Salt Lake City's
Open Government Initiative
360-Day Progress Report
February 26, 2010

Just over a year ago, Salt Lake City began its Greater Transparency for a Collaborative Government Initiative (since renamed as the Open Government Initiative). Much has been accomplished in the past year, including the adoption of our Policy on Open Government, but we still have much to do and learn.

Reflecting on our accomplishments and shortcomings, this past year has been a learning process for all of us. In fact, open government is a never-ending learning process. We must continually reevaluate our approaches as circumstances change over time and we learn from our experience. Through our public process on the Open Government Work Plan and Policy, we received and worked to incorporate many of the comments about the public's understanding of and expectations for open government. We are continually learning about what topics and City actions generate public interest, and which ones do not.

As a City, we are particularly proud of the joint adoption of our Policy on Open Government and the work we have accomplished regarding soliciting and incorporating public input early in the decision making process. Whether it was the nondiscrimination ordinance proposals or the development of North Temple Boulevard, public input was sought long before a final decision and the ideas received greatly influenced the City's thinking and perspective. As a result, better public outcomes and long term decisions have been made.

We have also learned of areas for improvement. It is challenging to predict the public's interest in being involved in some, but not all, of the City's normal business activities. Nor does the City always control how and when a particular issue develops. The City continues to try different options for when and how the public would like to be involved, either during the initial planning phases or after a series of options have been developed by staff.

Finding the right balance is not easy. In the past, the City was frequently criticized for not seeking public input early enough in the process. As the City has moved to seek public input earlier in the development of policy, there has been criticism that the City isn't providing enough details or that proposals aren't specific enough.

The early proposal of the two site locations for the public safety building and the Sorensen Center transfer are two good examples of how the City is learning to distinguish these areas.

The recent public hearing on the proposed Regional Sports Complex is another good example. The usual practice is for the Council to hear the Administration's presentation on a proposal during a work session typically held in the afternoon; and often times, a public hearing is held on this same proposal later in the meeting at 7:00 pm. The public is invited to attend all City Council work sessions to listen to a presentation on a proposal along with the Council's discussions; while a public hearing gives the public an opportunity to provide verbal comments to the Council.

On January 5, 2010, the Council learned that a large number of concerned and interested community members were planning to attend the 7:00 pm public hearing on the Regional Sports Complex. In order to give those residents the opportunity to hear the Administration's proposal and the Council's discussion, the Council delayed their afternoon work session discussion until the 7:00 pm portion of the Council meeting. As a result, immediately after the Administration's presentation and the Council's discussion on the Regional Sports Complex, community members were able to comment – "pro," "con," (or "other") – at the public hearing. The room was packed; nearly fifty members of the public spoke and twenty-nine submitted written comments during the hearing.

In order to provide members of the public who were not able to attend the January 5th hearing the opportunity to provide comments, the Council continued the hearing to January 12 and followed the same procedure. The room was filled again and an additional thirty community members spoke and twenty-five submitted written comments.

Consideration of the Regional Sports Complex proposal illustrates another important point. Open government does not mean that everyone will agree with the decision that the City makes. Public officials frequently have to make difficult decisions involving competing policy considerations. What open government means is that everyone has an opportunity to voice their perspective at a reasonable time during the decision making process and that the City explains the basis for its action so that everyone can understand the reasons, even if they do not agree with them.

Over the next year, we will continue to improve our understanding of the appropriate level of public process for specific decisions. We will focus heavily on expanding the culture of open government within Salt Lake City, along with increasing ease of access to tools and information, and expanding our processes for public engagement.

Thank you for following and tracking our progress. As always, we welcome input on all of our decisions, including the transparency initiative itself. Together, we can continue to open the doors of government and improve public decision making and accountability.

Ralph Becker   JT Martin
Mayor   Council Chair

Open Government
2009 Completed Initiatives

Over the past year, the Salt Lake City Administration and City Council have worked hard to increase transparency and create a culture of open government within Salt Lake City. The following is a list of initiatives completed by Salt Lake City where open government was specifically named as a key priority to be included. This list is intended to highlight the major accomplishments and does not include all of the projects completed under the umbrella of open government. Additionally, many of the listed accomplishments have subsections which are not included in the list.

Expanded Public Engagement

1) **Adopted Policy on Open Government and Public Process**
   In November 2009, Mayor Ralph Becker and the Salt Lake City Council jointly adopted the Policy on Open Government. The adoption represented almost one year of public outreach, comment, and discussion on the scope, needs, and items that should be included in the policy. Specifically, the Open Government Steering Committee utilized a wide range of web tools, including online forums, surveys, wikis, and discussion boards. Additionally, a broad review of existing academic literature and comparables with other cities was conducted. The proposed policy was also placed online and emailed to stakeholders for potential comment and feedback. Finally, a number of meetings with the media, business leaders, and community advocates were held during the development of the policy.

2) **City Council – Decision Process**
   Prior to 2009, the Council would commonly hold a public hearing, consider public comment, close the hearing, and then take action immediately following the public hearing. However, in 2009, to emphasize the importance of public hearings, the Salt Lake City Council changed their policy regarding public hearing items. When an item is scheduled for a public hearing, the City Council welcomes and considers all comments, closes the hearing, and in many cases delays their decision on the issue until the next City Council meeting, where the subject is placed under a new section of the Council agenda called "Potential Action Items."

   A delay in the Council's decision until one week after a public hearing provides: 1) additional time for the public to provide written comment through letters and e-mails and/or provide oral comments via the telephone, and; 2) additional time for the Council to consider all comments before reaching a decision.

   Note: As in the past, when an issue warrants more public comment aside from one public hearing, the City Council may choose to continue a public hearing to a future meeting to allow another opportunity for the public to comment before a hearing is closed.

3) **One-on-One Meetings with the Mayor and Mayor's Open Door Hour**
Each month, Mayor Ralph Becker opens the door to his office for both the general public and employees. During these sessions, anyone is invited to bring any issue before the Mayor. The meetings are generally 10 – 15 minutes each and are scheduled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

4) **Public Involvement on the City's Nondiscrimination Ordinance**
Prior to the drafting of the proposed Nondiscrimination Ordinance, Mayor Ralph Becker and the Office of Diversity and Human Rights conducted extensive outreach to research and document instances of discrimination in Salt Lake City. The Dialogues on Discrimination then informed the drafting of Mayor Becker's nondiscrimination ordinance proposal. Following the proposal, draft summary documents were submitted to the public for comment and review. The public comment was compiled and integrated with the final ordinance proposal where applicable for consideration by the City Council. See also paragraph 16.

5) **Public Safety Building/Complex**
Throughout the location and bond process, Salt Lake City officials invited the public to discuss and comment on all aspects of the Public Safety Complex. Information regarding location, cost, scope, and mission of the Public Safety Building (PSB) and Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was available to the public for feedback. Salt Lake City will continue this tradition of public feedback on the Public Safety Building as the project moves forward.

6) **Alcohol Normalization, Public Outreach and Comment**
Salt Lake City engaged in an extended public process regarding its proposed alcohol normalization ordinance changes during the summer and fall of 2009. The process sought to ensure that community concerns were identified early, and that a full range of perspectives were heard and considered for incorporation into the proposed ordinance language. In addition to formal and informal conversations with stakeholders over the past year, the City gathered input through presentations to relevant boards and commissions, conversations with community councils, open houses, a telephone survey, eight neighborhood discussion groups, and an extended written comment collection period. The results informed the Mayor's final proposal sent to the City Council, which conducts its own review and public process. See also paragraph 16.

7) **North Temple Master Planning and Process**
During the redesign and construction of North Temple, including the Viaduct and Airport Trax Line, Salt Lake City held numerous public open houses and workshops to create a public vision of the future Grand Boulevard. Three community workshops were held throughout October, along with a multiple meetings with businesses and stakeholders affected by the construction. Plans for additional open houses to review plans which reflect the public comment were scheduled for January 2010.

8) **Citizens Task Force Zoning Amendment Project**
Over the past year, the Salt Lake City Planning Division revised various sections of the Zoning Ordinance in order to clarify regulations, implement sustainability goals, promote progressive planning regulations, and provide predictability to the process for applicants and citizens. A citizen task force was established to ensure that public review and input opportunities from businesses, community councils, City boards and commissions, residents, and other interested stakeholders were incorporated into the final product.

9) **Reservoir Park Project Process**
Prior to construction in Reservoir Park in fall 2009, the Division of Public Utilities conducted over a year of public process to engage the community in design of the project. After initial meetings with community councils and interested stakeholders during summer/fall 2008, an *ad hoc* committee was created including representatives from the City and local neighborhood groups. The *ad hoc* committee served early on as a forum for brainstorming potential design approaches, and met weekly during construction to address community concerns. See also paragraph 16.

10) **City Creek Fire Break**
Development of the City Creek Fuel Break project has highlighted the need for proactive and adaptive stakeholder engagement within the community for projects that may elicit diverse perspectives on project impacts and goals.   Public interest and engagement was slow to develop as the Department of Public Utilities moved forward from the initial community council presentations and publications of the proposed project in the spring of 2009 with planned implementation that summer. Earlier stakeholder involvement and more active City solicitation of public input to evaluate alternatives was identified as a key factor generating public concern that the project was being rushed. In response to the public request and Public Utilities' commitment to community engagement, the project was delayed to allow additional public comment, background ecological data was collected, and a small three plot "demonstration" project is being implemented to observe impacts and obtain further public feedback.

11) **Gang Reduction Task Force**
In early 2009, the *ad hoc* Gang Reduction Forum transitioned into a standing gang reduction program. The SLC Gang Reduction Program is a multi-agency collaboration focused on effectively reducing gang activity in a comprehensive, long-term way. The Steering Committee, consisting of key partners in gang prevention, intervention and suppression solutions has been conducting a full assessment of the problem within the boundaries of Salt Lake City.

12) **Salt Lake Solutions**
Salt Lake Solutions is Mayor Becker's project-based approach to engaging the community in public decision-making. Salt Lake Solutions projects involve the community, all levels of government, business and non-profit organizations in solving problems and seizing opportunities that cannot be achieved without the integration of public and private support. In 2009, four Salt Lake Solutions projects were in progress: 1) renovation of the Fisher Mansion for community re-use; 2) institutionalization of

community programming for Pioneer Park; 3) six-week Clear The Air Challenge; and 4) proposal to reuse the Jordan Park Greenhouse as a food security community center.

13) **Universe Project Special Advisory Task Force**
The City continued to host and facilitate the Special Advisory Task Force created in 2008 to provide community input for the Universe Project proposed by the University of Utah next to the Stadium Trax station. Made up of representatives from locally-owned businesses, neighboring residents and other community organizations, the Special Advisory Task Force reviewed the proposed uses and preliminary design plans for the project. In fall 2009, the developer notified the University that it would not be exercising its option to go forward with the project under current economic conditions.

14) **Commercial Solicitation Public Comment**
On July 29, 2009, Salt Lake City released the proposed commercial solicitation ordinance for public comment and review. An email notice was sent to almost 100 stakeholders from various homeless and low income organizations. Comment was also solicited from Salt Lake City business organizations, community councils, and boards and commissions. The proposed ordinance was made available online at www.slcgov.com and covered extensively by multiple media outlets on numerous occasions. In response to public comment received, four recommendations were made to improve and further research the proposal.

15) **Public Budget Workshops**
Prior to the adoption of the FY 2009-2010 Budget, Salt Lake City conducted three Public Budget Workshops. These workshops were designed to educate the public about the City's budget process and receive feedback about the public's priorities. The workshops were offered at the Salt Lake City and County Building, Rowland Hall School, and Pioneer Police Precinct. The workshop and tutorial was also made available online at www.slcgov.com.

16) **Citizen Budget Survey**
In April 2009, Telephone surveys were conducted by Dan Jones and Associates to almost 700 City Residents to receive feedback and gauge citizen satisfaction or dissatisfaction with city services. In 2009 the survey includes a series of questions regarding the city budget.

17) **Increased Transparency in the Budget Process**
In addition to the public budget workshops and Dan Jones poll, City Officials utilized SLC TV17 to broadcast the City Council's budget discussion, met with Community Council Chair and Business organizations to discuss methods of increasing awareness of the budget process, and provided access to the Utah League of Cities and Towns' "Making Sense of Dollars" at all public library locations to increase awareness and understanding of the public budgeting process.

18) **Continued Learning**

After the City has completed - - or gotten well in to - - several important public processes, we have analyzed what elements of the process worked to make the process more open and effective. The analyses for the "Non-Discrimination Public Process," the "Reservoir Park Project Public Process", and the "Alcohol Normalization Project Public Process" (still underway) are attached as Exhibits A, B and C.

Open Government Tools and Resources

1) **Redesign of www.slcgov.com**

As part of the Open Government Initiative, Salt Lake City implemented a consistent brand scheme across Department and Division websites. A common look and feel throughout the City's web presence will assist online visitors in accessing the City's services, navigating through and across Departments, and conducting research and information gathering. Additionally, the redesign of slcgov.com more fully utilized web 2.0 tools, including RSS feeds, blogs, wikis, site sharing, social networking, videos, etc.

2) **Salt Lake City Council Fast Facts:**   These are fact-based bullet points which highlight policy issues for the public and news media regarding topics in upcoming City Council Meetings that could generate a high level of interest for the community. The goal of the Fast Facts is to give the public and news media specific, easy to understand information regarding issues that will be considered by the City Council. Opportunities for public comment are emphasized in all Fast Fact documents up to the point that the Council makes a decision on the subject. Links are provided to other information/background on the topic to provide a more complete understanding of the issue.

3) **Mayor's Office Hot Topics**

"Hot Topics" is published each week and lists the top issues and common questions the Mayor's Office is working on for the week. They are published on www.slcgov.com/hot.

4) **Acella and Citizen's Access Portal**

Salt Lake City has now fully implemented Acella across various Departments and Divisions. By centralizing the databases and improving internal communication systems, the City has been working to develop and support a true One-Stop-Shop for construction and development applications and permits. Through Acella's Citizen Access Portal, constituents are able to log in and see all construction and land use applications, permits, and petitions. Additionally, constituents are able to see where each public planning and zoning related item is in the approval process and any comments associated with the item.

5) **Planning Division Newsletters and Updates**

The Planning Division publishes *Urbanus* a monthly electronic newsletter to keep the public, as well as City employees, informed of their current activities.   The "Planning in Salt Lake City" brochure provides a simple, clear overview of the basic purpose and functions of the Planning Division.

6) **GRAMA Request and Tracking System**
The system will allow users to submit GRAMA requests online, document requests made, and track each request for official City records. This system will be used City-wide and assists the City in managing requests, tracking the status of requests, and ensuring requests are responded to in a timely manner. The system will be operational soon.

7) **Official Administration and Council Transmittals**
By means of an online portal, constituents will be able to access official transmittals and communications between the Mayor's Office and City Council. By utilizing the program, constituents will be able to search, sort, and filter Administration-Council transmittals based on a number of criteria, including topic, title, department, date, author, and key words found anywhere within the document. The program will allow immediate access to official materials and provides early notice on future Council discussions prior to the topic being scheduled on an agenda. The program will be operational soon.

8) **Development of Boards and Commission Website**
Salt Lake City has 26 public boards and commissions.   Each year, hundreds of residents donate their time to serve on one of these boards and commission. The new website provides in-depth information regarding each board or commission, its activities, and its members. It also allows the public to easily access application information, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes.

9) **Recovery.slcgov.com**
Salt Lake City's Recovery and Reinvestment website provides information on how Salt Lake City is investing federal funding within the City. All programs, plans and reports are be available for public review. The site also provides links to a variety of information regarding federal grants and available funds.

10) **Conflict of Interest Advisory Opinions**
Pursuant to Salt Lake City Code Section 2.44.210, the City Attorney is authorized, upon request, to issue advisory opinions on the application of the City's conflict of interest policies. Starting on January 2, 2009, the City Attorney made conflict of interest advisory opinions for the City's elected and executive positions available online through the Attorney's Office Website. Placing the advisory opinions and waiver decisions on-line is intended to facilitate accountability to the public.

11) **Public Legal Opinions**
Written communications between the lawyers in the City Attorney's Office and City officials and employees concerning legal advice are generally protected from public disclosure by the attorney-client privilege. However, Salt Lake City has chosen to waive this privilege in instances of great public interest. Since January 2, 2009, legal opinions which the City has made public have been posted online through the Attorney's Office website.

12) **Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Website**
On January 6, 2009, Salt Lake City launched its Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Website. Employees and the public are able to use the website to report possible incidents of fraud, waste, or abuse in the operations of Salt Lake City government. Reports and complaints may also be taken over the phone and made anonymously.

Culture of Open Government and Internal Transparency

1) **Departmental Baseline Assessments**
On April 13, 2009, Mayor Becker asked all City Department Directors to review their Departments and Divisions and establish a baseline of how their services are described online, what official documents and records are and/or are not easily available to the public, and identify how each Department/Division can continue to expand its efforts to incorporate public input early in the decision making process. These baseline assessments are being used to assist the City in understanding ways the government can become more open and collaborative.

2) **Employee Transparency Survey**
As part of the policy adoption, the Open Government Steering Committee released a survey to all City employees to rate how "open" their departments and divisions were. Just under 10% of the City's workforce responded, an impressive rate for an email survey. In general, the comments were similar to those received from the public survey, ranking Salt Lake City's openness roughly a "3" on a 1 – 5 scale. Organizational culture, including competition between teams, divisions, and departments, and lack of communication between management and employees, were commonly cited points of concern by employees. Additionally, many employees expressed a desire to be provided with more information and to be included earlier in the decision making process.

3) **Department Director's Retreat**
The afternoon session of the December 17, 2009 retreat focused on open government. The Mayor's Office, City Council and every Department Director were present during the discussion. The initial conversation focused on what, in the experience of the Department Directors, makes for "good" public process. They then discussed how the appropriate public process would be designed for specific initiatives involving internal and external "publics". They concluded by discussing how the City can foster an internal culture of openness and collaboration, and compiling a list of what resources the departments would like to go forward to do public engagement consistently and well. One of the suggested resources was written public engagement guidelines/best practices, and the City is currently developing that document.

4) **Review of SLC Open Government Initiatives by Outside Experts**
In order to assist the City in providing information to the public more effectively on the City's website slcgov.com, Associate Professor Joel Campbell of the Department of Communications at Brigham Young University developed a list of 37 criteria that represent "best practices" for municipal websites. For example, Criteria #1 is "Government staff directory and organizational chart with ease of access to find

information" and Criteria #4 is "Electronic 'reading room' or areas for frequently requested records." Salt Lake City was the first to receive an official "report card" based on Professor Campbell's criteria. It is expected this grading technique will be refined and applied to additional government websites over the coming months and years.

Salt Lake City received a good number of A's, but we also got two F's (one of which we've already fixed) and two incompletes. Overall our "GPA" was 2.94, with 2.57 in the "Transparency" area, 3.71 in the "Accessibility and E-Government" area, and 2.91 in the "Citizen Engagement, E-Democracy" area. We didn't make the Dean's List, but this report card will be very helpful in identifying improvements to be made to the City's website. Professor Campbell's set of best practices criteria can also be very helpful to other government entities looking to improve their website.

The city hosted a Partners of the Americas fellow for two months in 2009, who conducted an independent analysis of our open government initiatives. Ezedin Alarcon, Director of Transparency for the City of La Paz, Bolivia, complimented SLC on its extensive efforts to engage the public in decision making and provided suggestions for making www.slcgov.com more user-friendly.

5) **Open Government Working Groups**
Four working groups existed during 2009 to begin implementing the Open Government Policy and Work Plan. These included 1) **Policy and Process** which considered broad open government policy development; 2) **Technology Working Group** explored current technology and ways the City can use technology to become more open; 3) the **Financial Working Group** assessed how the City can comply with the state requirements in advance of the 2012 deadline and how to provide the City's financial data in the most effective way to be useful to the public; and 4) the **Employee Engagement Group** focused on ways internal transparency can improve employee productivity, morale, and outcomes. For 2010, the Open Government Steering Committee has reorganized itself into three as-yet-unnamed working groups, focusing on 1) transparency (making it easier for the public to "look in" on City government); 2) openness and collaboration (building capacity for the City to "reach out" to the public as part of its decision making process; and 3) internal culture (assuring that transparency, openness and collaboration are the way SLC does business).

6) **Parks, Trails, and Urban Forestry Advisory Board**
In response to public interest, Salt Lake City created a Parks, Trails, and Urban Forestry Advisory Board to increase public involvement and awareness of improvements and changes regarding the City's parks, trails, and urban forest. The board has been tasked with: 1) providing and overseeing strong stewardship of the City's parks, trails and urban forest; 2) educating the public and advocating for the City's parks, trails and urban forest policies; and 3) encouraging and facilitating public involvement and input, and the incorporation of that input into the City's parks, trails and urban forest plans and policies.

7) **Salt Lake City Emergency Management 18 Month Action Plan**
   Salt Lake City has adopted an 18 Month Action Plan for Emergency Management. One of its key objectives was an "overhaul of our public outreach to prepare our employees, citizens, and businesses to function and contribute during times of disaster, [including] organizing a healthy, viable volunteer coordination program." The program also established an Emergency Advisory Committee of public and private entities to facilitate openness and understanding of the City's potential activities during an emergency situation.

8) **Employee Book Club: "Transparency: How Leaders Create a Culture of Candor"**
   Open government is as much about an organizational culture as it is systems and technology.   The Employee discussion group has helped facilitate creating a culture of candor and openness within various City divisions. Additionally, this discussion group format was one of a variety of ways that the City has used to help employees understand the importance of transparency to the effective operation of City government.

9) **Transparency Discussions with Senior Staff**
   Numerous conversations and meetings have been held with the City's Department and Divisions Directors over the past year regarding the importance of transparency.