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TRANSPARENCY

Vision:

This spring, Governor Steve Beshear issued an Executive Order to establish the e-Transparency Task Force, a 14-member panel committed to provide a more transparent, accountable state government that helps eliminate wasteful spending and restores public faith in its leaders. To that end, Task Force members have been tasked by the Governor to establish Kentucky's Open Door, a Web site designed to provide a one-stop venue where citizens can review how their tax dollars are being spent, as well as obtain other vital information about state-funded programs.

Kentucky's Open Door will be launched by January 2009, and will serve as a user-friendly forum that will display all state expenditure information that is permitted under state law. This will include all data from the previous two fiscal years that is available under the Open Records Act, which would be accessible by agency, category, and vendor. The site will also enable citizens to better understand the budget process and to determine how their tax dollars are being used--both broadly by subject matter, and more specifically by contract and expenditure.

Progress:

✚ The Task Force has met three times to (1) outline the Governor's vision; (2) hear from the Treasurer, Secretary of State, and Economic Development on their current models to provide public data in the transition; (3) to learn from government experts the technological challenges and legal limitations that will define the Task Force's work, (4) to discuss and assess ideas concerning attractive elements of other state models; (5) discuss a formal policy on what data will be made public and what is shielded by the law and privacy considerations; (6) review preliminary Web site features that will provide user-friendly access to general state budget allocations and specific expenditures by agency and vendor; and (7) receive public comment.

✚ Since June, the State Controller's Office has completed its preliminary interviews with all state agencies, and is circulating letters of understanding on the expectations and types of information that would be included. Finance's Office of General Counsel has been in communication with state agencies to identify any specific types of information which need to be

protected and excluded from public view. Examples would include: settlements which have a specific legal obligation not to be disclosed, payments to victims of crime, and any payments to individuals protected by federal or state privacy and confidentiality laws.

Schedule for the Path Ahead:

- ✚ The Task Force will meet twice more. In mid-October, the group will meet to formally sign off on a legal policy and Web site features, and in late October, it will issue a report to the Governor.
- ✚ By October 1, Finance will have communicated with all 178 state agencies to ascertain what data is “protected” from disclosure pursuant to applicable state and federal law. By December 15, each agency will be asked to review all departmental data, prior to making it public.
- ✚ On January 1, we will deploy the “live” Open Door Web site. Later in 2009, Kentucky’s Open Door will be expanded to provide data on revenue sources, allow Kentuckians to learn about the budget process, provide a vendor payment “lookup” site, and ensure a more transparent eProcurement system.