Project Information

Question 1
Provide a description of the project.

The OpenAustralia Foundation aims to create a free and easily accessible online database of local council development applications to enhance public involvement and participation in their local community. With only a postcode, people will receive email alerts of new development applications in their area.

Further, this project will provide a template along with clear implementation guidelines for other community groups who wish to use the internet to effectively mine and share data via the Internet.

Question 2

Describe the aim of the project.

Have you ever walked down a street to find that beautiful building that you love so much knocked down and you knew nothing about it? You're not alone.

The aims of the Planning Alerts project are to:

1. increase the community's access to information on development applications in their local area, or in an area of interest, through the use of the internet
2. to allow the community to easily do searches on development applications
3. to allow the community to receive email alerts for new development applications in their area
4. to encourage community participation in their local area by making this information easily accessible

The broader aims of the project are to:

1. promote and research better, simpler means of distributing information to the community
2. demonstrate the use and potential of open-source software to provide greater access to data
3. research and promote the use of public sector information (PSI) within community groups

Question 3
Explain the methods or strategies that will be used to achieve the desired outcome.

Software

Planning Alerts is an open-source project. We will identify similar open-source projects whose existing software we can reuse, adapt, and further develop to implement our project. Once our project is implemented our software will likewise be available under an open-source license to other groups or individuals who wish to use it.

Development

We will create a pilot project working with a small number of Local Councils, these will be councils who currently make their development applications available online. We will also initially be focusing on councils with high populations to ensure that the project has an immediate impact. The pilot project will translate the formats of data already available to a uniform format for redistribution via the website. We will also

work with the councils to develop guidelines, formats and policies to maximise the utility of their data in the future. Once this phase is completed we will present the project online as a beta version.

Implementation

Once the beta version of http://www.planningalerts.org.au is online we will use a variety of strategies to recruit people to log and convert the data available into a useful format, these strategies include *Crowd Sourcing,* and running a national campaign through local government associations (such as, for example, the Local Government and Shires Associations of New South Wales). We will invite and encourage digitally literate communities to extend its usefulness by writing their own tools on top of our research by having a community hackfest.

Ongoing

The OpenAustralia Foundation will develop a 'how to' module which will be available on http://www.planningalerts.org.au that will educate other community groups about how to implement a project like ours thereby ensuring ongoing community education.

Question 4
State the expected dates of commencement and completion.

Expected commencement date: 5 October 2009
Expected completion date: April 2010

(Based on the project plan in question 22 and the developer and project manager each focusing 2 days / week on the Planning Alerts project)

Question 5
State the location or place where the project will be conducted.

We are currently physically located in Glenbrook, NSW. The project will be online and nationwide. The Hackfest and training day (see question 22) will take place in NSW while we will encourage our volunteer network to run similar events around the country.

auDA Foundation Charter

Question 6
Explain how the proposal meets one or more of the objectives of the auDA Foundation Charter.

Planningalerts.org.au meets the aims of the auDA Foundation charter in that it is a community demonstration project that will enhance the utility of the Internet for the benefit of the Australian community. We will develop a template for community access to information concerning local government that will encourage and enable community participation and help to address issues of access to information and social equity. Further, we intend that planningalerts.org.au should be available to the community as a template, or model for other community access projects.

A significant part of our project aims to ensure that the knowledge, skills, and applications developed through this project continue to benefit the community beyond the initial demonstration project.

Demonstrated Need

Question 7

Explain the need that is being addressed and why this is important. Provide quantitative data if possible.

Building development is an area where business, local council and community engage with each other. It is common that ordinary people feel disconnected from the decisions of their local/municipal council and what gets built or knocked down in their local community.

If we can give people and communities better tools to find out what's happening, more people will engage with their community which will lead to increased social cohesion and social equity. People will have higher expectations for their community if they have access to the bigger picture and have a better sense of everything that is going on.

Of the local councils that do put their development applications online, most are in a form that does not address all the needs of the community, further the information is often hare to locate and difficult to use, or may use overly technical language.

With Planning Alerts we aim to create a service where the information comes directly to the user in the form of email alerts for new development applications in their area.

Question 8
Define the group in need that you wish to assist. Provide quantitative data if possible.

We estimate that 70-75% (from a random sample of 50 local council websites) of the population of Australia lies within a local council that has development applications online which could be used as a source for our project. In 2008, 80.6% (source http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats6.htm) of Australia's population used the Internet. Also, those aged 25 and above account for 66.5% of the population (ABS - 2006 Census).

So, we estimate that this project has the potential to benefit 38-40% of Australia's population, approximately 8.3-8.7m

This will increase with time as the Internet penetration increases with initiatives such as the National broadband network (NBN) and as more local councils put their development applications online.

Likely outcomes

Question 9
Describe the benefits, outputs and outcomes the project is designed to achieve. What will be the likely flow-on effects?

1. Greater number of ordinary people have free and easy access to local development approval information
2. Increased social / community cohesion
3. Inspire and encourage more councils to put their data online
4. Provide another test case of the use of opening data
5. Make the exisiting services work better for people - use email alerts, RSS feeds, Google maps, KML data, etc..
6. Council have to handle less basic DA queries allowing more time and money to be spent on other services
7. Republish the data so its easier to reuse by third parties which in turn generates innovation opportunities
8. Lower barriers of entry including cost for statistical analysis of this data by council, local and federal government, as well as building industry, research institutions and the general public.

9. Make it easier for more smaller councils to put information online by providing guidance and free tools which will pick up their data without requiring them to build front-end websites.

Question 10
How and by whom will the effectiveness of your project be measured?

1. Website traffic
2. Media exposure
3. Reuse of data by other projects
4. Coverage of all local councils - both in terms of our implementation of parser as well of those putting their data online
5. Attendance in community engagement events (eg Hackfest and Training day)
6. Invitations to talks and conferences

Question 11
How many people will directly benefit from your project?

Please see answer to question 8.

Sustainability

Question 12
How will this project be sustained after the auDA Foundation grant funds have been expended?

1. Free hosting.
2. Volunteer support.
3. Private voluntary donations from users of the service.
4. Seek additional development funding from Local Government, Philanthropists, Digital Infrastructure Biased Grant Funding as well as the private sector.
5. Open-source allows for anyone to take part and for anyone to use the work done at any point during the projects lifetime, and beyond.

Organisational Development

Question 13
How will the project assist your organisation to better meet its goals?

The OpenAustralia Foundation uses contemporary technologies to deliver unrestricted access to information for common use. We will continue to research the use of new technologies, develop and freely share tools to make information more accessible, richer, and more useful to the public.

To quote our company objects (from the Constitution of OpenAustralia Foundation Limited):
1. to support a nationwide open access public digital reference library for the purposes of making information relating to public bodies accessible and useful for all Australians;
2. to conduct research into the use and effects of information and communication technologies relating to public engagement and developing tools to enable the sharing of information for the purpose of improving such engagement;
3. to disseminate the results and methods of this research for the benefit and education of the public;
4. to provide tools and services to both public and private bodies or institutions, and the general public, to enable them to reuse such data and research freely and for the public good;
5. to provide content and software under an open licence wherever practicable;

6. to create a network for related local, online and library communities;

Our company objects clearly show how the proposed projects fits within our organisation's broader goals.

Question 14
What other organisations are doing similar work and in what way does your project differ from the initiatives of these other organisations?

The area of using the Internet to improve public engagement is a very new one.

Internationally, we are doing very similar work to mySociety (http://www.mysociety.org/) in the UK and the Sunlight Foundation (http://sunlightfoundation.com/) in the USA. We are focused exclusively on carrying out our work in Australia.

Demonstrated Capacity

Question 15
Give evidence of your organisation's ability and expertise to deliver the proposed service.

http://www.openaustralia.org - Very similar project but with broader scope than this project. We have a proven ability, as demonstrated by www.openaustralia.org, as well as our individual experience, to take difficult problems and decide and deliver practical and pragmatic solutions at low cost.

Question 16
List the names and qualifications or experience of the individuals who will direct and manage the activity or project. Explain whether these people are available in-house or through appropriate outsourcing.

Katherine Szuminska, in-house Digital Producer/Project Manager, is a Visual Effects Supervisor with 4 years of project management experience delivering excellent high end creative work on time and budget. 12 years in creative industries. She has a BA Hons in English/Media and an MA in Computer Animation and Visualisation.

Matthew Landauer, in-house Lead developer, has been developing software professionally for 17 years. He is director and developer of a software company, Visual Appliance. Recently he served as Head of Pipeline for Rising Sun Pictures, leading a team of six software developers. He also mostly built the vast majority of openaustralia.org. He has a PhD in Physics.

Question 17
Discuss your experience in successfully delivering similar projects.

In June 2008 we launched openaustralia.org, Australia's first e-democracy website. This was a pioneering use of the Internet for community engagement for Australian citizens. As part of the process of developing the site we worked with a number of Federal Government agencies and departments including the Senate, the House of Representatives and the Department of Parliamentary Services to secure access to parliamentary papers. Another key aspect of developing and implementing this project was a 'hackfest' that we held where interested community members volunteered their time and expertise to help add features to the site, in all over 40 people attended the 'hackfest', a number far exceeding our expectations. Our experience with openaustralia.org has provided a concrete example of our ability to manage and deliver community demonstration projects.

Question 18
Discuss the preparation that has been undertaken to date. Where appropriate, discuss your access to relevant equipment and facilities.

We have undertaken the following preparatory research:
1. Created an up-to-date list of all local councils (LGAs) cross-referenced with website address and latest available population data from the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
2. Randomly sampled 50 local councils across all population sizes, determined whether they publish development application information online including assessment of quality and quantity of data
3. Used the above data to estimate the number of councils and percentage of Australian population potentially covered by the Planning Alerts project.
4. Examined the open-source software behind the UK http://planningalerts.com site
5. Researched latest online mapping technologies

Stakeholders

Question 19
Explain how relevant stakeholders (including the target group, project partners and other supporters) have been included in the proposal's development.

We have met with representatives of the Local Government Web Network and the Local Government and Shires Association of NSW to gauge and understand the reaction and needs of local councils.

Question 20
How have people and/or other organisations demonstrated that they are willing to take part in the proposal?

• The Local Government Web Network has agreed to introduce us to representatives of local councils
• Our pre-existing volunteer developer network for OpenAustralia shows great willingness and motivation to work on projects in the area of civic / community engagement and technology

Question 21
Provide at least two letters of support from external individuals or organisations.

Included with this application please find enclosed letters of support from:
• Martin Stewart-Weeks, Director, Public Sector (Asia-Pacific) for Cisco's Internet Business Solutions Group
• Rob Manson, Managing Director of MOB, a Mobile & Online Business Innovation Lab in Sydney
• Peter McEvoy, Executive Producer of Public Affairs at ABC TV

Project Plan

Question 22
Provide a project plan that includes:
a. *description of proposed activities;*
b. *milestones;*
c. *a detailed breakdown of costs; and*
d. *an itemised quarterly budget (income and expenditure)*

Milestone	Activity	Developer days	Digital producer days
Project Start (1 Oct 2009)			
	Prototype parser for Blue Mountains City Council development applications	2	
	Get basic UK planningalerts.com codebase up and running for development	2	
Milestone 1 - Prototype with one council (19 Oct 2009)			
	Technical liason (with council development application software engineers)	2	
	Parser for top 20 local councils development applications websites	20	
	Update text of website to make it relevant to Australia		2
	Council liason		10
Milestone 2 - Start private beta testing (1 Feb 2009)			
	Volunteer / community coordination		5
	Directly integrate Google Maps / OpenStreetMap	3	
Milestone 3 - Start community developer involvement (22 Feb 2009)			
	NSW Hackfest (for developers)	1	1
	Respond and address feedback from local councils and users in private beta phase	5	1
Milestone 4 - Public beta release (15 Mar 2009)			
	Media releases		3
	Social media publicity		3
	NSW Training day (for community groups)	1	1
Completion (12 April 2009)			

Budget

Developer: 36 days = $24 480 (@ 8 hrs / day and $85 / hr)
Digital Producer: 26 days = $17 680 (@ 8 hrs / day and $85 / hr)

Total: $42 160

Based on $20000 funding from auDA Foundation and $22160 of in-kind support, allocating 47% of payment for hours to auDA Foundation.

October - December 2009
(Develop days: 26, Project Manager days: 12)
Income: $12155 auDA Foundation, $13685 in-kind support
Expenses: $12155 developer and project manager labour

January - March 2010
(Developer days: 9, Project Manager days: 11)
Income: $6460 auDA Foundation, $7225 in-kind support
Expenses: $6460 developer and project manager labour

April 2010 - June 2010
(Developer days: 1, Project Manager days: 3)
Income: $1275 auDA Foundation, $1445 in-kind support
Expenses: $1275 developer and project manager labour

Question 23
List the amount of financial support your organisation will make towards the project.
   a. *Describe the in-kind support your organisation will make towards the project.*
   b. *List the trusts, foundations, corporations and other sources, including governments, from which you are seeking funding for this project.*

   c. *List any other funding already pledged to this project.*

Matthew Landauer and Katherine Szuminska will support the project in-kind by the donation of time to the value of $22 160. At the closed beta milestone we will also be seeking private donations for the project on our website.

Organisational Information

Where the applicant is a very large organisation, such as a university, please provide information only about the relevant faculty (or similar).

Question 24
Give a brief description of the history and purpose of your organisation.

   • November 2007: Started working the OpenAustralia.org project
   • June 2008: OpenAustralia.org website launched
   • July 2009: OpenAustralia Foundation Limited incorporated as a not for profit company limited by guarentee (With pro-bono help of Deacons lawyers through the Public Interest Law Clearing House)
   • Currently: Through Deacons, in the process of applying for income tax exemption and deductible gift recipient (DGR) status with the ATO.

Question 25
List the characteristics of the population that your organisation serves, for example, geographic location, socio-economic status, age.

Our organisation aims to serve the whole of the Australian public by the creation of a
new Australian digital library.

Question 26
Summarise the current programs and accomplishments of your organisation.

1. Creation of Australia's first e-democracy website
   http://www.openaustralia.org/
2. First to publish the Federal register of Members' and Senators' Interests online
3. Hackfest - building a community of people building tools to make Australia a
   better place
4. Many speaking engagements at conferences and free events to educate and
   publicise the importance of open access to government data
5. Providing leadership (by example) in the Australian government 2.0 public
   debate

Question 27
*How many paid full-time, part-time and casual staff, does the organisation
employ?*

The organisation does not currently employ any paid staff. All work done to date has
been on a voluntary basis. Matthew has been working on OpenAustralia on average full
time for the last ten months, Katherine about 2.5 days per
week for the last six months.

Question 28
*Provide a copy of your most recent annual report, ASIC annual statement, or
other financial information, including a list of your board of directors and their
affiliations. Identify which of your board members are executive directors. If
no annual report is produced, supply a list of directors only.*

We are a newly formed not for profit company and are currently applying for
appropriate tax statuses with the ATO all the way to DGR.

Directors:
• Katherine Szuminska
• Helen Reynolds
• Matthew Landauer

Question 29
*Provide the most recent financial statement, audited if available. This
statement should reflect actual expenditures and funds received in the most
recently completed financial year.*

OpenAustralia Foundation only incorporated in July 2009.

Question 30
*Provide a brief summary of all grants that your organisation has received in
the last three years from trusts and foundations.*

To date we have received no grants from trusts or foundations. This is the first grant
we have applied for.