

*1st*

*Putting*  
Customers  
*first '97*

---

Standards for Serving the American People

October 1997

President Bill Clinton  
Vice President Al Gore

NATIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW



We're saving money and using technology. You can find the 4,000 standards for 570 departments, agencies, organizations and programs that are summarized in this report at [www.npr.gov](http://www.npr.gov).



# A Noticeable Difference

*"I want to compliment your staff. . . This service is so much better than the old way."*

This feedback is from a customer of the National Archives and Records Administration, but similar comments are showing up in letters to practically all Federal agencies. Not all of our customers feel like this. But something is certainly changing for the better. And none too soon.

Confidence in the government's ability to solve problems had been plummeting for three decades, from about 75% in 1963, to as low as 17% in 1993. We either had to rebuild that faith or abandon the future to chaos. We had reason to hope we could succeed. Corporate America had reinvented itself to compete and win. Reinvention ideas were starting to work at the state and local level. We knew it would be incredibly difficult—the largest turnaround in history. Management experts and CEOs said it would take us 10 years. Everyone knew that dramatically better customer service had to be the heart of reinvention.

It started in 1993 with a recommendation from Vice President Gore's National Performance Review team and the President's executive order calling for "a revolution within the Federal Government to change the way it does business."<sup>1</sup> The executive order called for "putting customers first" and striving for a "customer-driven government" that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector. The directive also called for all agencies to develop customer service standards—service guarantees to the American people. The President's directive launched what has proven to become a massive effort across the Federal government to improve service. Change comes slowly in something so



PRESIDENT CLINTON'S EXECUTIVE ORDER 12862  
*"Setting Customer Service Standards"*

**Embark upon a revolution within the Federal Government.**

- Identify customers who are, or should be, served by the agency.
- Survey customers to determine the kind and quality of services they want and their level of satisfaction with existing services.
- Post service standards and measure results against them.
- Benchmark customer service standards against the best in business.
- Survey front-line employees on barriers to, and ideas for, matching the best in business.
- Provide customers with choices in both the sources of service and the means of delivery.
- Make information, services, and complaint systems easily accessible.
- Provide means to address customer complaints.

**The standard of quality shall be equal to the best in business.**

*Bill Clinton*

big and so used to focusing on itself. But now there are thousands of documented improvements in service, many “islands of excellence” that can match the best in business goal. And we have an up-tick in the public’s approval ratings of the Federal government.

Three years after the President’s directive, we can say public confidence in government is rebounding—up nearly 9% since 1993, according to a Roper poll.<sup>2</sup>

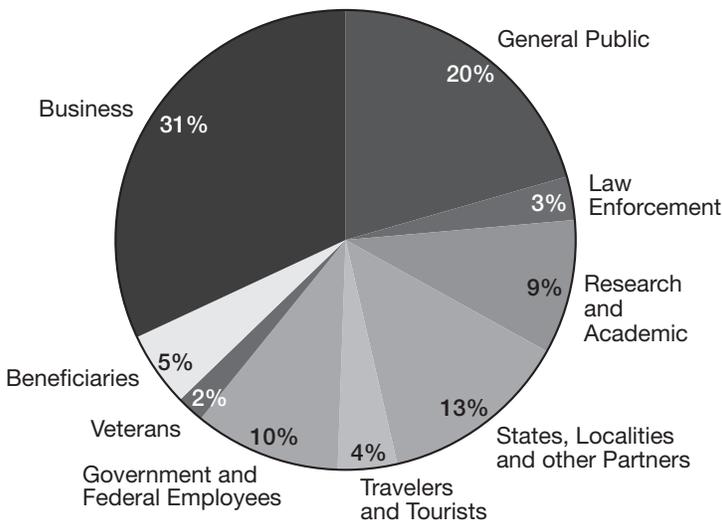
DALBAR Financial Services Inc. rated the Social Security Administration’s (SSA’s) 1-800 number the best among world class number providers in *both the private and public sectors*.<sup>3</sup> Way out ahead of the rest, SSA still needed to make good on its promise that calls would be answered within 5 minutes on the first try. So, SSA went further. It trained employees, established gateways and menus, introduced state of the art telephone technology to automatically re-route calls, and created work shifts that maximized coverage of the phone. In February 1997, the busiest time of the year for SSA’s 1-800 number, 97% of all customer calls to SSA were answered in five minutes or less.

People at the U.S. Mint now answer your calls about coins within ten seconds. That’s half the time set as a goal in the private sector. Ernst & Young reports that private industry aims to answer 80% of incoming calls within 20 seconds. The Mint also opened a new and modernized customer service center to field nearly 1,000 calls every day. The National Quality Research Center in Michigan puts the Mint in the same category with PepsiCo, Maytag, FedEx, Proctor and Gamble, and Mercedes-Benz, all recognized masters of customer satisfaction. And what do the U.S. Mint’s customers think? 93% satisfaction rating.

SSA and the Mint are just two examples of how we’re starting to get things right. This book is filled with proof of progress.

For example, in 1993, SSA, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) were the first agencies to publish customer service standards. The next year, 150 agencies made commitments to their customers.<sup>4</sup> And last year we had 214 making over 3,000 commitments.<sup>5</sup>

Standards by Customer Group



In this, the third customer service report, we’re reporting on over 4,000 standards for 570 departments, agencies, organizations and programs, reflecting an expansion throughout the departments and agencies into their organizations and specific programs.

All 14 departments have set customer service standards. Additionally, 37 of the independent agencies have reported standards. This report reveals changes that are occurring to departments, agencies, organizations and processes as they touch their customers. Some departments like Transportation and Commerce have added more standards this year. Transportation now has over 500 standards at 10 agencies and Commerce has over 300 standards at 13 agencies. The Department of Energy (DOE) has completely revised its standards. DOE set standards in 1993, published them and listened to its customers.

The Department realized it wasn't organized to respond to customers. So, this year, it started all over again. New standards now reflect the new business lines of the Department.

The Department of Education took standards that had been set previously and consolidated them into one set of departmental standards for all organizations. Ten other departments or agencies have standards that apply across their organization. They include the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Interior, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the General Services Administration (GSA).

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) didn't have standards for the agency as a whole the first year we published. Last year it had draft standards and was working on them with its partners. This year EPA committed to standards, which are very customer friendly. They say things like, "If you telephone us, we will make every effort to answer questions immediately. Where that is not possible, we will provide a timetable for responding during the initial conversation."

Okay, you say. That's nice. But what are you doing besides making promises?

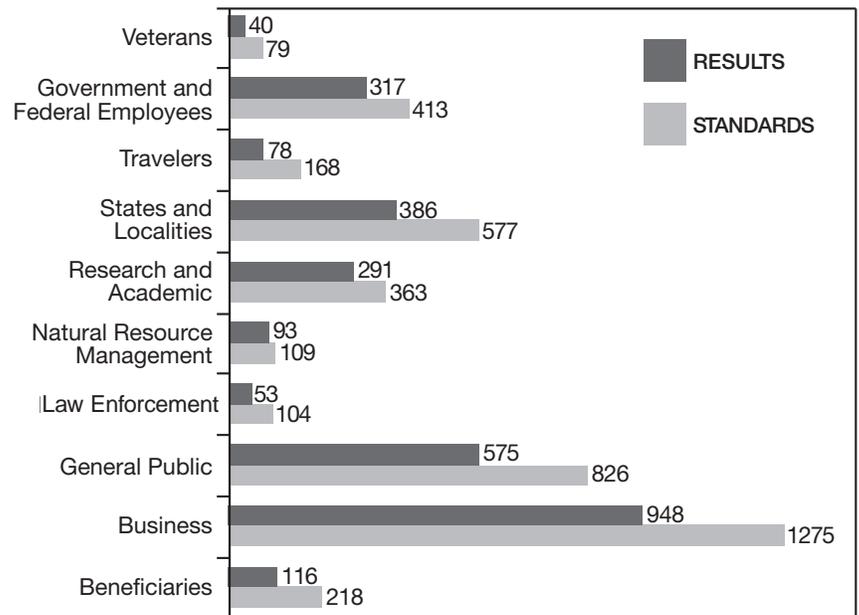
Well, to begin with, we did a lot of work to figure out what promises matter. We didn't know what to promise our customers until we asked what's important. So, for the last few years we've been asking. More important, we've been *listening* carefully to the answers.

Here's what we've heard: You—

- want to be treated with courtesy and respect.
- want to have more and easier access to services.
- want services that are timely and efficient.
- want communications that are clear and easily understood.
- want to save money.
- are willing to partner with us to help make changes.

Each agency had its own specific customer input that added details to these ideas. These inputs are the basis for the 4,000 standards. There are results identified for 2,800 of these standards. These are also the basis for changes and improvements.

### Results and Standards by Customer Group



# What We've Accomplished

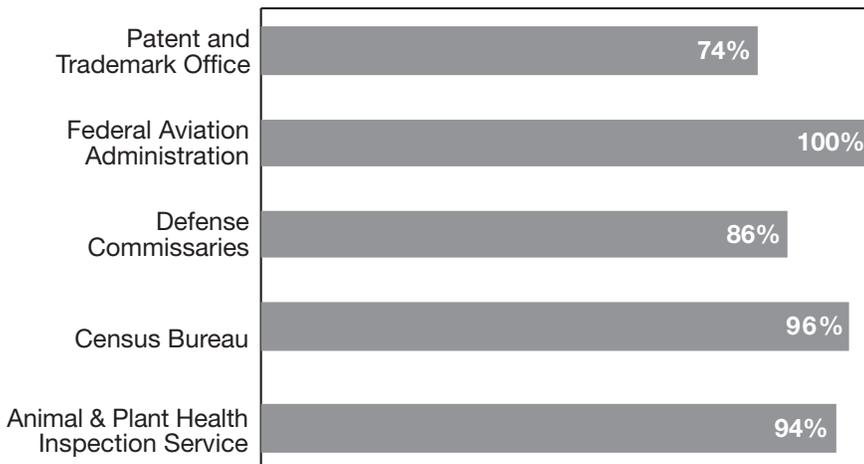
## Improved Courtesy and Respect:

First and foremost you want to be treated well. Without that, we know we can never reach our goal of 100% satisfaction.

We now have people leaving many of our offices smiling. You love it when the post office opens another window to move the lines along. You feel valued as customers when government employees are courteous on the telephone. And you are pleasantly surprised when we give you a fast turn-around on your requests.

**The customer is always right!** Or so say Census Bureau employees. The Census Bureau guarantees you will be happy with its products or you can return them for a full refund within 30 days. And soon the front line employees will be able to grant on-the-spot refunds. This should make customers happy.

Courtesy Satisfaction Ratings



### **Raised customer service satisfaction rates from 84% to 87% in one year.**

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) people know that their 84% satisfaction rating from you last year wasn't good enough. So they've been working to improve by training all their employees in customer service skills. Since last year they've raised their satisfaction rating to 87%. Just 3%, but we knew this would be a gradual process. And with added emphasis on personal courtesy they'll boost the number higher next year.

## Offered More and Easier Access to Services:

### **Changed telephone listings to common-sense usage.**

Some 50% of our customers couldn't find what they wanted in the Blue Pages of the 6,047 telephone books in the United States. For many people, the phone book is the first contact with the government. But, if they wanted a passport, they had to know to look for it under "S" for "State Department" or "B" for "Bureau of Consular Affairs." So Vice President Gore directed us to fix that. We're revising the Blue Pages listings. Soon all across the country you'll be able to look under "P" for "Passports." To check out the progress, go to the phone books for Cleveland, or Los Angeles or Fayetteville, where common sense prevails. Changing the Blue Pages will go a long way in making the government easier to deal with.

**Set up 24 hours a day, 7 days a week electronic access to WorldWide job information and applications.**

The Office of Personnel Management's customers said they wanted job information to be complete and available from one source. Now, as a customer, you control what information you get and how. You can choose the Federal Jobs Web site ([www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov)), the Federal Job Opportunities Board—an electronic bulletin board accessible via Internet, touch screen computers, or Career America Connection—a nationwide telephone information service. All the forms you will need to apply to a government job can be downloaded from the touch screen or the bulletin board and applicants can apply on-line using the bulletin board. And the customer response? 80% say they're satisfied with these systems. We are checking on what the other 20% want.

**Organized special assistance office to prevent environmental pollution.**

In response to industrial and community requests, EPA's Boston Regional Office set up an Assistance and Pollution Prevention Office of over 40 skilled employees. This group, the New England Environmental Assistance Team, provides clarification of regulatory requirements and, better yet, offers guidance to help prevent pollution before it starts. The result? Better government, citizen partnerships, satisfied customers, and an environment that is safer for all of us.

**Developed on-line catalog of "commonly asked questions."**

People seeking information about workplace safety and health rules place thousands of calls a day to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). You want a prompt, clear answer. OSHA had a clever idea. Why not put the most commonly asked questions on-line for fast, easy customer access? Today, OSHA boasts a series of on-line expert advisor systems including the Cadmium Advisor, the Asbestos Advisor, the Confined Spaces Advisor, and now, the Lead in Construction Advisor. (All of them can be found at [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).) Used by lots of customers, this bright idea has also given OSHA's field inspectors, and senior medical and technical experts added time for their front-line jobs of protecting workers' safety and health.

## Agencies Delivering on Big Time Promises!

**Consumer Product Safety Commission**—*Hotline available 24 hours a day for customer complaints and details of the latest product recalls.*

**RESULT:** 87% of callers reached the hotline first time they dialed, 24 hours a day.

**Internal Revenue Service**—*Tax refunds due on complete and accurate paper returns in 40 days; 21 days for electronic returns.*

**RESULT:** In 1996, paper returns—40 days; electronic—15.5.

**National Archives and Records Administration**—*Within 15 minutes of walking in, you'll have either the information or the help you need.*

**RESULT:** Met 99% of the time.

**Bureau of Labor Statistics**—*Data any way you want it: from a live person, by recorded message, fax, microfiche, diskette, tape, Internet, or TDD.*

**RESULT:** 98% satisfaction.

**EPA**—*In our voluntary programs, publicly recognize the achievements of business.*

**RESULT:** In 1996, Hammer awards presented to companies involved in EPA's 35/50 program.

**National Park Service**—*Great Smoky Mountains visitor center open every day but Christmas.*

**RESULT:** Open every day; 82% satisfaction.

**Forest Service**—*Our offices and visitor centers will be open at times convenient to you.*

**RESULT:** 85% satisfaction.

**SSA**—*New and replacement cards mailed within five days; we'll tell you your Social Security number in one day if it's urgent.*

**RESULT:** 97% of cards mailed within 5 days, 92% applicants given Social Security number.

**One-stop shopping is making it easier.** You want to get information hassle free without having to go to lots of different offices. We're seeing one-stop shopping take on many different forms throughout the government. At the Department of Agriculture, they're organizing USDA's One-Stop Assistance Offices to help all their farm, rural development and natural resources services customers. The U.S. Business Advisor ([www.business.gov](http://www.business.gov)) gives one-stop electronic access to rules from every agency of the federal government that regulates business, large or small. America's One-Stop Career Center at the Department of Labor (DOL) connects employment, education and training services at local, state and national levels for the nation's employees and applicants. No shopping around. It's all in one spot.

### **Saved Time for Customers:**

#### **Eliminated lines—and doubled the number of customers served—by instituting an automated appointment system.**

Customers of the New York Passport Office can now call at any time of the day or night to make an appointment, convenient for them, within the next 14 days. Gone are the days when customers waited in line all day and never even got to apply. Under the line-up system, the office was serving 500 people per day. With the automated system it serves 1,000.

#### **Trimmed turn-around time from 15 days to a few minutes.**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) promised that applications for permits would be processed in a timely manner. Under the old system, customers wrote for a permit . . . BLM wrote back with a cost estimate . . . and customers wrote again, *this* time with a check attached. We heard you. You said you wanted it quicker. Now you can fax in requests and call in credit card numbers for payment, saving weeks and sometimes months. And an Internet system is in the works.

#### **Increased number of new customers served by 16% by starting valet parking.**

What? You say this can't be true? It is. Pittsburgh's Veteran Affairs Medical Center neighbors and customers let them know how unhappy they were with congested streets and waiting up to three hours for a parking place. They wanted action on the problem and they wanted it NOW! The valet results? No more 50-car serpentine lines snaking through the neighborhood, no more clogged streets, and best of all, no more angry frustrated neighbors or patients. And more veterans are being served. In the long run, it made everyone's life happier and easier.

#### **Steadily reduced one-month turnaround of worker complaints to 7 days in 1994, 3 days in 1996, and currently, only 1 day.**

OSHA listened to its customers' concerns in focus groups, stakeholder discussions, and national surveys. Frustrated customers? You bet. The workplace safety and health complaint system moved at a snail's speed. Now, direct call-backs give workers quick problem resolutions. And employers prefer dealing with a person to an exchange of intimidating letters.

## Made Information Clearer and Easier to Understand:

### **Eradicated “Government-ese”**

We’re starting to see many government documents written in plain, simple language so they’re easily understood. The Small Business Administration’s (SBA’s) customers are among those truly grateful for the change.

### **Abolished 50% of the existing rules and guidelines.**

Working with customers, the Federal Trade Commission has reviewed, streamlined, adjusted, or abolished about half of its rules, making it easier for people to do business with the agency. This is a perfect example of cutting red tape by getting rid of what Vice President Gore calls “mind-numbing rules.”

### **Increased language options.**

Most agencies that serve the public have customers that need assistance in languages other than English. So far only about 12% of federal agencies offer these services, but those that do include agencies with a huge impact on the public, like the Consumer Product Safety Commission, National Institutes of Health, SSA, IRS and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

### **Saved Money:**

#### **Cut the government cost from \$20 to 35¢ and cut delivery time from 8-10 weeks to just a few minutes.**

The US Geological Survey (USGS) did it. How? Instead of requiring requests for maps by letter, their digital maps can now be accessed on the Internet ([www.mapping.usgs.gov](http://www.mapping.usgs.gov)).

### **Formed New Partnerships:**

“**Two-fer**” **saves time.** Customers in New York City can now get both the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and SSA forms and information at either office. “Two-fers” at the theater save customers money; “Two-fers” at government offices save customers time and cab fare.

### **Launched America’s Talent Bank at [www.atb.gov](http://www.atb.gov).**

After America’s Job Bank ([www.ajb.dni.us](http://www.ajb.dni.us)) was launched by DOL two years ago, making job and career path information available on-line (with 11.6 million hits in February 1997), a consortium of 20 states put together America’s Talent Bank. The Talent Bank, available at [www.atb.org](http://www.atb.org), lets employers access resumes of people interested in working for the government.

## Occupational Safety and Health Administration Exit Routes

### **The Old Way- Confusing and Lengthy Standards**

*Ways of exit access and the doors to exits to which they lead shall be so designed and arranged as to be clearly recognizable as such. Hangings or draperies shall not be placed over exit doors or otherwise so located as to conceal or obscure any exit. Mirrors shall not be placed on exit doors. Mirrors shall not be placed in or adjacent to any exit in such a manner as to confuse the direction of exit.*

### **The New OSHA- Plain and Simple Standards**

*An exit door must be free of signs or decorations that obscure its visibility.*

**Saved more than \$2 billion on an environmental restoration project.**

Partnering with customers can have big pay-offs. DOE set up a citizens' advisory board at its Fernald location, near Cincinnati, Ohio to help with an environmental restoration project. Local citizens offered reasonable solutions that the community could live with that helped save a bundle on the project, too.

## It's a Continuing Process

We made a lot of changes based on customers telling us what matters, but we are using other tools as well.

### Borrowing From the Best in the Business

First, we go to the best in business—we benchmark them—to find practices that lead to great customer service. Best in business organizations use many ways to achieve their goal of 100% satisfaction ratings.

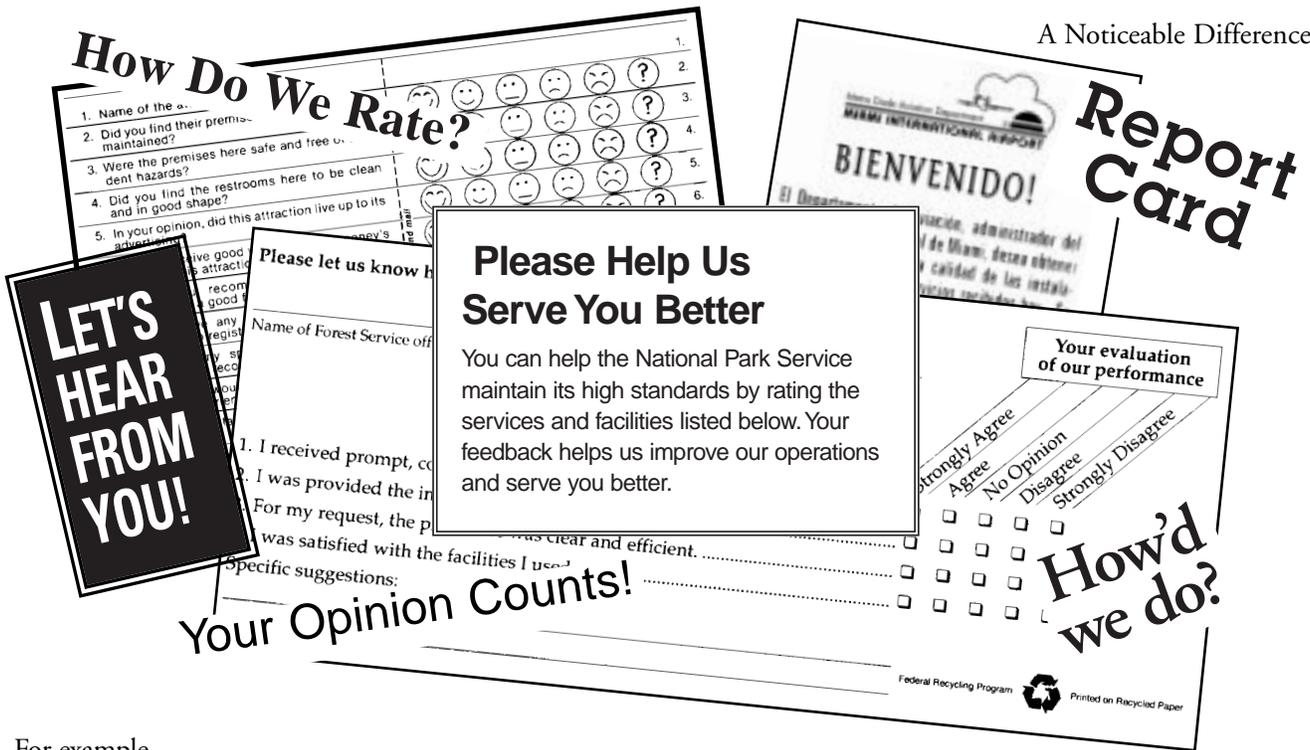
For example, we found that Toyota, already a customer satisfaction leader, continually asks customers how satisfied they are, how important specific services are when they buy a car, and about service on their car. Then they factor this information into every operation in their business, *including* financial and personnel decisions.

We found even the best get it wrong. Walt Disney World did. They thought everyone wanted to see the Disney characters in every village and at Epcot Center. When visitors complained that they were disappointed to have missed a character in one of the villages, Disney jumped to hire more characters and spread them out. When Disney got around to asking what they wanted, parents said they didn't want the characters at Epcot. They just wanted someplace to find them *all the time* at Disney World—no risk of a spoiled day because Mickey can't be found. So the characters were moved to FantasyLand *all day*. With fewer employees, Disney now delights parents and children alike.

Successful business examples have a common lesson. It's the heart of our customer service program—continually ask your customer how you're doing and what they want; skip this step and you'll get it wrong.

### Measuring What We Do

Most government agencies have started collecting customer feedback. One hundred and fifty of the 570 have done formal surveys. And the tool chest has grown to include written and telephone surveys, face-to-face interviews, comment cards, mystery shoppers, planning team partnerships with customers, and senior leaders working the front lines to get direct customer feedback.



For example,

- The United States Geologic Survey sends out a comment card every time they ship a product.
- HUD's Public and Indian Housing has established a "chat room" on the Internet to get feedback and suggestions for improvements from customers.
- The National Park Service has 10 years of visitor survey experience and is showing others how to do it.
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mails out customer survey forms to people who applied for assistance; the agency surveys state level partners by phone.
- VA conducts surveys for all 172 medical centers.

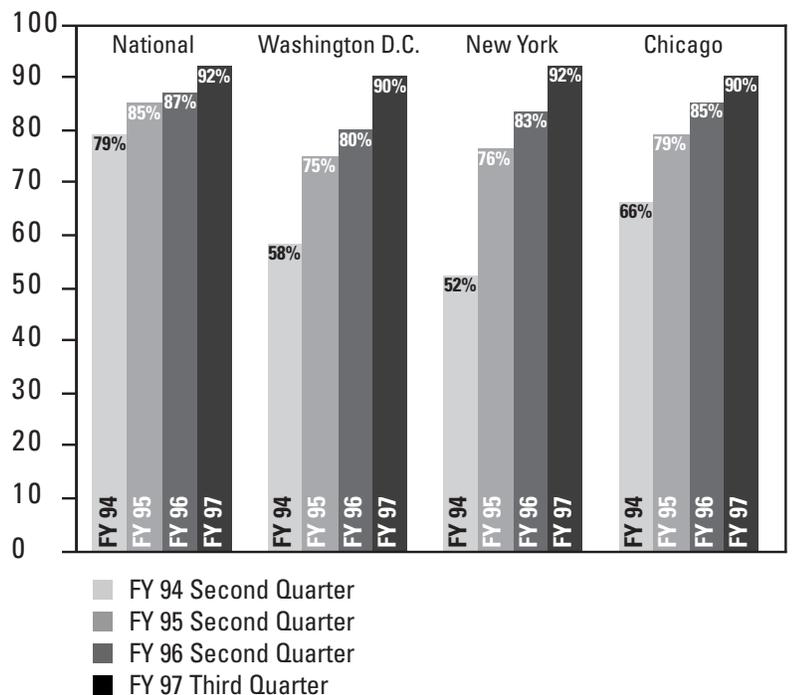
Speeding Up the Mail

Besides customer opinions, we rely heavily on direct measurement of performance to focus improvement efforts. The USPS is showing us all how this works.

In 1993, in the first NPR report, USPS promised local delivery overnight. The first year's results? Performance in Washington and New York was just above 50% on-time. Chicago came in at 66%. National media stories bloodied USPS, but an all-out effort has improved on-time service every year since. This year's results? Washington is up to 90%, New York's at 92%, and Chicago has moved to 90%. Nationally, on-time delivery has gone over 90% for the first time ever.

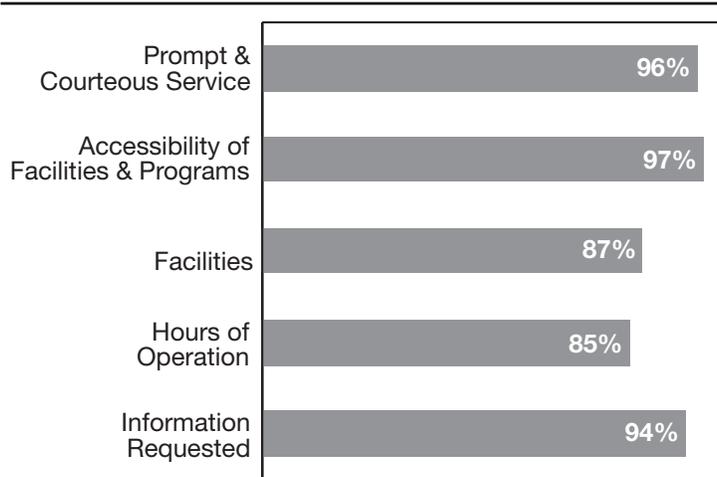
And there's more . . . Federal Express advertisements now try to point out USPS shortcomings. USPS considers that a good sign—FedEx considers them a competitor.

Some of the feedback says our performance is way below par. So we're working to fix it.



FY 94 Second Quarter  
 FY 95 Second Quarter  
 FY 96 Second Quarter  
 FY 97 Third Quarter

### Forest Service Satisfaction Ratings



Most agencies show good satisfaction levels. Though we know we have more work to do, customer feedback in a sampling of agencies indicates that we're on the right track.

- 88% of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) customers felt APHIS responded in a timely manner to information requests.
- The Energy Information Administration's Internet customers say they are: 85% satisfied or very satisfied with the timeliness of information; and 96% satisfied or very satisfied with the timeliness of electronic mail list service.
- 98% of the Bureau of Labor Statistics customers are satisfied or very satisfied with service.

### Using Complaints As Gifts

You can measure the success of an organization by what it does with complaints. The best in business make it easy to complain and then use that information to fix problems and improve service.

Every complaint is a gift. Think about it. A dissatisfied customer spends time pinpointing what's wrong. That's an opportunity for us to improve. Agencies are learning to cherish complaints. We're using six fundamental guides to shape how we handle complaints:

- Choices—You should have different ways to express complaints.
- Fast response—You should receive quick, personalized acknowledgment and resolution.
- No hassles—It should be easy for you to complain and not hear excuses about our rules and regulations.
- Empower employees—Front line employees should be given a chance to eliminate small problems before they become big ones.
- Train employees—Everyone should have the skill to meet your expectations.
- Customer databases—We should know your personal preferences.

### Capitalizing On Technology

We've heard your frustration about lack of accountability in the government. How many times have you told your story to a telephone representative, who switched you to someone else, you told your story again, and then were switched a third or fourth time with no continuity between service representatives? United Services Automobile Association (USAA) has the great private-sector success story on that age-old customer scenario. During calls from customers, service representatives log information directly into a database. An on-line diary is generated and information becomes immediately accessible by any USAA employee—in San Diego, Seattle, San Antonio, or where ever. No more repeating the same story over and over to USAA! Tell it once and all their service reps have it.

FEMA is on its way to a similar system. Disaster victims who want to file a claim call a 1-800 number to register for assistance. The information is entered into a database, which is maintained at FEMA's National Processing Services Center. This database is continually updated as additional information becomes available and claims are processed. Customers can call and get updated status reports, at any time.

Today's information technology is a great enabler. It's one of the strategic components of continuing reinvention. Over 50% of our agencies are using the Internet as a way to get news out to customers faster, cheaper, and more efficiently. More than 20% of our agencies are using the Internet to download information and forms. For example, you can get your IRS tax forms, request eligibility for Loan Guaranty benefits from VA, receive the Railroad Retirement Board's publication on "*How Earnings Affect Payment of Retirement Annuities*," or get your application for a passport. You can also process many applications through the Internet. You can apply to VA for burial benefits or apply for a student loan. No more driving to offices or waiting in lines!

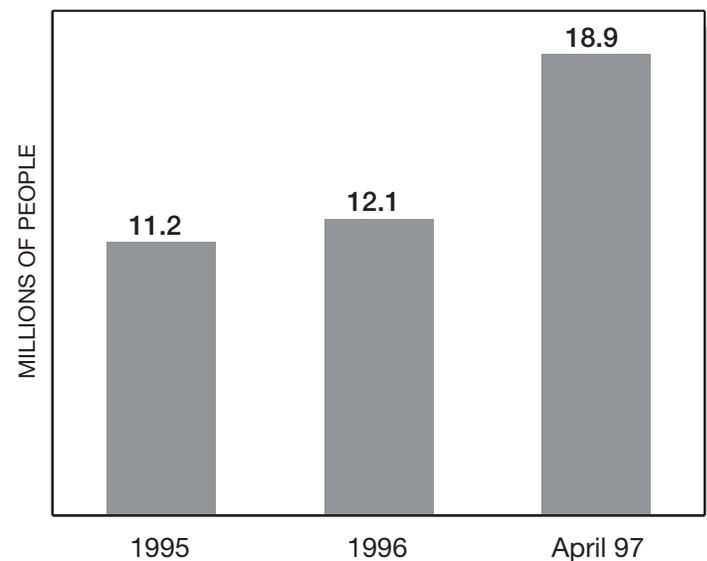
Not all technology applications require high-end components. More Americans contact the government by phone than any other way. Telephone services are getting better—additional 1-800 numbers, more hotline numbers, and improved telephone answering systems are in place. For example, if you call FCC at 1-800 Call FCC, you will get relevant telephone numbers, answers to frequently asked questions, legal interpretations of laws, and simple language interpretations all answered by a live operator. During the call you can arrange to have answers sent to you by e-mail, fax or regular mail.

At IRS, TeleFile gives 4.2 million taxpayers in 50 states who use the 1040EZ form a quicker and easier way to file. They can file on a touch-tone phone in about eight minutes. There is no paper, the phone system does the math and there is no other contact with the IRS. Additionally, electronic income tax filing has increased from 11 million taxpayers in 1995 to over 18 million in 1997.

Even the best telephone technology wasn't what EPA's Kansas City customers wanted. Instead of a labyrinth of touch-tone menus and transfers, customers now speak directly to an information specialist when they call the multi-state 1-800 hotline. Customers wanted a live and knowledgeable person. EPA delivered.

GSA's Federal Information Center ( 1-800-688-9889) logged 2 million telephone calls in 1995 and 2.4 million in 1996 from people looking for the right telephone number for a government agency. Operators use a database, built on millions of inquiries, to come up with the correct office and number to satisfy the customer's question. Telephones and computers aren't the only tools we're using to give better and faster service. As home offices and equipment become more sophisticated, more people have in-home fax machines. So, agencies such as STAT-USA, OSHA, NHTSA and the Centers for Disease Control offer fax-on-demand as one of the options for conducting business with them.

Electronic Income Tax Filing



## Training Our People

Everyone isn't born knowing how to serve customers. So, most agencies are offering customer service training. One of the stars is FEMA, where all full time and disaster relief employees have taken customer service behavioral skills training.

HUD conducted customer service training that included not just employees, but state and local officials, and employees of non-profit organizations. Some agencies train from headquarters to the front-lines. All employees of the Federal Railroad Administration and the Rural Business and Cooperative Development Service have received customer service training.

DOE is in the midst of its program to train everyone in the Department. EPA focused its customer service training on telephone courtesy, an area where customers said the agency needed to improve.

## Recognizing and Rewarding Quality Service

What gets rewarded and recognized gets repeated, and we're looking to repeat the best performances. So, many agencies have started to reward their employees for delivering quality service.

Many people have heard about the Vice President's Hammer Award for reinvention success. Using that as a model, VA and the Defense Logistics Agency have set up "Scissors Awards"—on-the-spot awards for people who are cutting red tape and making reinvention happen; GSA has "Giraffe Awards"—for people who are "sticking their necks out to make a difference"; the DOL has "Bravo Awards"—to say "thank you" for quality service; and DOE has an Honor Roll to recognize excellent achievement in "satisfying customers."

IRS has a "Seal of Approval" customer service award. FEMA has two new awards—one of which is a "People's Choice Customer Service Award" so employees and outsiders can nominate FEMA workers who give them extraordinary service. The Director's Customer Service Award gives supervisors and managers an opportunity to nominate employees who have done outstanding work for customers.

# Where Do We Go From Here?

Progress in customer service is terrific. It proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that government can do a great job serving customers. The next step is to create a more fully reinvented government.

Recognizing this, last fall Vice President Gore began work on a set of principles that would tell the leaders of agencies how to do that—how to reinvent their entire agencies.

Then in January 1997, President Clinton and Vice President Gore held a Cabinet Retreat at Blair House. For most of the day the Cabinet was split up in working groups, but there was one session attended by all. It was the Vice President's presentation on how all cabinet-level officials are expected to carry on the work of reinventing government.

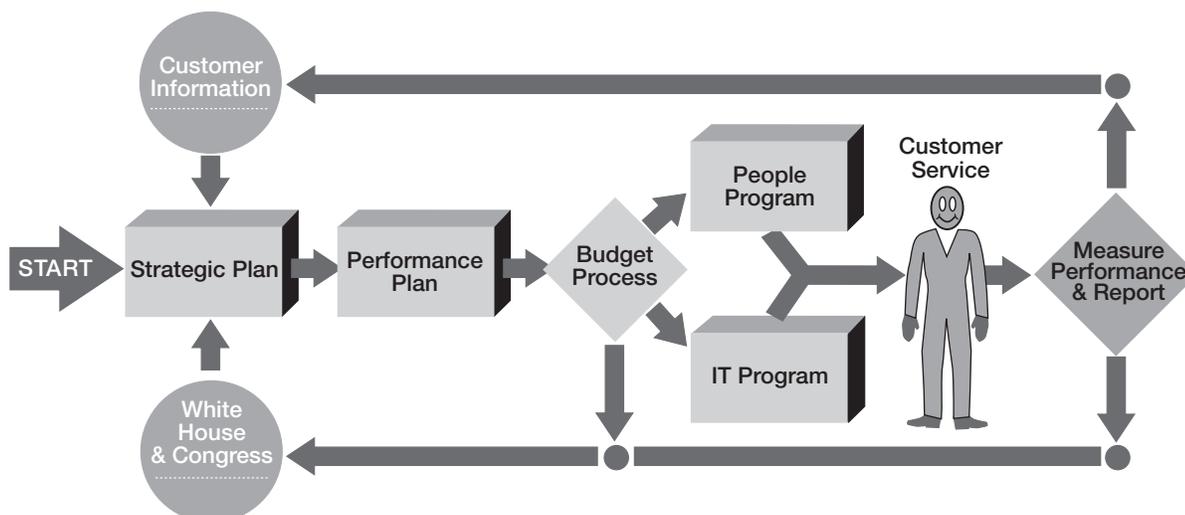
The Vice President told the Cabinet what had been learned since 1993, summarized in 15 papers. The papers have been published as "*The Blair House Papers*."

The first instruction in "*The Blair House Papers*" is to "Deliver great service." It says to treat people the way top *companies* treat their customers. It reminds people we're trying to restore America's confidence in solving *big problems* through self-government. How can people trust government to do *big* things if we can't do *little* things like answer the phone quickly and politely?

Drawn from the experience of federal reinventors, the book then spells out a set of rules for delivering good service.

When the President and Vice President gave the papers to the Cabinet members they asked each of them to set clear goals and to line up agency management systems to achieve those goals. Back in the spring of 1995, the President signed a directive<sup>6</sup> to start that process. It tied customer service to strategic planning, performance measurement and the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). The President said that operating plans, internal rules, training and personnel systems are to be aligned with a customer focus. He called for ongoing measurement and for reports to the public on whether we are living up to the published customer service standards.

## Align Systems to Serve Customers



A key part of this is how we carry out GPRA. This important reinvention legislation requires strategic goals focused on results, plus operating plans and budgets to support those goals. Agencies will be held accountable for the results spelled out in their GPRA plans.

What's all this mean? It's a complex task. In 1995, the President wrote his directive, soup to nuts. Every agency went to work on one of its systems to accomplish the necessary changes. Not all agencies worked on changing the same system, nor did they each work at the same pace. But these beginning changes gave the right direction for responding to GPRA.

Since the President's directive, the Vice President has been working with agencies to help carry it out. He met with dozens of agency heads this summer to finalize agency customer service and other reinvention goals for GPRA. The agencies' first GPRA plans went to the Office of Management and Budget and to the Congress in September.

These plans are laced with customer service standards, measurement plans, and results. In fact, direct customer feedback is one of the highest performance measures any agency can obtain. Under GPRA, customer service becomes the core value effecting everything that agencies do. That kind of focus is what makes the best in business the best, and is what will produce an improvement in government services that Americans will surely notice.

### **Promises to our Customers**

You'll find the telephone numbers and Internet addresses for government agencies, in the back of this book. In addition, all of our customer service standards can be found on the Internet at [www.npr.gov](http://www.npr.gov). We asked you what was the most convenient way for you to use the data on customer service standards and you told us it should be organized by customer groups. So, that's just what we've done.

Our web site makes it easy to find whatever may be of interest to you. For instance, if you're interested in government "hotlines," you can do a keyword search. Or, if you're curious about what services are offered by a particular government agency, you can search under the name of that agency.

As you review our service standards, you may find that the quality of the standards and the reported results differ from agency to agency or even within an agency. That's because different organizations are at varying stages of measuring and learning about what customers want.

Some of the standards represent a first attempt to determine what's important to their customers.

For instance, the Department of Transportation has set customer standards and is awaiting results of the data it's collecting to determine how its performance measures up to its promise. Here's what you'll see:

**STANDARD:**

We will acknowledge your request promptly and provide you with a request number and a point of contact.

**RESULT:**

Newly published standard.  
Collecting data for first annual evaluation.

Some agencies are discovering that their standards aren't really measurable. Other agencies have modified their first set of standards or drafted entirely new ones based upon further feedback from customers.

Eventually, all agencies will measure results and report them out like those shown for the Small Business Administration:

**STANDARD:**

SBA pledges to continue to work to relieve the regulatory burden on small business.

**RESULT:**

SBA worked to develop the U.S. Business Advisor, which provides customers with plain-language answers to questions concerning government regulations. SBA has reduced internal regulations by 55 percent and reduced standard operating procedures by 66 percent.

Since best in the business practices aim for percentages in the high 90's—and, of course, the ultimate 100%—that's where we're headed. And while some of our results from focus groups, interviews, comments cards, and mystery shoppers, don't lend themselves to percentages like SBA's results, you can bet that, quantitatively or qualitatively, the best in business is our goal.

---



<sup>1</sup> Executive Order 12862, "*Setting Customer Service Standards*," September 11, 1993

<sup>2</sup> Roper poll 96-4 and 96-6.

<sup>3</sup> "*Social Security Administration Tops in Customer Service*," Dalbar Financial Services, Inc., Boston, Massachusetts, press release, May 3, 1995

<sup>4</sup> NPR, *Putting Customers First: Standards for Serving the American People* (Washington, D.C.: September 1994)

<sup>5</sup> NPR, *Putting Customers First '95: Standards for Serving the American People* (Washington, D.C.: October 1995)

<sup>6</sup> Memo for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, "*Improving Customer Service*" March 22, 1995

# Agency Customer Service Telephone Numbers and Internet Addresses

## Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

(202) 606-8503  
www.achp.gov

## Agriculture (Department of Agriculture)

(202) 720-8453  
www.usda.gov

### Agricultural Marketing Service

(202) 720-2145  
www.usda.gov/ams/titlepag.htm

### Agricultural Research Service

(202) 720-3973  
www.ars.usda.gov

### Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service

(301) 734-8889  
www.aphis.usda.gov

### Economic Research Service

www.econ.ag.gov

### Farm Service Agency

(202) 720-7796  
www.fsa.usda.gov

### Food and Consumer Service

(703) 350-2288  
www.usda.gov/fcs/fcs.htm

### Food Safety and Inspection Service

(202) 720-4150  
www.usda.gov/agency/fsis/homepage.htm

### Foreign Agricultural Service

(202) 720-1293  
http://ffas.usda.gov/ffas

### Forest Service

(202) 205-1084  
www.fs.fed.us

### Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

(202) 690-3460  
www.usda.gov/gipsa

### National Agricultural Statistics Service

(202) 720-5891  
www.usda.gov/nass

### Natural Resources and Conservation Service

(202) 720-1845  
www.ncg.nrcs.usda.gov

### Office of Communications

(202) 720-3088

### Office of Inspector General

(202) 720-1918  
www.usda.gov/oig

### Rural Business and Cooperative Service

(202) 720- 9812  
www.rurdev.usda.gov/agency/rbcds/html/rbcdhome.htm

### Rural Development

(202) 690-4742  
www.rurdev.usda.gov

### Rural Housing

(202) 690-0219  
www.rurdev.usda.gov

### Rural Utilities

(202) 720-1946  
www.usda.gov/rus/home/home.html

### World Agricultural Outlook Board

(202) 720-5447  
www.usda.gov/agency/oce/waob/waob.htm

## Barry Goldwater Scholarship Foundation

(703) 756-6012  
GoldH2O@erols.com

## Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation

(703) 305-7700

## Commerce (Department of Commerce)

(202) 482-1981  
www.doc.gov

### Bureau of Economic Analysis

(202) 606-9900  
www.bea.doc.gov

### Bureau of Export Administration

(202) 482-1900

### Bureau of the Census

(301) 457-4102

### Economics and Statistics Administration

(202) 482-3234

### Economic Development Administration

(202) 482-4687

### International Trade Administration

(202) 482-5436

### Minority Business Development Agency

(202) 482-4671

### National Institute of Standards and Technology

(301) 975-4054

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

(202) 482-5916

### National Technical Information Service

(703) 487-4726

### National Telecommunications and Information Administration

(202) 482-1835

### Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization

(202) 482-1472

### Patent and Trademark Office

(703) 305-4217

**Committee for Purchase from People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled**

(703) 603-7740  
www.jwod.gov

**Consumer Product Safety Commission**

1-800-638-2772 hotline  
(301) 504-0990  
(301) 504-0051 fax on demand  
www.cpsc.gov

**Defense (Department of Defense)**

(703) 697-9708  
www.douglas@usde.osd.mil

Defense Commissary Agency  
(804) 734-8194

Defense Finance and Accounting Service  
(703) 607-3926

Defense Logistics Agency  
(703) 767-5275

Legislative Affairs  
(703) 697-7786

Office of Economic Adjustment  
(703) 604-2400

Office of Public Affairs  
(703) 687-8959

Performance Improvements and Management  
Reengineering  
(703) 697-9708

Personnel and Readiness  
(703) 693-3002

US Army Corps of Engineers  
(202) 761-0052

**Education (Department of Education)**

(202) 401-2349  
www.edu.gov

**Energy (Department of Energy)**

(202) 586-5000  
www.doe.gov

Energy Information Administration  
(202) 586-5000  
www.eia.doe.gov

Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy  
(202) 586-5000  
www.eren.doe.gov

Office of Fossil Energy  
(202) 586-5000  
www.fe.doe.gov

Civilian Radioactive Waste Management  
(202) 586-5000  
www.rw.doe.gov

Office of Environmental Management  
(202) 586-5000  
www.em.doe.gov

Office of Environment, Safety and Health  
(202) 586-5000  
www.tis-hq.doe.gov

Office of Executive Secretariat  
(202) 586-5000  
www.hr.doe.gov/es/

Office of Quality Management  
(202) 586-5000  
www.explorer.doe.gov/QM/qmhome.html

Defense Programs  
(202) 586-5000  
www.dp.doe.gov

Office of Nuclear Energy  
(202) 586-5000  
apollo.osti.gov/budget/ne\_oda.html

**Environmental Protection Agency**

(202) 260-0599/260-9144  
www.epa.gov

**Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

(202) 663-4900  
www.eeoc.gov

**Export Import Bank of the United States**

(202) 663-4900  
www.exim.gov

**Federal Communications Commission**

(202) 418-0138  
www.fcc.gov

**Federal Emergency Management Agency**

(202) 646-3665  
www.fema.gov

**Federal Energy Regulatory Commission**

(202) 208-0300  
www.ferc.fed.us

**Federal Labor Relations Authority**

(202) 482-6550  
www.access.gpo.gov/flra

**Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service**

(202) 606-8100  
www.fmcs.gov

**Federal Trade Commission**

(202) 326-3761/326-3128  
www.ftc.gov

**General Services Administration**

(202) 501-4294  
www.gsa.gov

Consumer Information Center  
202)501-4294

Federal Supply Service  
(202) 501-4294

Federal Telecommunications Service  
(202) 501-4294

Office of Chief Information Officer  
(202) 501-4294

Office of Governmentwide Policy  
(202) 501-4294

Public Buildings Service  
(202) 501-4294

**Health and Human Services****(Department of Health and Human Services)**

www.hhs.gov

Administration for Children and Families

(202) 401-9215

Agency for Health Care Policy and Research

(301)594-1455

Centers for Disease Control

1-800 311-3435

Food and Drug Administration

(301) 827-0946/827-4543

Health Care Financing Administration

(410) 786-6503

Health Resources and Services Administration

(301) 443-3376

Indian Health Service

(301) 443-4724

National Institutes of Health

(301) 402-6350

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration

(301) 443-8956

**Housing and Urban Development (Department of Housing and Urban Development)**

(202) 708-2806

www.hud.gov

Government National Mortgage Association

(202) 708-2806

Office of Community Planning and Development

(202) 586-5000

Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity

(202) 586-5000

Office of Housing—Federal Housing Administration

(202) 586-5000

Policy Development and Research

(202) 586-5000

Public and Indian Housing

(202) 586-5000

**Interior (Department of the Interior)**

(202) 208-1818

www.doi.gov

Bureau of Indian Affairs

(202) 219-2432

www.doi.gov/bureau-indian-affairs.html

Bureau of Land Management

(202) 452-5159

www.blm.gov

Bureau of Reclamation

(202) 208-3565

www.usbr.gov

Minerals Management Service

(202) 208-4120

www.mms.gov

National Park Service

(202) 208-3855

www.nps.gov

Interior Service Center

(202) 208-4392

www.doi.gov/isc

Office of Surface Mining

(202) 208-7839

www.osmre.gov

Fish and Wildlife Service

(703) 358-2082

www.fws.gov

US Geological Survey

(703) 648-4439

www.usgs.gov

**Japan-United States Friendship Commission**

(202) 275-7712

www2.dgsys.com/~jusfc/commissn/commissn.html

**Justice (Department of Justice)**

(202) 307-1800

www.doj.gov

Antitrust Division

(202) 514-2513

Bureau of Prisons

(202) 307-2033

Community Relations Service

(202) 305-2966

Drug Enforcement Administration

(202) 307-7005

Federal Bureau of Investigation

(202) 324-8519

Freedom of Information Act

(202) 616-6757

Immigration and Naturalization Service

(202) 514-3242

Justice Management Division

(202) 307-1845

Office of Justice Programs

(202) 616-3562

Office of Inspector General

(202) 616-4550

US Attorneys' Office

(202) 616-6792

US National Central Bureau

(202) 616-9700

US Trustee Program

(202) 616-1006

**Labor (Department of Labor)**

(202) 219-7357

www.dol.gov

Bureau of Labor Statistics

(202) 606-5886

Employment and Training Administration  
(202) 219-6955

Employment Standards Administration  
(202) 219-7601

Mine Safety and Health Administration  
(202) 703 235-8342

Occupational Safety and Health Administration  
(202) 219-7725

Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration  
(202) 219-7222 ext 3003

Veterans Employment and Training  
(202) 219-7357

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration**

(202) 358-2357  
[www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov)

**National Archives and Records Administration**

(202) 713-7360  
[www.nara.gov](http://www.nara.gov)

**National Endowment for the Arts**

(202) 682-5408  
[www.webmgr@arts.endow.gov](mailto:www.webmgr@arts.endow.gov)

**National Endowment for the Humanities**

(202) 606-8428  
[www.neh.fed.us](http://www.neh.fed.us)

**National Gallery of Art**

(202) 682-8428

**National Labor Relations Board**

(202) 273-3907  
[www.nlr.gov](http://www.nlr.gov)

**National Mediation Board**

(202) 523-5944

**National Performance Review**

(202) 632-0150  
[www.npr.gov](http://www.npr.gov)

**National Science Foundation**

(703) 306-1087  
[www.nsf.gov](http://www.nsf.gov)

**Office of Personnel Management**

(202) 606-1000  
[www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov)

Employment Service  
(202) 606-0800

Retirement and Insurance Service:  
Office of Insurance Programs  
(202) 606-1000

Retirement and Insurance Service:  
Office of Retirement Programs  
(202) 606-1000

**Peace Corps**

(202) 606-9440  
[www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov)

**Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation**

(202) 326-4018 ext.3334  
[www.pbgc.gov](http://www.pbgc.gov)

**Railroad Retirement Board**

(312) 751-4757  
[www.rrb.gov](http://www.rrb.gov)

**Securities and Exchange Commission**

1-800-SEC-0330  
[www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov)

**Small Business Administration**

(202) 205-6747  
[www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

**Social Security Administration**

1-800-772-1213  
[www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

**State (Department of State)**

(202) 647-4000  
[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)

Bureau of Administration  
(202) 647-4000

Bureau of Consular Affairs (passports)  
(202) 647-2423

Bureau of Political-Military Affairs  
(703) 875-7050

Diplomatic Security Service  
(202) 663-0158

Office of Coordinator for Business Affairs  
(202) 647-1625

Office of Foreign Missions  
(202) 647-6290

Office of Overseas Schools  
(703) 875-7800

**Transportation (Department of Transportation)**

(202) 366-5151  
[www.dot.gov](http://www.dot.gov)

Bureau of Transportation Statistics  
(202) 366-8925  
[www.bts.gov](http://www.bts.gov)

Federal Aviation Administration  
(202) 367-9551  
[www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov)

Federal Highway Administration  
(202) 366-6159  
[www.fhwa.dot.gov](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov)

Federal Railroad Administration  
(202) 366-3225  
[www.dot.gov](http://www.dot.gov)

Federal Transit Administration  
(202) 366-1727  
[www.fta.dot.gov](http://www.fta.dot.gov)

Maritime Administration  
(202) 366-5971  
[www.marad.dot.gov](http://www.marad.dot.gov)

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
(202) 366-5971  
[www.dot.gov/affairs/index.htm](http://www.dot.gov/affairs/index.htm)

Office of Civil Rights  
(202) 366-6159  
[www.dot.gov/ost/docr](http://www.dot.gov/ost/docr)

Office of Small and Disadvantage Business Utilization  
(202) 366-2852  
[www.osdbuweb.dot.gov](http://www.osdbuweb.dot.gov)

Research and Special Programs Administration  
(202) 366-4831

St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation  
(202) 366-5418  
[www.dot.gov/slsdc](http://www.dot.gov/slsdc)

US Coast Guard  
(202) 269-2292  
[www.dot.gov/dotinfo/coastguard](http://www.dot.gov/dotinfo/coastguard)

**Treasury (Department of Treasury)**

(202) 622-2000  
[www.ustreas.gov](http://www.ustreas.gov)

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms  
(202) 927-8455  
[www.atf.treas.gov](http://www.atf.treas.gov)

Bureau of Engraving and Printing  
(202) 874-2343  
[www.bep.treas.gov](http://www.bep.treas.gov)

Bureau of the Public Debt  
1-800-4USBOND  
[www.publicdebt.treas.gov](http://www.publicdebt.treas.gov)

Office of the Comptroller  
(202) 874-4515  
[www.occ.treas.gov](http://www.occ.treas.gov)

Federal Law Enforcement Training Center  
(912) 267-2660  
[www.ustreas.gov/treasury/bureaus/flectc/homepage.html](http://www.ustreas.gov/treasury/bureaus/flectc/homepage.html)

Financial Management Service  
(202) 874-8780  
[www.fms.treas.gov](http://www.fms.treas.gov)

Internal Revenue Service  
[www.irs.ustreas.gov](http://www.irs.ustreas.gov)

Office of Thrift Supervision  
(202) 906-5685

US Customs Service  
(202) 927-0398  
[www.customs.ustreas.gov](http://www.customs.ustreas.gov)

US Mint  
(202) 874-9988  
[www.usmint.gov](http://www.usmint.gov)

US Secret Service  
(202) 435-7202

**US Access Board**

1-800-972-2253

**US Agency for International Development**

(202) 647-1850  
[www.info.usaid.gov](http://www.info.usaid.gov)

**US Institute of Peace**

(202) 457-1700  
[www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org)

**US Merit System Protection Board**

(202) 653-7200  
[www.access.gpo.gov/mspb/index.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/mspb/index.html)

**US Postal Service**

(202) 268-2339  
[www.usps.gov](http://www.usps.gov)

**US Trade and Development Agency**

(202) 875-4357  
[www.tda.gov](http://www.tda.gov)

**Veterans Affairs (Department of Veterans Affairs)**

1-800-827-1000  
[www.va.gov/customer/customer.htm](http://www.va.gov/customer/customer.htm)

Board of Veterans Appeals'  
(202) 565-5004

National Cemetery System  
1-800-827-1000

Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization  
(202) 565-8124

Veterans Benefits Administration  
1-800--827-1000

Veterans Health Administration  
1-800-827-1000

**Woodrow Wilson Center**

(202) 357-4335  
[www.ics.si.edu](http://www.ics.si.edu)



