunlightfoundation.com/policy/opendatamap/) maintains a list of open data policies. Five states have implemented open data policies including Utah, New York, Hawaii, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. At least eight more states have started the process. At the federal level, the White House has also implemented an open data policy for the executive branch. Within Pennsylvania, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh have also implemented open data policies.