



AMERICAN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX
**E-GOVERNMENT
SATISFACTION INDEX**

JUNE 14, 2005

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LED BY HEALTH-RELATED SITES, CITIZEN SATISFACTION INCREASES SLIGHTLY, INDEX GROWS 19%

Citizen satisfaction with e-government is up from last quarter, according to the second quarter 2005 release of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) E-Government Satisfaction Index. With an aggregate score of 72.6, citizen satisfaction is up approximately 1% from last quarter. This improvement in satisfaction stalled the downward trend from last quarter, when the aggregate citizen satisfaction score had declined slightly from the prior quarterly measurement.

Slight improvements in many of the elements that drive website satisfaction, including Content, Navigation and Search, bolstered the aggregate score. The aggregate score was also positively impacted by the strong scores of many returning sites, as well as high initial scores by several sites entering the Index for the first time.

Of particular note are health-related sites under the domain of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Nine of the top ten websites in the Index are health-related and eight of the top ten are within the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which has taken an enterprise approach to measuring customer satisfaction online.

This quarter also saw positive trends in citizen satisfaction scores for behaviors tied to channel loyalty: Likelihood to Return to the site and Likelihood to Recommend it to others, both of which increased slightly since last quarter.

The second quarter 2005 ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index contains 70 sites, a 19% increase since last quarter. Nine of the fourteen new sites are associated with the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the Public Health Service and part of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The 70 sites included in this quarter's Index are divided into four categories according to the primary function of the site: Portals/Department Main Sites, News/Information, E-commerce/Transactions and Recruitment/Careers.

Key Findings

- Citizen satisfaction with government websites has risen 1% this quarter to a score of 72.6.
- Participation in the ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index has grown 19% since last quarter as more e-government sites adopted the ACSI as a key performance metric.
- Many of the health sites in the Index report very strong satisfaction scores, with sites associated with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services comprising the top 10% of the Index.
- Search and navigation have increased since last quarter, although these remain areas of focus for government websites.

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"It's exciting to have 14 new sites using the E-Government American Customer Satisfaction Index this quarter and the Index scores continue to improve. I don't know any better proof that federal agencies are putting their customers first."

—Anne Kelly, CEO/Director, Federal Consulting Group

THE ACSI METHODOLOGY

The ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index is a special quarterly report of the ACSI, which is produced by the University of Michigan in partnership with the American Society for Quality (ASQ), ForeSee Results and the CFI Group. The ACSI is a cross-industry measure of offline customer satisfaction that measures the performance of approximately 200 private sector companies, as well as many government agencies. ForeSee Results collects and analyzes the data for the e-government websites included in the report.

ACSI e-government scores were calculated based on data gathered from voluntary online surveys of site visitors. Each government website was rated by its visitors on various components of overall satisfaction. The ratings were converted to a score on a 100-point scale using the ACSI methodology.

The ACSI methodology identifies key drivers of satisfaction and quantifies their relationship to overall customer satisfaction. Going further, this cause-and-effect methodology predicts how customers will behave in the future and demonstrates the impact of website enhancements on customer satisfaction, customer behavior and ultimately, the bottom line.

Comparison of ACSI Aggregate Government and E-Government Scores	Q1 2005	Q2 2005	Change
ACSI E-Government Aggregate	71.9	72.6	+1.0%
ACSI Aggregate (Cross-industry, online and offline)	73.6	73	-0.8%

HEALTH-RELATED SITES GET HIGH MARKS FOR CITIZEN SATISFACTION

Health information is clearly one area where e-government sites are in the lead at meeting and exceeding the needs of citizens, judging by the impressive scores of many health-related sites in the second quarter 2005 ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index. The average score of the 19 sites in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) sites included in this quarter's Index is 7% higher than the average of all other measured sites. As a subset, the aggregate score for NIH sites is 8% higher than the aggregate e-government score.

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In fact, the top 10% of sites in the Index are all health-related sites. Three of these, MedlinePlus, Medline Plus en español and the National Women's Health Information Center, continue to be among the top-scoring sites in the Index, quarter after quarter. This quarter, their scores are 85, 84 and 82, respectively. Although Medline Plus has dropped two points since last quarter, the fact that these three sites have maintained such strong showings in the Index is commendable. These three public-facing sites compete with private sector health information sites, which makes their continued focus on satisfying citizens—who continually expect more from a website—especially noteworthy.



The National Institutes of Health has played an important role in the growth and strong performance of the e-government health sites category. Nine of the new sites measured this quarter are NIH sites and eight of the top ten sites in the Index are NIH sites. As an agency, the NIH is taking a strong leadership role ushering in a more citizen-centric online information delivery system using the ACSI as a key performance metric.

"The ACSI analytics give us a data-driven approach to make informed planning and resource allocation decisions regarding changes and improvements to NCI's website," said Sue Feldman, Senior Program Analyst, Web Analytics for the National Cancer Institute, the highest scoring e-government portal and one of the sites in the top ten. "Managers are provided with the tools to support their decisions based on maximizing return on investment."

Many health-related sites face the challenge of serving a variety of audiences that range widely in their background and needs. Balancing the needs of highly technical audiences with the general public can be particularly difficult; however, the web provides an opportunity to tailor information to specific audiences.

"Our constituency is multifaceted, including patients and their families and friends, health professionals, scientist/researchers, advocates, and others. Segmenting the data allows us to evaluate how we can best serve these different audiences," said Feldman of the NCI.

WHAT DRIVES ONLINE CITIZEN SATISFACTION

Satisfaction with a website is a complex equation with multiple elements determining how well the online experience meets the needs of site visitors. The ACSI methodology calculates the impact of the different drivers of satisfaction based on direct "voice of the customer" feedback for each measured site. The cause-and-effect nature of the methodology enables an agency or department to predict the impact of website enhancements in a particular area, (e.g., navigation) on overall satisfaction. Going further, the methodology predicts how increases in satisfaction affect desired future behaviors of site visitors, such as return visits, referrals to the site and preference for the website as a primary resource for information.

Typically, an area with a low satisfaction score and a high impact score is considered high priority. The identification of high priority satisfaction drivers provides valuable insight into how an agency or department should prioritize website improvements based on where they will have the greatest impact on citizen satisfaction and ROI.

This quarter's ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index commentary looks at broad trends with respect to what drives satisfaction with government websites. It's important to note that this data cannot be generalized to ALL government websites, or even to all of those included in the Index. Rather, it's intended to give a perspective on key citizen likes and dislikes, and the top-priority challenges and areas of opportunity for government websites.

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Search and Navigation are Still Areas of Concern, Despite Small Satisfaction Increases

This quarter's 1% improvement in aggregate citizen satisfaction is due to a slight improvement with scores for some of the elements that drive satisfaction with the online experience. Search, which has long been an opportunity for improvement in both the government and the private sector, increased 1.3%. While the score is up to 73, it is still among the lowest-scoring element measured for government sites. And, it remains a top priority for 90% of the sites measured in the E-Government Satisfaction Index. So, while government sites have made small strides in improving how effectively people find information online, plenty of opportunity for improvement still remains.

Content and Navigation both helped drive the upward movement in aggregate satisfaction through 1.1% increases. However, when we look closer at the scores and impacts for these elements, we see that government could do more in both areas. Navigation, with a score of 72 remains the single lowest-scoring element. This is a concern because Navigation is a top-priority element for 43% of the sites measured. Moreover, people generally tend to prefer to navigate to find information they're looking for, instead of using search functions, so a poor navigation score often translates to lower satisfaction overall and undermines loyalty to the web channel.

Content, on the other hand, has a much higher score of 79. However, this element is only high priority for 3% of measured sites. While this doesn't mean that site owners shouldn't worry about keeping their content fresh and relevant, it does mean that e-government sites are already doing a good job with content from the perspective of site users so this shouldn't be their sole focus. After all, if people can't find the content, due to sub-par Search and Navigation, the content provides little value. Of course, when people rate Content, they are assessing what they can find currently on the site. Any issues with missing content would be likely to negatively affect the scores for Navigation, Search and Functionality as well.

Functionality—which includes a measure of site visitors' ability to accomplish what they want to on the site—saw a slight decrease of .3% from last quarter. This is a bit of a concern because Functionality is a top-priority element for 36% of agencies measured. Undoubtedly, not providing site visitors with easy ways to navigate the site or use the search engine to find information quickly can contribute to a lower Functionality score.

The highest-scoring element measured across government websites was Site Performance, which had a score of 81. This quarter, the percentage of measured websites for which Site Performance is a top priority jumped from 12% to 23%. The high score, combined with the importance of this element, shows that measured government websites overall are satisfying site visitors in an area of importance, namely, the speed, reliability and consistency of the site.

Looking at individual sites, the 10% of sites that have the highest satisfaction ratings (scores are 81 or higher) have higher element scores across the board, but especially in the areas of Navigation and Search. Conversely, the 10% of sites that have the lowest satisfaction rates (scores of 65 or below) are those that score significantly below the average for Search, Functionality and Navigation. This shows that sites that make it easy for citizens to find and peruse the information they need do a better job overall of providing

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a satisfying online experience. On the other hand, sites that don't do a good job with these "basics" will find it difficult to meet the needs of the public.

CHANNEL LOYALTY STRONG FOR GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

The ACSI methodology predicts future behaviors based on current levels of satisfaction. Compared to private sector portals measured by the ACSI, e-government outperforms the private sector, which has an aggregate score 71, by a small margin. For government websites, we measure how likely site visitors are to return to the site, and how likely they are to recommend it to others—both key indicators of loyalty.

In second quarter 2005, aggregate scores for both of these behaviors rose slightly. Likelihood to Return is up .2% to a score of 82, while Likelihood to Recommend is up .4% to a score of 78.

For the top 10% of sites in the ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index, the scores for these critical future behaviors are even higher. Likelihood to Return is an 84 (2% higher than the Index average) while Likelihood to Recommend is an 82 (5% higher than the average score).

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION BY TYPE OF MEASURED SITE

The 70 sites in this quarter's index fall into four categories. Aggregate satisfaction scores for Portals/Department Main Sites and News/Information Sites rose; scores for E-Commerce/Transactions are flat, while the score for Recruitment/Career sites fell.

Category	Q1 2005 Score	Q2 2005 Score	Change
ACSI E-Government Aggregate	71.9	72.6	+1.0%
Portals/Department Main Sites	71.9	72.6	+0.9%
News/Information	71.5	72.5	+1.4%
E-commerce/Transactions	71.3	71.3	0.0%
Recruitment/Careers	77.7	77.2	-0.7%

Portals/Department Main Sites

The category of Portals/Department Main Sites rose slightly from last quarter to 72.6. Scores in this category range from 81 to 61. Compared to private sector portals measured by the ACSI, e-government outperforms the private sector, which has an aggregate score 71, by a small margin.

With a score of 81, up one point from last quarter, the National Cancer Institute's main website, www.cancer.gov, continues to lead this category. The Office of Science Education's main site, <http://science.education.nih.gov>, enters the ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index with a strong score of 80.

The website of the General Services Administration, www.gsa.gov, saw the greatest increase in quarter-over-quarter scores, with a 14 % leap from 57 to 65. This improvement was a result of analyzing why people come to the site, and acting on this "voice of customer" feedback. The GSA site has made a number of changes based on analysis of users' satisfaction. One example is that after discovering that one of the primary reasons that people visited the site was to obtain per diem information, GSA made this information much more readily available.

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For Portals/Department Main Sites, Search is a top priority element for 92% of the sites, while Navigation is critical to 52% of them. These priorities are not surprising, considering the volumes of information that people can access on many of these sites. Many of the sites within the Portals/Department Main Site category could realize gains in satisfaction—and ultimately, in channel loyalty to the website—through enhancements in these areas.

ID	E-Government U.S. Agency/ Department/Office	Website	6/05 Score
<i>Portal/Department Main Websites</i>			
NCI	National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, HHS	National Cancer Institute main website www.cancer.gov	81
HHS, OSE	Office of Science Education, National Institutes of Health, HHS	Office of Science Education website http://science.education.nih.gov	80
HHS, NIAMS	National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, National Institutes of Health, HHS	NIAMS Public Website http://www.niams.nih.gov/index.htm	78
NPS	National Parks Service, Interior	National Parks Service main website www.nps.gov	78
NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology, Commerce	NIST main website www.nist.gov	78
HHS, NLM	National Library of Medicine, HHS	NLM main website—www.nlm.nih.gov	76
HHS, NHGRI	National Human Genome Research Institute National Institutes of Health, HHS	NHGRI Website www.genome.gov	75
GSA	General Services Administration	FirstGov.gov website (Spanish) http://firstgov.gov/Espanol/index.shtml	75
DOD	Department of Defense	Department of Defense main site http://www.dod.mil	75
HHS, NIDCR	National Institute of Dental & Craniofacial Research, National Institutes of Health, HHS	NIDCR Web Site http://www.nidcr.nih.gov	74
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	CDC main website—www.cdc.gov	73
SSA	Social Security Administration	SSA main website—www.socialsecurity.gov/	73
FDIC	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	FDIC main website—www.fdic.gov	73
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	NASA main website www.nasa.gov	72
GSA	General Services Administration	FirstGov.gov website—www.firstgov.gov	72
GAO	Government Accountability Office	GAO main public website—www.gao.gov	71
State	Department of State	Department of State main website—www.state.gov	71
HHS, NIGMS	National Institute of General Medical Sciences, National Institutes of Health, HHS	NIGMS Website http://www.nigms.nih.gov	71
Treasury	Department of the Treasury	Treasury main website—www.treasury.gov	70
NARA	National Archives & Records Administration	NARA main public website—www.archives.gov	69
IRS	Internal Revenue Service, Treasury	IRS main website—www.irs.gov	69
USPTO	United States Patent & Trademark Office	USPTO main website—www.uspto.gov	68
DOT	Federal Aviation Administration	FAA main website—www.faa.gov	67
GSA	General Services Administration	GSA main website—www.gsa.gov	65
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	HUD main website www.hud.gov	61

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News/Information

The aggregate score for News/Information sites experienced the largest quarter over quarter index, up 1.4% this quarter, up to an aggregate score of 72.3. Scores in this category range from 85 to 58, led by MedlinePlus (<http://medlineplus.gov>) at 85 and MedlinePlus en español (<http://medlineplus.gov/esp/>) and the main site for the National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Disease (<http://www.niddk.nih.gov>), both with scores of 84. These sites, as well as all of the top six sites in the News/Information category, are part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). As a point of comparison, the e-government score for this category trails the private sector News/Information category, which had an ACSI score of 75 (3% higher than the e-government score).

The website of the Federal Citizens' Information Center (FCIC), www.pueblo.gsa.gov, is an example of a News/Information site that is doing a good job at providing information to citizens in a more efficient and cost-effective manner—24/7. The public can order a wealth of informational publications, on topics ranging from Medicare to mortgages, on the site, which had a score of 79 this quarter. Prior to the launch of the site in 1994, people went through the slow process of ordering information via “snail mail” or phone, then waiting for it to arrive in their mailbox. Now, they can go online and immediately search for specific topic, then either read, print or save the information. Through its Consumer Focus feature, the website also provides a way for the FCIC publish important information that isn't available in any of the publications available for order.

As with Portals/Department Main Sites, Search is a key element. In fact, 97% of sites in the Information/News category identify this element as high priority. Functionality, Look & Feel and Navigation are identified as priorities for 37%, 34% and 31% of News/Information sites, respectively.

ID	E-Government U.S. Agency/ Department/Office	Website	6/05 Score
Information/News Websites			
HHS, NLM	National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, HHS	MedlinePlus http://medlineplus.gov	85
HHS, NLM	National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, HHS	MedlinePlus en español— http://medlineplus.gov/esp/	84
HHS	National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Diseases, National Institutes of Health, HHS	NIDDK Main Website http://www.niddk.nih.gov	84
HHS, OWH	Office on Women's Health	National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC) main website— www.4woman.gov	82
HHS, NIDCD	National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, National Institutes of Health, HHS	NIDCD Website http://www.nidcd.nih.gov	81
HHS, NIDCD	National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, National Institutes of Health, HHS	NIH Stem Cell Information http://stemcells.nih.gov	81
GSA	General Services Administration	Federal Citizen Information Center www.pueblo.gsa.gov/	79
HHS,NLM	National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, HHS	AIDSinfo http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/	79
State	Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, State	State Alumni website https://alumni.state.gov	79

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ID	E-Government U.S. Agency/ Department/Office	Website	6/05 Score
<i>Information/News Websites Continued</i>			
HHS, NLM	National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, HHS	TOXNET http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov	76
DOJ	National Criminal Justice Reference Service, Justice	NCJRS website www.ncjrs.org	76
DOJ	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Justice	OJJDP website http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org	75
NARA	National Archives & Records Administration	NARA Presidential Library websites http://archives.gov/presidential_libraries/index.html	74
DOJ	National Institute of Justice, Justice	NIJ main website— http://www.ojp.gov/nij	74
HHS	Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality, HHS	Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality www.ahrq.gov	74
SSA	Social Security Administration	SSA FAQ— http://ssa-custhelp.ssa.gov	73
State	Department of State	U.S. Department of State Education USA http://educationusa.state.gov	73
HHS	National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, HHS	NIAID main website www.niaid.nih.gov	73
SSA	Social Security Administration	Social Security Disability Internet Users http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disability/	72
DOL	Bureau of Labor Statistics	BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook http://www.bls.gov/oco/	71
USDA	Economic Research Service, Agriculture	ERS main website— www.ers.usda.gov	71
Commerce	Bureau of Economic Analysis, Commerce	BEA main website— http://www.bea.gov	71
USDA	Foreign Agricultural Service, Agriculture	FAS main website— www.fas.usda.gov	70
HHS, NCI	Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER), National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, HHS	SEER website http://seer.cancer.gov	70
State	Department of State	Student website— http://future.state.gov	69
NARA	National Archives & Records Administration	NARA main public website— www.archives.gov	69
State	International Information Programs, State	IIP main website— http://usinfo.state.gov	69
EIA	Energy Information Administration, Energy	Energy Information Administration www.eia.doe.gov	67
USDA	National Agricultural Library, Agriculture	NAL main website— www.nal.usda.gov	66
USDA	Food Safety and Inspection Service, Agriculture	FSIS main website www.fsis.usda.gov	66
USDA	Forest Service, Agriculture	Forest Service main website— http://www.fs.fed.us	66
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency, Homeland Security	FEMA Mitigation Division website www.fema.gov/fima/	65
USDA	Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, Agriculture	CSREES main website www.csrees.usda.gov	62
Treasury	Department of the Treasury, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau	USTTB website www.ttb.gov	58
DOD	Military Health System, Defence	TRICARE— www.tricare.osd.mil/	58

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E-commerce/Transactions

The aggregate citizen satisfaction score for the E-Commerce/Transactions category of government websites stayed flat from last quarter at a score of 71.3. E-government's e-commerce aggregate score trails the private sector e-commerce score (78.6) by a full 10%.



The Social Security Administration's Retirement Planner (www.socialsecurity.gov/r&m1.htm) led this category with a score of 79, up one point from last quarter. Scores for E-Commerce/Transaction sites range from 65 to 79. Search is a priority for sites in this category, although not to the extent it is for sites in the News/Information and Portals/Department Main sites. For 67% of sites, Search is high priority, while Navigation is key for 43%.

Site Performance this quarter leaps to the forefront as an area of focus for E-Commerce/Transaction sites. While none of the sites in this quarter had Site Performance as a high priority element last quarter, 43% of them do now. This shows that it's critical to monitor satisfaction over time, as citizens' priorities are constantly changing. Nonetheless, Site Performance is also the lowest priority for 57% of the sites measured, so it's important to gauge individual site priorities rather than make assumptions based solely on the category trendline.

ID	E-Government U.S. Agency/ Department/Office	Website	6/05 Score
<i>E-Commerce Websites</i>			
SSA	SSA Retirement Planner	SSA Retirement Planner www.socialsecurity.gov/r&m1.htm	79
Treasury	United States Mint, Treasury	Online Catalog— http://catalog.usmint.gov	76
Treasury/ BPD	Department of the Treasury, Bureau of the Public Debt	TreasuryDirect www.treasurydirect.gov	72
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency, Homeland Security	FEMA Flood Map Store http://store.msc.fema.gov	71
GSA	General Services Administration	GSA Advantage website https://www.gsaadvantage.gov	69
GSA	GSA Global Supply website	GSA Global Supply website https://www.globalsupply.gsa.gov	68
PBGC	Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	PBGC main website— www.pbgc.gov	65

Recruitment/Careers

The aggregate satisfaction score for this category of government websites is down .7% to 77.2. Scores in this small category are grouped closely together, ranging from 76 to 79.

Navigation is a high priority element for all of these sites, not surprising considering that people use these sites to sort through information and find jobs.

ID	E-Government U.S. Agency/ Department/Office	Website	6/05 Score
<i>Recruitment/Careers Websites</i>			
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency	Recruitment website— www.cia.gov/employment	79
OPM	Office of Personnel Management	Recruitment website— www.usajobs.opm.gov	77
State	Department of State	Recruitment website— www.careers.state.gov	76

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CONCLUSIONS

The significant growth in participation in the Index this quarter signals continued commitment to making e-government more responsive to citizen's needs and expectations. Even the modest gains in key satisfaction drivers, Search and Navigation, show that federal government sites continue to make steps toward improvement while citizens' standards continue to rise, as evident in private sector ACSI online score declines.

The gains of health-related sites are particularly noteworthy in contrasting public and private sector performance. These sites are true leaders in satisfying the public's need for credible, reliable information that is made readily available with consistency and convenience. While serving the general public, they simultaneously unite a world-wide community of medical researchers who are advancing the horizons of medicine.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Larry Freed is an expert on Web Effectiveness and Web Customer Satisfaction. He is also President and CEO of ForeSee Results, a market leader in customer satisfaction measurement on the web, which utilizes the methodology of the American Customer Satisfaction Index.

ABOUT THE ACSI

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is the only uniform, national, cross-industry measure of satisfaction with the quality of goods and services available in the United States. In 1999, the Federal government selected the ACSI to be a standard metric for measuring citizen satisfaction. Over 55 Federal government agencies have used the ACSI to measure citizen satisfaction of more than 110 services and programs. The Index is produced by a partnership of the University of Michigan Business School, American Society for Quality (ASQ) and CFI Group, an international consulting firm. ForeSee Results sponsors the e-commerce, e-business and e-government indices.

ABOUT FORESEE RESULTS, INC.

ForeSee Results is the market leader in online customer satisfaction management and specializes in converting satisfaction data into user-driven web development strategies. Using the methodology of the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), ForeSee Results has created a model that scientifically quantifies the elements that drive online customer satisfaction and predicts future behaviors, including the likelihood to return to the site or recommend the site to others. ForeSee Results, a privately held company located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, can be found online at www.ForeSeeResults.com.

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