

## Open Gov Data Act: Machine-Readable Records May 19, 2019

Signed by President Trump on January 14, 2019, the *OPEN Government Data Act* (OGDA) establishes openness, machine-readability, and schema-standard-compliance as the default for public information. It extends and codifies in law the guidance set forth on May 9, 2013, by President Obama in [Executive Order 13642](#), Making Open and Machine Readable the New Default for Government Information.

Prior to that, on January 4, 2011, Obama signed the *GPR Modernization Act* (GPRAMA) into law (P.L. 111-352). [Section 10](#) of GPRAMA says:

... each agency required to produce strategic plans, performance plans, and performance updates ... shall ... produce such plans and reports in *searchable, machine-readable formats* ...

OGDA extends that good practice more broadly, eventually to apply to all Federal public records. Here are some key provisions:

- Make data [open by default](#), sharing it in an [open format](#).
- [Collaborate](#) with non-government entities – including businesses, researchers, and the public – to understand how government data is valued and used.
- [Data](#) is defined as “recorded information, regardless of form or the media on which the data is recorded”.
- [Machine-readable data](#) is defined as “data in a format that can be easily processed by a computer without human intervention while ensuring no semantic meaning is lost”.
- Any record subject to disclosure under the [Freedom of Information Act](#) (FOIA) is to be made available in [machine-readable](#) format.
- Such formats should be based upon [schemas](#) developed and maintained by [standards organizations](#).
- Agencies are directed to [engage the public](#) not only in using public records but also [determining priorities](#) among them for disclosure.

Those provisions build upon the *E-Government Act of 2002*, which directed agencies to:

- Work together to [link their performance goals to key groups](#), including citizens, businesses, and other governments, as well as internal Federal Government operations.
- [Adopt open standards](#) enabling the organization and categorization of Government information in a way that is searchable electronically and interoperably across agencies.

Prior to that, the [Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments](#) of 1996 charged agencies not only to make records available in “any form or format requested” but also to “make reasonable efforts to maintain ... records in forms or formats that are reproducible ...”

Let’s take advantage of the opportunity to engage and assist agencies in unlocking the value of public records.