Data.gov and NASA Prize Money - Where does this get us better services?

Story
NASA: Prize Money a Bargain for Better Software
Data.gov popularity soaring, GSA report says
GSA Office of Citizen Service and Innovation Technologies 2011 Annual Report

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Two recent stories caught my attention: Data.gov popularity soaring, GSA report says: More than 2.3 million data sets downloaded in 16-month period, and NASA: Prize Money a Bargain for Better Software, and prompted this story.

I have written recently about the pros and cons of Data.gov, Prizes and Challenges, and Licensing government data and services and wonder where does all of this gets us in terms of better government data and services, which is what we are really trying to accomplish. Aren't licensing and technologies issues just the means to the end? Do they really affect the outcome or are they just diversions for people’s business and personal interests and preferences?
I looked for answers in the new GSA Office of Citizen Service and Innovation Technologies 2011 Annual Report (PDF) and said why don’t they deliver that report as a service with innovative technologies as an example of all they claim they are doing!

So as I repurposed and analyzed their PDF report, I said to myself: Use a collaboration tool, convert PDF to structured text, use Linked Open Data (well-defined URLs for content), implement the sitemap.org and schema.org protocols, make tables real reusable data tables, etc.

As I read: USASearch transforms the public's search experience and saves government agencies valuable resources and money by providing hosted site search services for more than 400 government websites and the quote: "It would not be possible to match the value of GSA's free search service by procuring or building a custom solution."

WhiteHouse.gov

I said: Can you just use Google and overlook the ads to save the taxpayers money and improve their experience? Studies already show they use Google in preference to USA.gov.

Can you integrated those 8 programs under the E-Government Program costing $8M so they produce better results because Congress already told you they did not see their value to the citizens when you had substantially more money in previous years?

Can you show us how the Federal Citizen Services Fund which "serves as the authoritative source for public government information and services ...", actually saved the government over $76M in FY11 in cost avoidance by offering agencies no or low-cost government-wide policy-compliant solutions and by eliminating costly and duplicative procurements" while costing us 34M?

In summary: Can you provide us with a report that is shorter on achievements and recognitions and longer on real results?

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**NASA: Prize Money a Bargain for Better Software**

Source: [http://gcn.com/articles/2012/01/16/nasa-pilots-coding-tournaments.aspx](http://gcn.com/articles/2012/01/16/nasa-pilots-coding-tournaments.aspx)

In October 2010, NASA and the Harvard Business School launched the NASA Tournament Lab, an online platform for contests between independent programmers who compete to create software and algorithms and solve computational problems.

Both NASA scientists and Harvard academics have an interest in the subject of open innovation, the use of ad hoc groups such as open-source software communities or wikis to produce solutions outside of traditional organizations.

NASA’s interest is practical. “We’re always looking at ways to fill gaps in our technical capabilities," said Jason Crusan, chief technologist for NASA’s human exploration operations. NASA has experimented with crowdsourcing and other development techniques, and the Tournament Lab is the latest in these efforts.

Harvard’s interest is academic. "My research is focused on how innovation happens outside of the formal organization," said Karim Lakhani, assistant professor of business administration at Harvard. His work is plagued by a lack of real-world data on the comparative merits of different models of open innovation.

NASA researchers with complex computational problems now can use the Tournament Lab to order up a program or an
algorithm for a modest amount of prize money. NASA gets operational software at bargain prices; Harvard gets real-world data for academic studies on how collaborative and competitive communities work. The programmers get real-world experience, street cred and some cash.

The idea of commercial, competitive software development is not new. NASA’s Tournament Lab is hosted by TopCoder, an online company that brings together customers with problems to solve with a virtual community of more than 320,000 programmers around the world who compete to solve these problems for cash prizes. The NASA lab draws on these resources but is designed so that its competitions can be structured to provide academic results as well as software. So far, the results have been encouraging.

“We didn’t think we would have as high a success rate as we’ve had,” Crusan said. “There are a lot of smart people in the world.”

On your marks, get set, code

The first challenge presented in the lab was developing an algorithm to optimize the contents for the medical kits that accompany astronauts on missions. It might sound like a trivial exercise, but there are a lot of variables involved and the stakes are high. The kit contains the only medical resources available in space and the mass and volume of the kit is strictly limited. The contents must also take into account both expected and unexpected problems and reflect the specific requirements of each mission and crew, long-term and short-term.

The challenge was to develop an algorithm that addressed all of these issues, trading off the mass and volume of each item while ensuring sufficient resources to minimize the likelihood that a medical problem would terminate a mission.

NASA already had an algorithm but was looking for one that was more efficient. Harvard put up the prize money, NASA developed the specifications, and 516 coders working in groups of about 20 each competed. Individuals in each group did not collaborate but competed with each other. A total of $1,000 in prize money was awarded to the top five performers in each group: $500 for first, $200 for second, $125 for third, $100 for fourth and $75 for fifth place.

The contest produced 549 submissions over two weeks. The best submission was more effective than NASA’s previous algorithm by a factor of three, and NASA is now using it. “We got very high quality ideas in a short period of time,” Crusan said.

The program has been successful enough that TopCoder recently announced the first competition on the NASA Tournament Lab sponsored by another agency. The Patent and Trademark Office is offering $50,000 in prizes for the development of algorithms to help digitize an archive of 7 million patents by recognizing and classifying images from patent documents. The contest was scheduled to run from Dec. 16 through Jan. 16, and as an added incentive each competitor will receive a limited edition NASA Tournament Lab t-shirt.

The competitive coding market

The competitive model of coding, although it falls under the same rubric of “open innovation,” is in many ways the antithesis of the open software model. Where open software communities are collaborative and donate their efforts,
competitions primarily are profit-driven. The idea of academic and creative contests with cash prizes is not new, Lakhani said. Prizes offered in aeronautics and aerospace have spurred developments in transatlantic flight and private spacecraft over the last century. But in the last decade the idea of competitive coding has been commercialized and a market is developing for it.

TopCoder expects to post competitions with $7 million in prize money this year.

"We have contests for everything for coming up with an idea or a conceptualization, to substantive design and development process," said TopCoder president Robert Hughes. The company acts as a middle man, providing its community of independent coders with a forum for work and charging customers for access to the community. Prizes offered range from $25 for minor updates and documentation to as much as $10,000 for “marathon matches” such as those for NASA to develop new programs or algorithms that significantly advance current capabilities.

Although the prizes typically are modest, coders who consistently win can make good money. “One guy won $1 million in seven years,” Hughes said. “He has become something of a rock star in the community.”

The community is skewed toward grad students seeking real-world experience as well as money, Hughes said, although there is a wide variety of experience represented. It is an international group, with the Philippines and Southeast Asia tending to dominate in the graphics areas and Russians in component and back-end design. The challenge for TopCoder is to make its model not only attractive to competent coders but also credible to customers who will be using the code.

“It’s required to be completely transparent,” Hughes said of the development process. Competitors document their work, and everything is available for evaluation, both automated and peer reviewed. Work typically is triaged with an automated assessment upon submission to find obvious weaknesses. Finalists usually are evaluated by peer reviewers. Contestants also are ranked according to their participation and performance.

“The reviewers are selected by us from a pool of trusted members” whose work has demonstrated their reliability, Hughes said. The customer also can evaluate results before awarding a prize. Intellectual property rights for winning submissions go to the customer.

Other innovation models

Competition is not the only innovative model NASA has experimented with. The agency turned to crowdsourcing for a program to identify, characterize and count lunar craters in NASA images. The project worked well on a set of 200,000 images, Crusan said.

“The problem is, we have over 2 billion images and growing every day,” he said. Tackling that problem required an algorithm to detect and analyze craters. A challenge in the Tournament Lab produced 310 submissions in two weeks. “Now we have a solution that is returning about 75 percent accuracy on crater identification. We’re using it as a starting point to accelerate our algorithm development.”

Another image detection challenge produced nearly 550 submissions for analyzing satellite imagery of terrestrial
pipelines. “We’ve had a high level of success in every challenge we’ve held,” Crusan said. NASA has plans to take the lab to the next level. “Now we’re getting into how to write whole applications,” such as a portable EKG app for a table computer to be used in orbit.

The Tournament Lab so far appears to be producing high-quality results in short periods of time at a low cost, but “we can’t empirically say that yet,” Crusan said, because the data for comparison still is being gathered. “We’re still in the learning phase.”

But some information is beginning to emerge. Lakhani has managed to solve one paradox in competition coding theory: Economic theory predicts that small competitions are likely to produce better results because each contestant will have a greater chance of winning in a small group and will make a greater effort. But behavioral theory predicts that a larger group of contestants, spurred by greater competitive stimuli, is more likely to produce a favorable outcome.

It turns out that the economic theory is right, at least most of the time, Lakhani said. In larger groups of competitors individual performance drops off rapidly. But with complex problems requiring expertise in multiple knowledge domains, large groups seem to work better.

Whatever the final results of the pilot, the NASA Tournament Lab is working as intended. “We deliver software to NASA that is operational, and we as academics can do our research,” Lakhani said.

Data.gov popularity soaring, GSA report says


More than 2.3 million data sets downloaded in 16-month period

By Alice Lipowicz

Jan 06, 2012

The federal Data.gov repository experienced major gains in 2011 in the number of data sets added and downloaded and in the number of new applications and “mashups” created with data obtained from the site, according to a new report from the General Services Administration.

The Barack Obama administration launched Data.gov as a flagship open government initiative in 2009. It contains thousands of data sets of machine-readable federal government data, collected from a variety of federal agencies. The data sets are available for free download to the public.

Related stories:

Are e-gov programs worth the cost?

E-gov on the chopping block
While Congress reduced funding for Data.gov and other open government initiatives last year, the GSA's Office of Citizen Services & Innovative Technologies, project manager for Data.gov, released its annual report on Dec. 30 showing that Data.gov's popularity is accelerating and has had global impact.

For example, the number of Data.gov data set downloads increased to 2.35 million in a 16-month period that ended Sept. 30. Previously, there were 652,000 data sets downloaded in a 12-month period that ended May 2010.

When adjusted to a 12-month average, the annual rate of growth in downloads was 270 percent.

The number of applications and mashups created by the public and by governments during the period also rose substantially, to 1,079 during the 16-month period that ended Sept. 30. That compared to 237 during the 12-month period.

Annualized, the rate of growth in mashups was 341 percent.

During the same time periods, the number of data sets available at Data.gov grew to 390,000 as of Sept. 30, up from 273,000 as of May 2010.

Other countries have followed the U.S. lead in creating data repositories of their own, with 21 nations doing so as of Sept. 30, up from 6 in May 2010. State-sponsored open data websites rose to 29, from 8, during the same periods; while city-sponsored websites rose to 11, from 8.

The report also highlighted additional features of Data.gov added in recent months, including six dedicated sections called Data communities organized around topics including energy, health, law and oceans. Four more communities are planned in the coming months, the report said.

The potential savings to taxpayers for the data collaborations in the Data.gov communities was $5.5 million, the GSA said in the report.

The U.S. and India are collaborating on the Data.gov-in-a-Box initiative to provide an open source, integrated version of Data.gov that can be adopted by other countries to make their own available freely available and downloadable on the Internet in usable formats.

Another new feature is the Data.gov Interactive Catalog, which is a cloud-based capability that provides an interface to help citizens find and use the data they are looking for.

The catalog “is available anywhere, anytime, is secure and backed-up, without the expense of dedicated government servers,” the GSA report said. “Application developers will be able to access the data in real time (vs. downloading files) through open, consistent, ubiquitous, standards-based Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), enabling them to tailor applications to use only the data they need (promoting mobile apps) and enabling real-time updates for always-fresh data.”

The interactive cloud platform also allows users to embed data from Data.Gov on blogs, websites and social media pages.
The GSA's fiscal year 2011 Annual Report for the Office of Citizen Services & Innovative Technologies also highlights other open government, cybersecurity and efficiency programs, including Cloud First cloud computing, FedRamp collaboration on cybersecurity standards and Challenge.gov platform for innovation contests.

About the Author

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GSA Office of Citizen Service and Innovation Technologies 2011 Annual Report

Source: http://www.gsa.gov/graphics/staffoff...nualReport.pdf

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Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies: Meeting the Challenges

We are leading the Obama Administration’s charge to make government more open, transparent, and effective for the citizens it serves.

We led several key initiatives this year to reform federal IT, facilitate using new technologies to improve government operations and citizen engagement, and help agencies enhance customer experience across government.
Citizens accessed our information and services more than 272 million times this year, visiting USA.gov and other websites, searching through USASearch, ordering and downloading publications, interacting via social media, and getting answers by phone calls and e-mails about thousands of different government services and programs.

We addressed government-wide challenges outlined in the Administration’s 25 point Implementation Plan to Reform Federal Information Technology, leading key IT management reform initiatives that will enable agencies across the government to significantly increase operational efficiency and effectiveness. These reforms are expected to save the government $3-$5 billion in just a few years.

**Innovative Technologies:** One of the Administration’s 25 Point Plan’s primary goals is to get many agencies to use secure cloud computing through the Cloud First Policy. OCSIT is the government-wide lead on Cloud First, which requires Federal agencies to “default to cloud-based solutions whenever a secure, reliable, cost-effective cloud option exists.” Agencies must also move one service to the cloud within 12 months and two more within 18 months.

OCSIT’s Federal Cloud Computing Initiative Program Management Office is leading the way with the following government-wide implementation measures:

- Consolidating data centers and eliminating 800 of the existing 2,100 by 2015.
- Establishing contract vehicles for Infrastructure as a Service, E-mail as a Service and other cloud-based and commodity IT services.
- Developing the Federal Risk Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP) to speed up agencies’ adoption of secure cloud solutions.
- Creating Apps.gov, an on-line storefront that provides access to over 3,000 cloud-based products and services where agencies can research solutions, compare prices and place on-line orders using GSA’s eBuy system.

Our Federal Cloud Computing Initiative focuses on implementing cloud solutions that increase operational efficiency; optimize common services and solutions across organizational boundaries; and enable transparent, collaborative and participatory government. These ground-breaking efforts help to close the IT performance gap between the federal government and the private sector, as outlined in my congressional testimony in April and September.

**Expanding open government:** We keep expanding open government by building and sharing new tools with agencies. We helped federal agencies use online dialogues, developed mobile government strategies and apps, offered a central web platform for hosting innovation challenges, and enabled an increasing number of ways so the public can talk with government. This transparency and openness leads to better management, operational efficiencies, and greater accountability for results. Some examples include:

- Challenge.gov, the central platform for government contests and challenges, empowers the government and the public to bring the best ideas and solutions to our agencies. The platform has featured more than 130 challenges and awarded over 38 million dollars in prizes.
- Data.gov, which now hosts over 400,000 downloadable, interactive data sets, is the anchor of the 38-nation Open Government Partnership. We also launched Data.gov-in-a-Box, an open-source version of Data.gov that other countries and other governments at any level can use.
- Executive Order on Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service, which led to our managing the .gov Reform Initiative. This initiative calls for reducing the number of federal websites and eliminating duplication. OCSIT is also helping GSA and other agencies develop the customer service plans required to comply with the executive order.
OCSIT won a dozen major awards for leadership and innovation this year. We’ve been invited to share our knowledge with government and non-government groups alike—from Capitol Hill to state governments across the country to Canada, from Singapore to Switzerland, Taiwan and Mexico.

While we’ve achieved tremendous success this year, we still face a number of challenges. As always, they bring with them many exciting opportunities for further innovation that will keep us on our toes in the coming year.

Next year, we will have to do more of the same with fewer federal e-government dollars. But we have demonstrated our ingenuity, our innovativeness and our ability to maximize and leverage resources to benefit the federal government and our citizens.

David McClure
Associate Administrator
Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies
U.S. General Services Administration

Who We Are

We deliver government-wide information and services to the public. We provide practical tools, models, and proven practices that agencies can easily use and make it easy to adopt new technologies to improve efficiency and effectiveness of government operations and enhance citizen engagement.

Our Vision

Our vision is simple: Deliver a world-class experience to the public when accessing government information and services – anytime, anywhere – through the channel that they choose.

We create products and services that federal agencies can easily adopt that will enhance their ability to innovate, deliver services, engage the public, and save valuable resources.

**Innovation**: Expand public engagement with government using pioneering and proven solutions and practices that are adaptable government-wide.

**Customer Intimacy**: Deliver an online customer experience that is best in class, that is driven by results, and that other agencies can use.

**Operational Excellence**: Propose, incubate, and propagate new technology solutions to close the gap in information technology performance and innovation, and accelerate federal leadership in implementing solutions that are faster, cheaper, and greener.
Our Values

Accomplishments

Innovative Technologies

We serve as the government-wide leader in identifying and fostering adoption of innovative new technologies that help agencies increase efficiency of government operations, enhance effectiveness of service to citizen, and achieve cost savings.

Federal Cloud Computing Initiative

Cloud computing offers an unprecedented opportunity for substantial IT spending savings, while increasing federal IT systems’ agility, scalability, performance and sustainability.

We manage the Federal Cloud Computing Initiative (FCCI) Program Management Office (PMO), which ensures that the government leverages cloud-based solutions and addresses obstacles to adoption of secure cloud solutions. It works closely with National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to develop standards to govern portability and interoperability in the cloud environment. It also works with the CIO Council and chief information security officers, the Departments of Homeland Security and Defense, industry, academia, and other key stakeholders.

The FCCI PMO leads several major initiatives that will make it easier to adopt secure cloud computing, including making available cost-effective government-wide contract vehicles for cloud-related services; adopting a robust, consistent; and
standards-based approach to security and risk management; achieving federal data center optimization; and using a one-stop shop for acquiring cloud services. Each is described below.

FCCI concentrates on cloud security, Email as a Service (EaaS), data center consolidation, Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), and Apps.gov. Also, the FCCI plays a leadership role, making it easy to get access to cloud-based solutions from commercial providers that meet federal requirements, and enhancing agencies’ capacity to analyze viable cloud computing options that meet their business and technology modernization needs. This reduces or minimizes barriers to safe and secure cloud adoption.

Also, the FCCI PMO manages and updates Info Portal, info.apps.gov, the primary information portal for cloud computing across government. It boasts an average of 3,000 hits a month, and gives federal agencies and state and local governments with an authoritative source for information on GSA-managed cloud procurement vehicles, cloud case studies and metrics, and documentation agencies can use for their own cloud research, business case creation, and procurements.

Achievements:

- OCSIT and FAS completed security authorizations for enough IaaS awardees to ensure competitive fields in all three lots. The Department of Homeland Security placed the first order against the IaaS BPA for web hosting services in the cloud, and will host high-profile public-facing websites such as http://fema.gov and http://dhs.gov in the cloud. GSA has an order in the queue that should be awarded shortly.
- Within the IaaS BPA, agencies buy what they need and can respond to demand spikes and valleys. This is a huge change in how government agencies provision their information technology. Owning the hardware – or leasing dedicated hardware from hosting vendors – will become a method of the past reserved for special applications. For low- and medium-risk systems, the economics will shift hosting toward cloud services for more flexible environments at better prices.
- Issued a solicitation for cloud-based e-mail services in the second quarter of FY 2011.
- Working with security experts from across the federal government to develop a set of security controls, risk management, and continuous monitoring procedures to address cloud-based products and services. The Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP) is being reviewed by industry and government stakeholders and will become operational in early FY12.

Federal Cloud Computing Program Management Office

In coordination with GSA’s Federal Acquisition Service (FAS), the Cloud PMO develops requirements and supports the establishment of competitive government-wide contract vehicles that enable agencies to acquire secure, commercially available cloud solutions for infrastructure, email, and other commodity services.

Achievements:

- Supported establishing procurement vehicles that allow agencies to purchase IT resources as commodities, ending in FAS’ awarding the Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) Blanket Purchase Agreement under GSA Schedule 70. The 12 diverse cloud service providers offer cloud storage, computing power, and cloud-based website hosting as commodity services. These IaaS contracts enable agencies to best use their infrastructure and achieve substantial, long-term cost savings. Agencies pay only for what they need, define performance requirements, can respond to changing demands, benefit from commodity pricing, and receive secure solutions.
- Helped develop the Email as a Service (EaaS) BPA, which is an active procurement managed by FAS. It will offer federal customers a streamlined procurement vehicle for commercially available cloud email solutions that best fits their agency's needs.
The Administration’s Cloud First policy’s primary goal is to achieve widespread practical use of secure cloud computing to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness of government. Currently, most agencies conduct their own security assessment and authorization for every system they acquire, leading to unnecessary expense, duplication, and inconsistency across government. According to the 2009 FISMA report to Congress, agencies spent $300M on security assessment and authorization activities alone. FedRAMP will substantially reduce these costs by providing a single, provisional authorization that can be used by all agencies as the basis for issuing an Authority to Operate (ATO).

Working closely with DHS, NIST, DoD, OMB, and the Federal CIO Council, GSA set up the Federal Authorization Risk Management Program (FedRAMP) to accelerate adoption of secure cloud solutions by agencies across government. Key benefits include:

- Provides a single, consistent security risk assessment and authorization that can be leveraged across agencies – an "approve once, and use often" approach
- Establishes a common set of baseline security assessment and continuous monitoring requirements using NIST standards
- Approves and makes available qualified, independent third-party assessors, ensuring consistent assessment and accreditation of cloud solutions based on NIST’s proven conformity assessment approach
- Shifts risk management from annual reporting under FISMA to more robust continuous monitoring by moving towards detecting in real-time and

Savings across agencies are estimated at a 50% reduction in staffing, 75% reduction in assessment time and $200K cost avoidance every time an agency leverages the FedRAMP ATO, far exceeding the cost of the program.
Achievements:

Agencies seeking to adopt cloud services have shown strong support and demand for FedRAMP. Its processes, policy, governance, and technical security standards have all been based on a consensus-based approach that includes agencies’ Chief Information Security Officers, the Federal CIO Council and its Information Security and Identity Management Committee (ISIMC), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Defense (DoD), National Security Agency (NSA), and numerous industry organizations.

The FedRAMP PMO has fully vetted baseline security controls, requirements and documentation with both government and industry stakeholders, receiving over 1,100 comments between November 2010 and January 2011. Based on this extensive input and ongoing collaboration with stakeholders, the FedRAMP PMO developed a comprehensive concept of operations, conformity assessment process, and continuous monitoring framework for Federal agencies to use when using this program. FedRAMP will deploy fully during FY12 and is expected to be mandatory for agencies to use when acquiring cloud services.

**Apps.gov**

Apps.gov is an online storefront to encourage and enable the adoption of cloud computing and social media solutions within the federal government. Apps.gov aggregates the cloud-based service catalog available to agency CIOs. It offers a robust set of business, productivity products and services, and links to social media applications that have signed terms of service agreements with GSA.

Using Apps.gov, agencies can research cloud products, compare prices, and place orders. Many agencies begin their research and analysis of existing cloud products and services at this site. Once procurement decisions have been made, agencies can buy direct through the storefront or through GSA Advantage or e-Buy.

Agencies also use Apps.gov to research free social media tools that have federal-compatible terms of service agreements in place with GSA. By negotiating these agreements and making them available to other agencies, OCSIT has cleared an important hurdle to adopting free, commercial tools such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr.

Achievements:
• Access to more than 3,000 cloud-based products and services. The site receives about 3,800 hits per month. Apps.gov gives agencies a direct entry point to GSA's eBuy system so that they can complete their Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) competition requirements for cloud-based solutions that require a statement of work (SOW). Agencies have purchased more than $5 million in cloud-computing services and products.

• FISMA-certified cloud computing services through the Infrastructure as a Service (Iaas) Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) are available on Apps.gov. This BPA has 12 vendors across three different lots of services: Web Hosting, Cloud Storage, and Virtual Machines. The IaaS BPA allows Federal agencies to compare vendors offering similar services and provides a streamlined procurement vehicle for acquiring cloud services.

Federal Data Center Consolidation

One of the Obama Administration’s primary IT priorities is reviewing and consolidating federal data centers. Data center proliferation strains agency budgets, resources, and the environment.

Our Federal Cloud Computing PMO manages the government-wide Federal Data Center Consolidation Initiative (FDCCI). The FDCCI helps agencies identify their existing data center assets and create consolidation plans that include a technical roadmap and targets.

Data Center Consolidation savings by the end of 2015 are expected to be $3B, based on analysis of information provided in October, which shows that agencies plan to close 472 data centers by the end of next year.

This initiative will significantly enhance IT efficiency and enable infrastructure optimization, while also fostering environmental sustainability and greening of data center facilities throughout government. The PMO works with agencies to create a repository of information on IT assets and aggressive plans to consolidation data centers, and provides guidance to agencies on meeting consolidation goals.

Achievements:

• Chartered and is facilitating a governmentwide data center consolidation task force cochaired by DHS and DOI that meets monthly and includes representatives from all 24 CFO Act agencies.

• Ensuring consistent data collection of the federal data center inventory by developing and disseminating standard templates to collect, manage, and analyze agency data center inventory data.
• Collaborating with industry on best practices and solutions for key data center consolidation issues.
• Conducted an Industry Day to discuss key data center consolidation challenges and seek input on best practices and case studies that provide actionable insights to agencies. Over 120 white papers were submitted for government review, and are being studied by government professionals.
• Developed a comprehensive total cost model for agencies to use to analyze alternative consolidation scenarios and enable data-driven decision-making for infrastructure cost and performance optimization.
• Pursuing development of a data center marketplace that will help best optimize infrastructure utilization across government by matching agencies with excess computing capacity with those that have immediate requirements. A working group is addressing consensus-building, requirements gathering, and other key facets necessary to ensure success.

On September 30, agencies released their updated data center consolidation plans to the public. This data reveals that the government remains on track to close at least 800 data centers by 2015, as stated in the Administration’s IT Reform Plan. After more than a year of consolidation work, agencies stated they plan to close 962 data centers through 2015, and that 81 of these data centers have already been closed.

Open Government and Citizen Engagement

OCSIT is an accelerator and incubator for government-wide social media and public engagement solutions. We provide agencies with practical tools and technology, research, best practices, training, policy guidance, and outreach to meet the public’s rapidly changing expectations of being able to participate, collaborate, view and understand government activities and information, and use government services. We also engage citizens directly through USA.gov, the National Contact Center, and an extensive presence on social media channels.

Open Government

On his first day in office, President Obama ushered in a new era of openness in government when he challenged federal agencies to strengthen America’s democracy, boost government efficiency, and save taxpayer dollars by improving transparency and increasing public participation.

GSA met this challenge head on by successfully spearheading several open government initiatives and making meaningful headway towards fulfilling the aspirations of the President’s Open Government Directive. We have helped launch several flagship initiatives that are transforming citizen engagement with government. GSA’s Open Government initiative serves as a roadmap of the agency’s activities to advance a culture of openness. GSA’s Open Government Plan celebrates GSA’s on-going efforts to increase transparency and expand opportunities for public participation and engagement in agency operations.

Our newest public engagement activities include dialogues, collaboration forums, partnerships, and etools that are bringing new insights to government in key areas such as improving federal websites, expanding use of mobile computing, and fostering small business participation in federal procurement.

In addition to our original four flagship open government initiatives, in 2011 we added two new programs in the beginning phases of implementation. The six flagship initiatives are:
• Terms of Service Agreements
• Open Government Public Engagement Tool
• Challenges and Prizes Platform
• Citizen Engagement Platform
• Business Breakthrough (New)
• ePublications (New)
Our flagship Open Government initiatives benefit every federal agency and show our government-wide leadership role.

- The Terms of Service Agreements and the Open Government Public Engagement Tool give federal agencies policy-compliant, proven solutions that enable them to communicate openly and effectively with the public.
- The Challenges and Prizes Platform, challenge.gov, allows agencies to solicit innovative ideas and practical solutions from the public, backed by incentives that encourage the public to participate and compete.
- The Citizen Engagement Platform expands agencies’ ability to use social media tools that are secure, tested, and accessible to persons with disabilities.
- The Business Breakthrough program helps businesses better understand the intricacies of the federal market, and learn more about ways they can use GSA’s contracting vehicles to grow.
- ePublications makes popular government publications available for free via electronic download in a variety of e-publication formats.

President Obama highlighted his Administration’s commitment to open government when he unveiled the U.S. National Action Plan on September 20, 2011 at the United Nations. The plan lays out the key challenges that will be addressed in the open government space. At the same time, The Obama Administration’s Commitment to Open Government: A Status Report, was released, which outlines the administration’s major Open Government initiatives, summarizes the progress made on those initiatives, and explains how the Administration will continue to implement them over the next months and years.

GSA’s excellent work is highlighted with Data.gov, Challenge.gov, and other OCSIT initiatives as key components. GSA will keep openness as an operational standard. Details on how GSA will implement its Open Government Plan and flagship initiatives are available via the Open Government Dashboard published on the agency's Open Government web page: [http://GSA.gov/Open](http://GSA.gov/Open).

**Data.gov**

We are the executive lead and project manager for Data.gov, which is the flagship initiative of the Administration’s Open Government Directive. Its goal is to make the federal government transparent and open through clear, accessible, and easy-to-use online government data. Data.gov increases public access to high-value, machinereadable data sets generated by the federal government’s executive branch.

Communities are able to aggregate content, collaboration capabilities, and data across agencies. With 6 communities today, including energy, health, law and 4 more expected in the next few months, this yields a potential savings of 5.5M.
The Data.gov team makes public-sector data available to everyone and creates and maintains a central directory for all data published by federal agencies. We continue to provide value to the public through an enhanced delivery channel, and deployment of a shared data set hosting environment. Data.gov empowers the public by fundamentally changing the way government shares its data, and creates value through applications for daily use. Data.gov increases the public’s ability to easily find, download, and use data sets that the federal government has generated.

**Data.gov Quick Facts**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>Total data sets available</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>272,768</td>
<td>389,933</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applications and mashups developed by the public and government</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>237</td>
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<td>Data set downloads</td>
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<td>Nations establishing open data sites</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>States offering open data sites</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cities in North America with open data sites</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
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**Achievements:**
• Launched new Data.gov communities, specialized sections of the website dedicated to bringing together data suppliers and data consumers around a specific, cross-agency topic. These active communities provide citizens with a place to find data on their topics of interest, access apps and tools that bring that data to life, read blogs from contributors from agencies like HHS and the Department of Energy, and use discussion forums.

• Since the United States launched this capability, seven other national governments have launched their versions – and more are expected. India and the United States are working on Data.gov-in-a-Box. This initiative seeks to help interested countries promote transparency, improve citizens’ engagement, and strengthen public service delivery by increasing citizens’ access to public information. For the Data.gov-in-a-Box effort, technical experts from India and the United States share respective best practices, ideas and experiences to create an open-source, integrated version of Data.gov that will provide citizens with open government data and public information in a usable format. Data.gov-in-a-Box will provide an integrated, open-source platform, free of charge and intellectual property constraints that any government can use. Also, this effort will issue challenges and other citizen engagement initiatives to encourage citizens of both countries to develop new applications for global use. We plan to make Data.gov-in-a-Box available by early 2012.

• Launched a new Interactive Catalog, a cloud-based capability that provides a better interface to help citizens find and use the data they are looking for. It is based on a modular, cloud-based platform architecture, so it is available anywhere, anytime, is secure and backed-up, without the expense of dedicated government servers. All agencies can load their data, getting easy access to the cloud and allowing smaller agencies to host large amounts of data at a reasonable cost. Application developers will be able to access the data in real-time (versus downloading files) through open, consistent, ubiquitous, standards-based Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), enabling them to tailor applications to use only the data they need (promoting mobile apps), and enabling real-time updates for always-fresh data. The new platform also makes it easy to embed data from Data.Gov on blogs, websites and social media pages.

Challenge.gov

Challenge.gov is the free, government-wide platform where federal agencies can host competitions and engage the public in submitting solutions. By connecting "seekers" and "solvers," Challenge.gov makes it easier and quicker to find innovative solutions to some of government's most pressing problems. It is the centerpiece of the President's Strategy for American Innovation and is driven by the American Competes Act.

“Considering the cost-benefit ratio, it’s amazing we don’t have thousands and thousands of innovation prizes addressing areas of stagnancy throughout our infrastructure — contests that would unleash the intellectual power and drive of entrepreneurs.”

Washington Post
which gives agencies broad authority to conduct prizes and competitions.

Challenge.gov allows citizens to view challenges and prizes from across government and actively participate by submitting solutions, voting on solutions, supporting a particular challenge, or sharing information among different communities.

GSA has saved agencies significant time and resources by providing a central no-cost, policy-compliant solution for hosting challenges, and has avoided agencies creating their own redundant challenge platforms.

Through Challenge.gov, OCSIT has spurred unprecedented government innovation and creativity. Using challenges and prizes has numerous benefits, such as:

- new opportunities are opened for agencies to access expertise beyond traditional networks
- agencies only pay for results if a solution meets the winning criteria
- individual solvers reap the social rewards of being recognized as “winners,” generating much higher levels of public engagement and awareness of key agency mission objectives than a traditional procurement process ever could.

Achievements:

Within the first year, Challenge.gov posted 130 challenges, 36 federal agencies participated, and agencies awarded more than $38 million in prize money. Challenge.gov saves agencies considerable time and money by providing a platform that already complies with federal requirements, including privacy, security, the Paperwork Reduction Act, and access for people with disabilities. We expect to host 150 challenges in FY12; if agencies bought similar challenge hosting service from outside vendors, it would cost them an estimated $15 million. Challenges can cost from $50,000 to $150,000 each, on average.

Challenge.gov has been visited over a million times by people from 194 countries and territories—nearly every country around the globe. In the United States, the 583,000 visits came from more than 10,000 cities, reflecting broad interest and demonstrating our commitment to tap into the creativity of those outside government.

In addition, we trained hundreds of federal employees in how to effectively conduct challenges and to think strategically about how challenges can help solve their top business problems. We developed and updated best practices and checklists on the Challenges section of HowTo.gov and created several videos that showcase how agencies have successfully implemented challenges. Below are examples of how Challenge.gov has supported agencies in their innovation efforts and reaped significant cost savings and efficiency:

- **CDC flu app challenge**

  CDC received nearly 100 submissions to develop an app to help people better understand flu symptoms and treatment. Nine winners shared $35,000 in prize money; whereas it would have cost an estimated $360,000 to develop the apps through a typical procurement process. See: [http://fluapp.challenge.gov/](http://fluapp.challenge.gov/)

- **Apps for Healthy Kids (USDA)**

  This challenge, supported by First Lady Michelle Obama's “Let’s Move” campaign, called for people to create apps to help kids make better, healthier food choices. The challenge stimulated the creation of over $5 million worth of software and games in exchange for $60,000 in prizes. In addition, the challenge generated tremendous...
social rewards, with over 100 print articles, 200 web articles, 50,000 tweets and 50,000 Facebook postings, creating a level of awareness on a scale difficult to achieve via traditional press releases and outreach—or if USDA had developed apps via a typical procurement process.

Citizen Contests

We use contests, prizes, and other incentive-backed strategies to find innovative and cost-effective solutions to improve open government. These allow the government to tap into the public’s creativity, and also let the public more easily contribute knowledge and creativity to finding better solutions together.

- USA.gov launched the “Help Answer the Public’s Questions Video Contest” (http://faq.challenge.gov) where the public can use FAQs at answers.usa.gov to create videos to help people understand how to find government information and services. Contest closes October 28, 2011.
- Building on a common question government gets, OCSIT ran a “How Do I Become President” Infographic Challenge. (http://challenge.gov/GSA/44-kidsgov-...dent-challenge). The winning entry was made into a poster and sent to 10,000 middle schools. This poster is so popular that it’s been reprinted and is now available on Publications.USA.gov.
- To engage the public more in government, OCSIT ran a challenge for guest bloggers (http://challenge.gov/GSA/31-share-yo...riterchallenge) to write for the USA.gov blog (blog.USA.gov). The public shared their stories of how government information has been useful to them.

Social Media

We help federal agencies with legal and policy issues related to social media. In addition, we have greatly expanded our own use of social media channels as part of our outreach and public engagement efforts.

Achievements:
We created a robust presence for USA.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Tumblr, Scribd, and Flickr; currently with more than 150,000 followers on Twitter and 31,500 Facebook fans. We manage several Twitter accounts that tell the public about what we’re doing and what we offer: @GovNewMedia, @WebManagerU, @USAgov, @GobiernoUSA, @Challengegov and @USDataGov.
Our other impressive social media results reflect the public’s growing use of the popular social media channels:

- Developed and expanded social media directories on USA.gov, including government blogs, widgets, RSS feeds, podcasts, and videos
- Helped write GSA-wide social media guidelines for employees
- Created and published extensive social media best practices on HowTo.gov
- USA.gov rebranded GovGab as the USA.gov Blog (Blog.USA.gov) and became the first federal agency to use the Tumblr, the popular blogging platform. In just four months, the USA.gov blog gained more than 1,300 followers on Tumblr. Since USA.gov led the way to Tumblr and negotiated a government-friendly terms of service with the company, Tumblr has been adopted by other government agencies, including the U.S. Department of State, Peace Corps, National Archives, and National Endowment for the Humanities. Tumblr has tagged our content 41 times and featured us in their Radar multiple times, which has greatly expanded the reach of our blog content
- In collaboration with other agencies and programs, delivered 19 guest posts from 11 different agencies on Blog.USA.gov. OCSIT increased blog activity - GovGab posted a new blog each business day, whereas Blog.USA.gov now posts multiple updates every day and on weekends
- GobiernoUSA.gov’s Twitter growth exploded to more than 60,000 followers, up 1,150% over 2010. Twitter is now recommending GobiernoUSA.gov to new subscribers
- The USGovernment YouTube channel had a subscription rate increase of 99% over the previous year, with a 92% increase in upload views
- Publications.USA.gov added Scribd as a social media channel to share Pueblo publications with the world’s largest community of readers. Our publications received over 78,000 “reads” on Scribd
- Our social media touchpoints grew almost 400% from August 2010 to August 2011
- USA.gov held a nationwide 1.USA.gov Hack Day on July 29, 2011 to encourage people to explore the 1.USA.gov data. Participants in four cities created and shared code. Before and after Hack Day, participants created useful tools out of the data on shortened and shared government URLs. Most tools centered around finding popular links, showing links by location, and using click data to enhance security

Social Media Terms of Service Agreements

As of September 2011, agencies had signed 214 terms of service agreements with 59 social media providers. There are more than 1,000 uses of these social media applications across the federal government. The 44 social media apps on Apps.gov represent everything from large-scale social networks, to open source development platforms, to mapping and data visualization applications.

We led a coalition of federal agencies to work on terms of service agreements with a broad range of social media providers that offer free services to users. These standard agreements address issues that were previously seen as barriers to adopting social media applications, including complying with federal laws and regulations. Agencies can now use various social media sites without having to start from scratch negotiating special terms of service. These agreements have paved the way for broader adoption of free social media tools that greatly expand government’s ability to deliver information to the public at little or no cost to taxpayers.
The National Dialogue on Improving Federal Websites was a nationwide, two-week online conversation with citizens, policymakers, and web experts to generate ideas for redefining and re-inventing how the federal government delivers information and services online. Through the Dialogue, people submitted and voted on ideas for improving federal websites in key areas: content, search, usability, accessibility, social media, and mobile, emerging technology, multilingual content and online services. This dialogue is part of the larger .gov Reform Initiative launched earlier this summer by the White House and GSA. It launched Monday, Sept. 19 and ran through Tuesday, October 4, 2011.

Achievements:
The Dialogue had a high turnout and solicited relevant comments and actionable ideas. During the two-week period, OCSIT gathered 446 ideas, 1,663 comments, and 8,259 votes from 992 individual users.

The .gov Task Force will use the results to develop a Federal Web Strategy, making recommendations for updating federal web policies, and improving citizens’ experience with federal websites.

Citizen Engagement Platform
The Citizen Engagement Platform provides agencies with free engagement tools—blogs, wikis, and discussion forms—that are easy to use, easy to deploy, fully secure, and comply with policy. This “build once, use many” approach is cost-effective, makes it easy for agencies to meet their open government goals, and allows agencies to focus on collaborating with the public rather than on creating redundant, back-end technology systems. By standing up interactive spaces and collaborative tools, federal employees and the public can work together to find new and improved solutions for government. In addition, the Citizen Engagement Platform saves agencies time and money by solving policy issues centrally.

Achievements:
The Citizen Engagement Platform enhanced the platform’s usability through user testing, customer surveys, and listening sessions with current users. More than 420 users are registered on the platform, which has given 227 tools to 49 different agencies, including 97 blogs, 84 wikis, and 46 forums.

Citizen Services
For more than 40 years, we have provided consumer information and services to the public. As the public changes the way it wants content provided, we find new ways to provide information where, when and how the public wants it. We work closely with federal agencies to ensure that government information is made easily available and fully accessible by the public.

We are passionate about delivering excellent service and have multiple points of quality assurance to monitor and constantly improve the customer experience. We achieved 272.7 million citizen touchpoints, more than a 50% increase
over FY 10. A “Citizen Touchpoint” is a “direct supply of federal information to a citizen as a result of someone using an OCSIT-provided service”. It includes using USA.gov, Data.gov, Challenge.gov and our other websites. It includes answering citizen inquiries through automated and assisted telephone contacts, email, web chat, and search results. It includes publications distributed or electronically viewed; subscriber e-mailings; a variety of social media interactions; and more.

We have designed and launched open government initiatives that increase government data’s accessibility, transparency, quality, and discoverability. We lead the Administration’s flagship program to achieve open and transparent government.

USA.gov

USA.gov is the U.S. government's official Web portal, making it easy for the public to find government information useful in their daily lives as well as during emergencies. In fiscal year 2011, we launched several new capabilities to engage the public effectively. USA.gov interacts with its customers through social media, websites, polls, blogs, surveys, user tests, focus groups, and day-to-day feedback by email, phone and web chat. USA.gov uses public input to transform its business, providing information where, when, and how the public chooses to consume it.

Achievements:
In response to customer preference, USA.gov introduced mobile apps, innovation challenges, public polls, user-generated comments, public dialogs, text messaging, electronic readers, crowdsourced data, and increased social media activity in Facebook YouTube, Twitter, Tumbler, Scribd, and Flickr. The public gives us high scores through the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), as do our agency customers who use our best practice services at OCSIT's National Contact Center, Pueblo print distribution facility, and USA Contact contracting vehicle.

These improvements encourage the public to interact with our websites and have resulted in over 55 million visits to USA.gov, 40,000 poll responses and about 500 visitor comments.

Consumeraction.gov, Consumidor.gov, Pueblo.GSA.gov and Info.gov—all with a long and successful history in delivering important consumer information to the American public—were consolidated into USA.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov. By integrating these websites, we not only reduced costs and improved efficiency, but leveraged USA.gov's powerful brand recognition, enabling us to increase our reach and make it easier for the public to find government information. The website integration also improved the consumer information found on the websites; an improved directory of federal agencies; and the launch of Publications.USA.gov, a single place online for the public to find, read, order, and download Government publications.
USA.gov/GobiernoUSA.gov built Japan 2011 pages and widgets in response to the massive earthquake and tsunami. Through the web pages and widgets, USA.gov/GobiernoUSA.gov gave the public important information about how to determine the safety and whereabouts of U.S. citizens in Japan, as well as food safety and environmental monitoring updates in the nuclear accident’s aftermath.

GobiernoUSA.gov


During FY 11, GobiernoUSA.gov launched an application gallery site (Apps.GobiernoUSA.gov), a collection of Spanish language mobile sites and apps across government. GobiernoUSA.gov’s weekly column, syndicated to major Hispanic portals such as MSN Latino (published on their home page), AOL Latino, Univision, Terra, and others, reached 42 columns, published 287 times. GobiernoUSA.gov, in collaboration with the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services, produced and released two videos: “How to Avoid Mistakes When Applying for Citizenship” and "Benefits of Becoming a U.S. Citizen." The video registered more than 13,000 views on GobiernoUSA.gov’s YouTube channel, and were featured on major Spanish-language websites, including the home pages of Univision.com and AOL Latino.

During FY 11, GobiernoUSA.gov published 70 Spanish-language FAQs on Respuestas.GobiernoUSA.gov, the Spanish language version of Answers.USA.gov.
USASearch transforms the public’s search experience and saves government agencies valuable resources and money by providing hosted site search services for more than 400 government websites, including the U.S. government’s official English- and Spanish-language search engines on USA.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov, respectively.

“It would not be possible to match the value of GSA’s free search service by procuring or building a custom solution. Previously, we needed to dedicate significant resources to configuring and tuning our internal solution, whereas with USASearch, we can now deploy these resources to enhance the features of and technology supporting the White House website.”

WhiteHouse.gov

USASearch is a commercial-grade search engine that quickly delivers relevant, government-centric information. It displays results without the ads found in commercial search engines. USASearch provides its search services at no cost to local, state, and federal government agencies using its infrastructure and open-source software.

Achievements:
On USA.gov, USASearch provides access to search FAQs from 44 agencies and 200 spotlights (content that collates information from unique, sometimes difficult to find, sources) on a variety of public interest issues.

USASearch also provides search for USA.gov on mobile devices at m.usa.gov and via the USA.gov iPhone app, and provides Spanish-language search at GobiernoUSA.gov. The click-through rate on search results using the system has increased from 25 percent to 33 percent, reflecting an improvement in the results’ quality and relevancy.

USASearch launched the capability to search government forms and recalls on USA.gov. This enhancement improves the public’s ability to find government forms since Forms.gov no longer exists. It also allows the public to easily search for recall information even though it comes from multiple agency sources.

USASearch launched GovBoxes on USA.gov, which provide instant answers to searchers’ questions. Newly released GovBoxes, include an Agency GovBox (which provides contact information and lists popular pages shared via Bit.ly) and a Health GovBox (which provides direct access to MedlinePlus and clinical trial information).
Kids.gov is the official kids' portal for the U.S. government. It links to over 2,000 web pages from government agencies, schools, and educational organizations, all geared to the learning level and interest of three audiences: Grades K-5, Grades 6-8, and Educators. Each audience tab is divided into educational subjects such as Arts, Math, and History. Within each subject, the websites are grouped as either government sites (federal, state, military) or other resources (commercial, non-profit, educational). Achievements: Responding to the public's common search term of "careers" and "jobs," Kids.gov launched podcasts and short videos that feature government careers, including an interview with U.S. Treasurer Rosie Rios, whose signature is on our money; Yasmeen Khan, a rare book conservator at the Library of Congress; Juan Rodriguez, an animal keeper at the National Zoo; and Cris Comerford, White House Executive Chef.

Also responding to a common question from kids on how someone becomes President of the United States, Kids.gov launched a challenge on Challenge.gov for an infographic of the process of being elected President of the United States. We made the winning adult infographic into a poster, and sent it to 10,000 middle schools. This poster has become so popular among schools and educators that we now offer it on Publications.USA.gov.

The National Contact Center
The National Contact Center provides direct telephone (800-FED-INFO), e-mail, and Web chat services to the public, as well as contact center and print distribution services for several other customer agencies. It answers more than one million phone, e-mail, and chat inquiries each year on all federal government topics, and takes orders for consumer publications distributed from our facility in Pueblo, Colorado.

To provide consistent and accurate information to the public, the National Contact Center maintains a comprehensive knowledgebase of more than 2,600 answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) on the government. These answers, used by our contact center agencies, are also accessed by the public on Answers.USA.gov. The search engine here returns answers from this as well as other agency FAQ knowledge bases.

We are known for our ability to partner with agencies during emergencies. Within minutes of earthquakes, terrorist attacks, hurricanes, and other crises, the National Contact Center provides 24/7 services to the public seeking help or providing information to the government.

Achievements: In FY 2011, the National Contact Center answered over 1.1 million inquiries from the public. In addition, the center’s knowledge base was accessed over 5 million times by users who sought and found answers on Answers.USA.gov. In FY11, the NCC implemented its Spanish language knowledge base, available to the public on GobiernoUSA.gov.

The National Contact Center is typically open from 8:00am – 8:00pm EST, but quickly expands to 24/7 service in times of emergency. During the period of Egyptian unrest in January and February, the contact center worked with the Department of State to respond to calls from people seeking information about the status and well-being of American family and friends in that country, extending operations to a 24/7 basis for over a week. The center did the same for three days during the Libyan revolt in late February. In March, during the aftermath of the earthquake in Japan, the NCC remained open round the clock for nearly two weeks fielding calls for the State Department from anxious relatives of Americans caught up in the event.

During FY11 the NCC began a text messaging (SMS) pilot, which can accommodate several lines of text delivery. Its first subscription line supports the new Publications.USA.gov page, announcing the site’s October 3rd public launch and furnishing regular updates to subscribers on new and timely publications.

Consumer Publications

Since the 1960s, a top priority has been educating and protecting U.S. consumers. The Federal Citizen Information Center works with other federal agencies to publish and distribute millions of publications each year to give the public valuable information on consumer problems and government services: home mortgages, health, managing finances, retirement, consumer protection from fraud and scams, identity theft, and government benefits.

Achievements:

To be more sustainable and reduce costs, we began digitizing our print publications and offering them in a variety of e-publication formats. We entered into a partnership with Google Books and began distributing over 100 consumer publications for free. We launched our new web site Publications.USA.gov with over 600 consumer publications available for viewing, downloading in a variety of online formats, and/or ordering print copies from the Pueblo, Colorado, publication distribution center. We are continuing to convert publications to new epublications formats, making them available for downloading onto computer tablets, smart phones, and mobile devices.

We developed, printed, and released new editions of the Consumer Action Handbook and the Spanish sister publication Guia del Consumidor. Consumers requested more than 500,000 copies of the Handbook and more than 50,000 of the Guia.
Additionally, we continued to develop, print, and distribute 10 million copies of the quarterly Consumer Information Catalog, promoting publications available not only through our distribution facility in Pueblo, Colorado, but also on our new Publications.USA.gov web site. For our largest partner agency, the Federal Trade Commission, we distributed more than 15 million publications dealing with consumer protection tips and issues.

Publication distribution through Pueblo exceeded 33 million copies in FY 11. For the first time we are now tracking the distribution of digital publications. In FY 11 over 1.4 million publications were either viewed in HTML or downloaded in PDF and ePub formats from our three channels: Google Books, Scribd and Publications.USA.gov.

Citizen Outreach

One of our more successful and visible outreach efforts is the Public Service Advertising (PSA) program. English and Spanish PSAs promote awareness of USA.gov, GobiernoUSA.gov and 1-800-FED-INFO. One critical piece of each campaign is the television advertising. The 2010-2011 English TV campaign “Transitions” is a fast-paced production showing that whether you have information to get or ideas to give, USA.gov can keep you connected to the government benefits and services you need on the go. The 2010-2011 Spanish television PSA campaign, “El Gran Sueño” features a family discovering that the information they need to get their finances in order and plan the small business of their dreams is easy to find on GobiernoUSA.gov.

We also reach out to the public through print ads and consumer information articles published free in newspapers, magazines and online publications nationwide as a public service to their readers.

Achievements:

Together the television campaigns received more than 1 billion audience impressions nationwide and were ranked in the top two percent of all public service advertising in 2010-2011 according to Nielsen Media Research. The English print ad campaign “Information to Get, Ideas to Give” was given prime advertising space in more than 35 popular publications such as Oprah Magazine, Time, Sports Illustrated, and Real Simple, and brought an astounding 73x ROI. Radio, web banner and library poster campaigns complement the television and print campaigns’ concepts. Together, the 2010-2011 PSA campaigns will receive free advertising time and space worth more than $24 million.

In FY 2011, the total circulation impressions of print and online newspapers and magazines carrying our print ads and articles exceeded 320 million. Media outlets provided 3,958 placements of 20 different print ad campaigns, and 1,900 articles mentioning our programs and publications. This includes a “Dear Abby” letter on women’s health that we placed, which resulted in the distribution of more than a million publications.

Beginning in FY 11, we began looking at and expanding new forms of citizen outreach, including web banner ads, search and social media ads, and transit ads in buses and metros. We will be expanding and testing these activities in FY 12 to be sure we are reaching citizens where they are with valuable government information.
Mobile Government

The widespread use of mobile technology and devices has signaled the public’s changing needs and expectations—who expect anytime, anywhere information and services. Citizen expectations extend to government-provided information and services.

This “Mobile Gov” is driven by:

- Widespread use of mobile devices in the United States
- Opportunities to use mobile to improve the efficiency of government’s service delivery
- Innovations in mobile that can propel new government services/service delivery
- Improved transparency through increased access to government data and information

In response, we established the mobile program management office to help federal agencies develop a citizen-centered path to mobile government by focusing on policies, practices, partnerships across government and industry, applications and tools, and outreach.

Achievements:

The Mobile PMO built a cross-government, multi-disciplinary community of practice with 45 government agency innovators to help the government embrace the promise of mobile through capacity building and knowledge sharing. The community invested time and talents in developing a multi-media education and discussion project, Making Mobile Gov. Through videos, live events, workshops, demonstrations, media outreach, and a nationwide dialogue, the project identified and built consensus around the major challenges and opportunities to address so agencies can strategically use mobile technologies. Based on the input, the PMO has launched a community-generated wiki with tools and resources to help agencies build and implement a mobile strategy.

"..We appreciate the job GSA is doing on the mobile side. We really have benefited from the community and the exchange of ideas y’all have facilitated"

Director, USDA
Agencies are more aware of Mobile Gov; community of practice members almost doubled over the summer, 80 apps/mobile sites—tripling the size of the mobile gallery—at Apps.USA.gov, and hundreds of participants in workshops, trainings and online discussions.

The Mobile PMO provides information, speakers, and resources on the state of mobile gov, frequently speaking to audiences inside and outside of government including IT professionals, public affairs, program offices and the media. Critical to these efforts has been the amplification of expertise via strong participation of inter-agency partners in videos, panels, and online.

**Mobile Apps Gallery**

By providing mobile apps and websites, USA.gov is working hard to make government easy, convenient, and accessible to the growing millions of people accessing information and services by mobile devices. USA.gov’s Mobile Apps Gallery features over 85 apps that were developed by government agencies on a variety of platforms. Achievements: In just its first month, the gallery received more than 160,000 visits. Prominent media outlets – such as National Public Radio, Parade magazine, TheConsumerist.com, Yahoo Buzz, CNN, and the New York Times – have all featured positive reviews for the new government apps gallery.

**Collaboration Across Governments, Best Practices and Training**

We facilitate the adoption of collaborative technologies to enhance citizen engagement, increase operational efficiency, and deliver quality services government-wide. We foster sharing of best practices and proven solutions across federal, state, local and international governments.
With the Federal Web Managers Council, we manage HowTo.gov. The site serves as the authoritative source of federal requirements and best practices for managing government customer service channels, including websites, social media, contact centers, and mobile.

HowTo.gov provides guidance, training, best practices and shared tools to thousands of federal, state, and local government professionals to improve the customer experience with government. It provides exceptional value to agencies in delivering best practices in a practical, “how to” format, and avoids the need for agencies to develop their own best practices.

Achievements:
We launched HowTo.gov in December, consolidating several customer-service focused web properties into one streamlined website. HowTo.gov organizes content into topical “channels” such as web content, social media, and technology, and recently added a new contact centers channel, with best practices to help agencies set up and manage a highly effective government contact center.

We successfully migrated 400 pages into Drupal, an open-source content publishing tool that will allow us to more easily upgrade the site and implement interactive features. OCSIT hosted it’s first-ever Write-A-Thon, bringing federal volunteers to draft new content for HowTo.gov.

We updated some of our more popular and critical content, including web requirements and best practices checklists, to help agencies comply with the complex set of directives for managing government websites. We published new “HowTo” guides on other popular topics such as plain language, blogs, employee ideation programs, and challenges and prizes. We collaborated with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to develop important guidance to help agencies collect customer feedback in compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) and the new “fast-track” PRA clearance process.

We took several steps to improve HowTo.gov’s overall usability and customer experience. We did usability testing through the First Fridays Product Testing Program (p.41), did quick enhancements, and streamlined the training information for Web Manager University. As a result, visits to HowTo.gov increased almost 12% over FY10 levels, and customer satisfaction scores remain high, on par with our sister site, USA.gov.
.gov Reform Initiative

The .gov Reform Initiative is a government-wide effort to improve the customer experience with federal websites, eliminate redundant and outdated websites, and improve how websites are managed within and across agencies.

The Initiative is an outcome of the President's Executive Order 13571, "Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service," issued April 27, 2011, which requires federal agencies to take specific steps to strengthen customer service, including how they deliver services and information on federal ".gov" websites. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) created a .gov Task Force to manage the initiative, led by GSA, OMB, and the White House Office of Digital Strategy, in coordination with the CIO Council and the Federal Web Managers Council.

Achievements:

- Enacted a freeze on the issuance of new .gov domain names for the federal executive branch, to stop the creation of new sites and to encourage agencies to use existing websites and infrastructure to host new content
- Published the first list of all registered .gov domain names so the public can see all the federal websites they're paying for. The list is posted on Data.gov and is updated weekly. It has increased access to, and transparency of, government data; fostered accountability in how we manage our federal websites; and made it easier for agencies to see the websites they own, those owned by other agencies, and increased opportunities for collaboration across government
- Required agencies to report on their web streamlining efforts through the .gov inventory, governance survey, and drafting of agency Web Improvement Plans
- Worked with agencies to eliminate or consolidate 149 domains

Beginning in FY12, the Task Force will focus on the following activities:

- Develop a Federal Web Strategy that lays out the long-term vision of what the user/citizen experience should be with .gov websites
- Make recommendations to OMB for updating federal web policies and best practices
- Develop common tools and best practices to make our web operations more effective and cost efficient
- Recommend how government websites can integrate with federal agencies' use of third-party sites and applications

Federal Web and New Media Community

We sponsor and lead the Federal Web Managers Council, which was formed as a result of the E-Government Act of 2002, to bring together senior web leaders to collaborate in improving the online delivery of federal government information and services. The Council comprises web and new media directors from federal Cabinet agencies, as well as designated Congressional support agencies and major independent and subagencies. It is a dynamic and influential community of practice, guiding the work of nine subcouncils. The Council also serves as the steering committee for the Web Content Managers Forum, a larger, grassroots community of over 2,800 federal, state, and local web and new media professionals from across the country.

Achievements:

During FY11, the Federal Web Managers Council collaborated with OMB to develop and modernize several groundbreaking web policies and guidance documents, such as implementation guidance for implementing the Plain Writing Act, the Paperwork Reduction Act, and agency use of cookies and third-party websites. We collaborated with the National Archives and Records Administration to update web records guidance and policies.
In addition, we coordinated across government to respond to several emergencies and natural disasters, including the Japanese tsunami, to ensure the federal government was delivering consistent and coordinated content across agencies.

We also expanded the Web Content Managers Forum community to more than 2,800 federal, state, and local U.S. government web managers who share dozens of innovations, best practices, and solutions with their peers on a regular basis. By supporting this dynamic community, we facilitate important peer-to-peer sharing, which allows for creative problem solving across government and reduces significant duplication of effort.

**Web Manager University (WMU)**

Web Manager University serves as the federal government’s flagship training program for all areas of digital media and citizen engagement, including web management, social media, mobile, challenges and prizes, emerging technologies, and contact centers. The program’s goal is to build agencies’ capacity to deliver an outstanding and innovative customer experience via multiple customer channels. The program continues to add value government-wide to improve the knowledge of digital government best practices among thousands of government workers each year.

Web Manager University saves agencies significant time and money by providing high quality training that is more cost effective than having federal employees attend similar training in the private sector. In addition, the program provides a curriculum that is targeted to a federal audience and peer-to-peer learning that facilitates cross-agency collaboration and sharing of best practices.

The multidisciplinary curriculum addresses the broad range of skills that agencies need to manage their digital media and citizen engagement efforts, such as:

- Customer service principles and techniques
- Web management


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• Content strategy and plain language communications
• User experience, design, and accessibility
• Search engines
• Social media and citizen engagement
• Challenges, prizes and innovations
• Mobile
• IT and emerging technology
• Contact center management

The program focuses on delivering hands-on, practical skills that government Web professionals can immediately apply to their work. WMU provides high value to government agencies by centralizing this training function, rather than having hundreds of agencies manage their own training programs.

Achievements:
During FY11, Web Manager University hosted 81 training events and trained over 10,000 attendees from nearly 100 federal, state, and local agencies across the country. This represents an increase in attendance of 40 percent over FY10. Student satisfaction ratings averaged at least 4 out of 5, with nearly one-third rating their class 5 out of 5.

We also conducted the eighth annual Government Web & New Media Conference, the largest gathering of government web and new media professionals in the U.S, attracting over 500 attendees. The event continues to attract well-known keynote speakers, including senior executives from OMB, the White House, and federal agencies, as well as leading experts from some of the top online properties such as Craigslist, Twitter, YouTube, Starbucks, and Amazon.

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Web Manager University continues to build on its success, expand its offerings, and ensure a high caliber of faculty from around the world. OCSIT will continue to market the program to thousands of potential participants, and expand opportunities to attract students from other disciplines, such as program managers, public affairs officers, technology specialists, financial experts, legal staff, and senior executives.

First Fridays Program
We launched the First Fridays Program in early FY11 to give agencies simple, affordable user testing of their websites and web applications.

The program, which is typically held the first Friday of each month, is designed to quickly find and fix basic usability problems. In addition to helping agencies improve their web properties, the First Fridays program trains GSA and agency staff to learn how to organize and conduct tests for themselves. In this way, First Fridays is making the best practice of usability testing a routine part of agency operations.

Achievements:
The First Fridays Program tested 16 products in FY11. This included some of the more frequently used federal websites, web forms, and web applications, including the State Department’s online passport application, USAJobs.gov, Weather.gov, and FCC.gov. Making quick improvements to these sites will benefit millions of people who use these sites every year. In addition, the program hosted nearly 300 participants and observers from over 20 agencies and from all the major program offices in GSA. This will have a huge multiplier effect, where participants will go back to their agencies to successfully conduct their own testing.

To accelerate agencies’ ability to adopt these new techniques, the First Fridays team also developed a step-by-step Testing Toolkit: http://www.howto.gov/webcontent/usab.../first-fridays.
Given the success of the program in its first year, we've already increased the frequency of testing to more than once a month, and have a wait list of agencies who want to participant in the program and individual employees who want to be trained as test facilitators.

Although only in its beginning stages, the program has already demonstrated a high return on investment. By providing this service centrally to agencies, we are saving agencies hundreds of thousands of dollars they would have been spent if they had procured the same product testing services from the private sector. And it serves as another excellent example of how we provide a much-needed shared service for government agencies, rather than have each agency develop redundant testing programs.

**Government Contact Center Council**

We created and lead the Government Contact Center Council, also known as G3C. G3C is a group of federal contact center managers that share industry and government best practices and emerging technologies, and collaborate during national emergencies.

Achievements:

The Government Contact Center Council grew in FY 11 to 160 members from 42 federal offices, an increase of over 100 members from one year ago.

The council meets monthly to share best practices and collaborate on communications for national emergencies and natural disasters.

In FY11, the G3C started a Government Contact Center training program, which conducted three training sessions and its first annual conference, for over 200 training attendees, receiving excellent evaluations from participants.

**USA Contact**

We created and maintain a contracting vehicle, USA Contact, which provides federal agencies with a cost-saving approach to contracting for contact center services. USAContact provides agencies an indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contract vehicle to quickly acquire a broad range of best practice contact center services from a choice of nine pre-qualified companies. Agencies are not charged to use the contract.

Through USA Contact, we ensure ready access to government information and services, helping agencies ensure timely, consistent, and accurate responses to public inquiries. OCSIT also developed a cost calculator to allow agencies to better estimate costs of various contact center services before procuring services.

Achievements:
To date USAContact has helped agencies award 29 task orders with a total value of $341M. Two additional task orders, worth a total value of $184M, are expected in early FY 12. Government-wide cost savings are about $7.5M for FY 11 for agencies using the streamlined procurement process and not having to run their own contact centers. These agencies receive quality contact center services that provide enhanced customer service capabilities for their customers.

**International Collaboration**

We have led the way in intergovernmental collaboration among all levels of government and, notably, across national boundaries. We are at the heart of many international cross-government communities, sponsoring productive international pilot projects and providing a safe forum for exchanging information, ideas and insights as a trusted catalyst for open-minded exploration of innovations in government.


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We have longstanding relationships with international networks of senior government leaders, chiefly in the IT area. This was a particularly productive year for OCSIT’s Global Government Innovation Networks:

**North American Day:** This year marked a major milestone for cross-continental information sharing, as the senior IT officials of Mexico, Canada, and the United States signed a Memorandum of Understanding to support trilateral collaboration and launched pilot projects to build an information-sharing framework in the areas of public health and public safety. The MOU was signed by OCSIT’s Dave McClure and the CIOs of Mexico and Canada in a televised ceremony at OCSIT’s annual North American Day talks in Mexico City in July 2011. The pilot projects were launched in August in collaboration with public health and public safety officials from all three countries. They will help the three countries use stolen-vehicles data and public health alerts to better control crime and health emergencies.

**U.S./Canada Bilateral Meetings:** The leaders of GSA and its Canadian counterpart, Public Works and Government Services Canada, meet face-to-face about once a year to discuss public buildings and acquisition programs, support for small businesses, and sustainability, among other common issues.

We led this year’s event, hosted by GSA Administrator Martha Johnson in June. For the first time, the group agreed to collaborate on action items to solve difficult problems that both countries face, such as building sustainability into procurement, encouraging innovative companies to work with government, and developing a coordinated approach to branding “Workspace 2.0.”

**5-Nations CIO Council:** This group of CIOs from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand has been meeting quarterly since 2006. We convene the group for three videoconferences and a face-to-face meeting each year to discuss government IT-related concerns we all face. High-ranking officials with few peers, they use this group to work out common public-sector problems through open and productive conversations with their counterparts from other countries.

Discussions in 2011 centered on IT management reform, identity management, and mobile and search technology. The group met in Washington in November 2010 to share experiences with IT reform. The 2011 meeting will be held at the ICA conference in Taiwan.

**International Council for IT in Government Administration (ICA):** As the U.S. dues-paying member of ICA—the premier international group of senior government IT officials from 20 countries—we hosted its 44th annual conference in November 2010. National CIOs and other national IT leaders from 22 countries met for three days to discuss important IT topics under the conference theme, “Open Government: making It Work.” Among the key participants were the CIOs of Singapore, Taiwan, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. The 2011 conference will be held in Taiwan.


The conference, coordinated with the United Kingdom's Open Government Data Camp, launched a week of international collaboration in the open linked-data community. This led to creation of a new World Wide Web Consortium on open government data, work on international metadata standards, United Nations interest in forming a group on open government data, and plans for capabilities that can be used by any government starting an open data platform.


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Recognition

We continue to play a key role in driving greater transparency and openness in government by using agile technologies, processes, and expertise for public engagement and collaboration built around innovative solutions that provide a more effective, public-driven government.

We are consistently recognized as a world leader in public engagement and innovation. Our staff is in high demand for speaking events, consultation and interviews with major media outlets. We are proud to have been recognized with many prestigious team and individual awards.

- CIO Magazine Honors OCSIT’s Data.gov with 2011 CIO 100 Award
- Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards from the National Association of Government Communicators for the Challenge.gov website. First Place in Social Media Outreach and Communications.
- Data Heroes Award for Data.gov from EMC Corp.
- Federal Computer Week FED100 Award Winners: Martha Dorris, Bev Godwin, Katie Lewin, Keith Thurston
- Sheila Campbell named a 2011 Washingtonian Tech Titan
- GovMark Council Award for Excellence in Government - USA.gov Mobile Apps Gallery
- AFCEA Bethesda - Outstanding Achievement Award for Cloud Computing David McClure, Ph.D., Associate Administrator, Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies, General Services Administration
- AFFIRM Leadership Award for the Advancement of Open Government:
  
  David McClure, Associate Administrator, Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies
  Martha Dorris, Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Citizen Services
  Sanjeev "Sonny" Bhagowalia, Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Innovative Technologies
  Beverly H. "Bev" Godwin, Director, Federal Citizen Information Center
  Sheila R. Campbell, Acting Director, Center for Excellence in Digital Government
  Sally Y. Kiel, Assistant Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Innovative Technologies
  Marion A. Royal, Project Director, Data.gov
  Keith Thurston, Assistant Associate Administrator for E-Government
  Sara Crane, Director, USA.gov I GobiernoUSA.gov I Kids.gov
  Russell O'Neil, PMP, IT Specialist/IT Project Manager USA.gov
  AFFIRM Leadership Award for Innovative Applications - Mary Sue Deffily and the USASearch Program Team

- Federal Computer Week Rising Star Awards - Jessica Milcetich and Zach Baldwin
- Excellence.gov Awards Finalist - Data.gov
- InformationWeek 2011Government Innovator Award Winner - USASearch Program

Helpful Links

http://www.GSA.gov/OCSIT
http://www.GSA.gov/Open
http://www.USA.gov
http://www.GobiernoUSA.gov
http://www.Publications.USA.gov
http://www.Search.USA.gov
http://www.Apps.gov

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Budget Appendix

The U.S. General Services Administration's (GSA) Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies (OCSIT) develops and delivers low-cost, high-value services and solutions that are used across government, enabling efficiencies, savings, and cost-avoidance that far exceed OCSIT’s modest budget.

E-Government Fund

The E-Government (E-Gov) Fund facilitates adoption of innovative technologies that improve operational efficiency and effectiveness government-wide. E-Gov allows development of solutions that can be leveraged outside the resources and mission of any single agency. E-Gov initiatives enable billions of dollars in long-term savings, many orders of magnitude above the $8M FY 11 E-Gov budget.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance.gov</td>
<td>$1.1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Risk Authorization and Management Program (FedRAMP)</td>
<td>$0.3M</td>
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<td>Federal Cloud Computing/Data Center Consolidation</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT Dashboard</td>
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<td>Data.gov</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenges Platform</td>
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<td>Citizen Engagement Platform (Apps.gov)</td>
<td>$0</td>
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<tr>
<td>USASpending.gov*</td>
<td>$1.2M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Business Dashboard*</td>
<td>$0.1M</td>
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<tr>
<td>FFATA Subawards Reporting System Assistance*</td>
<td>$2.88M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$8M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Funded by OCSIT, managed by GSA Office of Government-wide Policy

Federal Citizen Services Fund

Federal Citizen Services Fund (FCS) operations serve as the authoritative source for public government information and services. FCS enables citizen access and engagement through an array of direct services via the internet, phone, email,
and print. The FCS fund saved the government over $76M in FY11 in cost avoidance by offering agencies no or low-cost government-wide policy-compliant solutions and by eliminating costly and duplicative procurements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact Center Services</td>
<td>$8.6M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Printed Publications Services and Citizen Outreach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Management and Content (USA.gov &amp; GobiernoUSA.gov)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for Excellence in Digital Government (CEDG)</td>
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<td>Information Technology Services Solutions (ITSS)</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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