Open Austin 2016 Advocacy Agenda

1. **An issue tracking system for the City's website and digital properties to encourage feedback and productive action in the form of site improvement**
    - The city has an issue tracking system (3-1-1) for citizens to report broken traffic lights and loose animals. There should be a system for citizens to report broken web links, bugs on the website, errors in data formatting in open data datasets, requests for missing datasets, etc.
    - The system should allow the City to solicit feedback on its digital properties in a transparent manner so that citizens are aware that their content recommendations or bug reports are being seen and responded to.
    - **Recommendation:**
        - Create a regularly updated public inventory of websites and digital services to understand the scope of an issue tracking system.
        - Initiate a process to discover, design, or procure a centralized issue tracking system for austintexas.gov, data.austintexas.gov, and other digital properties.

2. **Survey data collected by, or on the request of the City should be "Open by Default"**
    - When the City (or a 3rd party paid by the City) conducts a survey gathering data from citizens, the deliverable is often a PDF report. However, there is arguably more value in the data than the report that is produced.
    - Demographic questions provide insights into the perspectives and needs held by different sub-groups in Austin. They also allow researchers to determine whether the study has reached the target audience.
    - **Recommendations:**
        - Survey data should be made publicly accessible in appropriate formats including raw data, data maps, questionnaires, and details about survey methodology.

■ Survey data should include demographic questions, but should not capture any personally identifiable information and preserve the anonymity of individual respondents.

3. **City should release an inventory of datasets scheduled for public release, with update schedules**
   ○ This would help users understand whether the datasets that have been released are still current and accurate.
   ○ The city should also provide a schedule of pending releases for datasets that have not yet been made public.
   ○ For comparison, see the release schedule at the bottom of New York's open data plan and the documentation of the release process in New York's open data dashboard.
   ○ **Recommendations:**
      ■ Inventory should specify which department is owner of the data, a description of the dataset, and a specified release/update schedule

4. **City should release lobbying and dark money disclosures in machine-readable form**
   ○ As the city council advances ordinances requiring disclosure of lobbying activities and dark money campaign expenditures, the city should plan to release the disclosure documents as open data.

5. **City should improve access to and completeness of public-meeting information**
   ○ General Council, Council committee and commission proceedings should be aggressively transparent in the spirit of the Texas Open Meetings Act and because citizens should not have to be experts to participate.
   ○ Current City Council agendas are not easily navigable nor searchable. Commission and committee agendas are worse, typically posted as PDF documents in disparate places.
   ○ The underlying data for agendas, minutes, and backup should be released in an open data format – and not just locked up in a website or app. This would allow data to be merged with other information available to the public, such as 3-1-1 service calls or council district overlays.

- ○ The current agenda management system, SIRE, is out of date. Its vendor Hyland Software has discontinued the software and no longer supports it.
- ○ **Recommendations:**
    - ■ Initiate procurement of modern legislative tracking and agenda management software system that would support the publication of the underlying meeting details, decisions, and supporting documents data in an open data format.
    - ■ Include community stakeholders in process to identify needs and features.
    - ■ Research and evaluate best practices from other cities, such as open-source tools like [Councilmatic](#). City procurement team should seek resources and requirements in order to implement such a system in the City of Austin.

6. Advance Open Government Resolution to ordinance

- ○ In December 2011, the city council adopted resolution 20111208-074 that commits the city to principles of open government. This resolution should be updated to reflect needs and experience over the past four years, and adopted as an ordinance.
- ○ **Recommendations:**
    - ■ City Council Economic Opportunity Committee consider a new open government ordinance.
    - ■ Consider including other policy items from this agenda in the ordinance.

7. Encourage data-creating agencies to recommend an appropriate citation form

- ○ From the [Sunlight Foundation](#): "While failure to provide attribution for government data should never be actionable, users of government data should be encouraged to note the origin of data sources by accurately citing those sources. The practice of citing government data can be encouraged by having direct data managers develop model citations for their data sets. These model citations should both list key elements of the source's identity that would be required to effectively identify an individual data source and identify the unit of government which created or maintains the data. Where data users are actually transforming government data in some way, encouraging the proper citation of government data will allow end users to distinguish between

problems with government data quality and intermediary data quality by providing a clear route back to the original source of the data."

8. Encourage a "digital first" strategy for collecting government data

○ Collecting data initially in a digital form makes it easier for agencies to release and update open datasets with new records.

More resources:
- [Code for America's Engagement Practice Area](#)
- [Sunlight Foundation's Open Data Policy Guidelines](#)

Contact:
Mateo Clarke, Brigade Captain
Matt Carey, Policy Lead
Open Austin
info@open-austin.org