



Services for Federal Agencies

The Federal Citizen Information Center (FCIC) is probably most widely known for its humorous television public service announcements promoting the mailing address “Pueblo, Colorado 81009.” That’s where consumers write for the free Consumer Information Catalog and hundreds of low-cost federal publications on everything from their homes and cars to health and financial questions. What you may not know is that FCIC (part of the U.S. General Services Administration) also provides web, telephone and e-mail services where citizens can get answers to questions about the federal government. This fact sheet explains the many services FCIC offers to federal agencies to help you get your information to the public quickly, easily, and cost-effectively.

What can the Federal Citizen Information Center do for you?

FCIC, with over 35 years of experience, is a trusted one-stop source for answers to questions about government services and consumer problems through information posted on the web at USA.gov, pueblo.gsa.gov, or ConsumerAction.gov; through its toll-free National Contact Center; and through printed publications. This multi-channel approach lets citizens get information through whatever means they desire, and enables agencies to reach their target audience through an array of channels.

FCIC can provide a wide range of information services to federal agencies including:

- posting or linking to your information on the FCIC family of websites in multiple formats,
- handling your agencies’ misdirected telephone calls and e-mails,
- providing streamlined contracting options for telephone and e-mail contact center services,
- listing your publications in the *Consumer Information Catalog*,
- identifying government/industry cooperative publishing opportunities,
- promoting your information through the print, broadcast, and electronic media,
- providing publication order fulfillment and warehousing,
- offering specialized or targeted mailing services in English and Spanish, and
- publicizing your agency programs in the *Consumer Action Handbook* and on ConsumerAction.gov.

What will this cost you? Surprisingly little. In fact, much of it is free to your agency. FCIC does not charge your agency for putting your information on our websites, for handling any misdirected telephone calls or e-mails you receive, for *Catalog* or *Handbook* listings, for publication development services, or for online or media promotion activities. There are costs associated with providing specialized contact center services and publication order fulfillment. These costs vary according to the level and kind of service provided but, in most instances, using the FCIC established infrastructure will result in lower costs than agencies can command individually.

Websites

FCIC will add your agency information and publications to our award-winning website, pueblo.gsa.gov. Consumers can order, read, print out, or save the full text of all the publications listed in the *Consumer Information Catalog*. Users can also find great information on a wide range of topics, as well as the latest product recalls and scams and updates of consumer news items from federal agencies.

The complete *Consumer Action Handbook* is also available online at ConsumerAction.gov. The website has thousands of links to federal websites; state, local and county consumer agencies; FCIC corporate publishing partners; consumer organizations; and corporations and trade associations with ongoing consumer programs.

FCIC also manages USA.gov, the official web portal of the U.S. Government. Citizens use USA.gov to find information, services, and transactions on millions of pages from federal, state, and local government websites.

Your agency can also be featured where appropriate on kids.gov, which was developed and is maintained by FCIC. Kids.gov is the official children’s portal to the U.S. government and provides links to over 400 kid-friendly websites from government agencies, schools, and private organizations—all geared to the level and interest of kids.

National Contact Center

FCIC operates a National Contact Center (NCC) that answers questions in English and Spanish about federal agencies, programs, and services. The public can call toll-free **1 (800) FED INFO** (1-800-333-4636), Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time. At all other times, automated messages are available. The public can also e-mail their questions through a handy web form found on USA.gov. The trained NCC staff either directly answers questions about all aspects of the federal government or provides callers with the most appropriate contact.

Additionally, FCIC encourages agencies to redirect phone and e-mail inquiries to the NCC whenever those inquiries are not related to the agency's mission.

FCIC can also provide agencies contractual assistance through FirstContact, a multiple-award IDIQ. This saves agencies time and money when purchasing a wide variety of contract center services.

Catalog and Handbook Listings

FCIC revises and publishes the free *Consumer Information Catalog* four times a year and distributes more than 10 million copies annually. Each issue has descriptive listings of about 200 federal publications, covering everything from health to housing, from buying federal surplus property to building careers, from credit to cars. The *Catalog* is made available through schools, libraries, consumer groups, federal offices with large numbers of visitors, Congressional offices, and in response to individual requests. Orders for publications in the *Catalog* are received and filled by the Government Printing Office (GPO) facility in Pueblo, Colorado.

Your agency can also be featured in the *Consumer Action Handbook*, one of the most helpful and popular consumer federal publications ever published, with more than 9 million copies requested since 1979. This comprehensive guide helps citizens find the best and most direct source for assistance with their consumer problems and questions. Congressional offices, state and local government agencies, and libraries nationwide use the *Handbook* as one of their most trusted and frequently used consumer resources.

Cooperative Publishing

Although the majority of the publications handled through FCIC are developed by federal agencies alone, FCIC also manages publications that are developed cooperatively by federal agencies working together with the private sector. FCIC is authorized to accept money from the private sector to assist with the costs of these publications.

The benefits of cooperative publishing include:

- pooling resources (staff time, expertise, and budget),
- providing improved information from a greater number of informed sources, and
- expanding the reach and availability of your information.

FCIC actively seeks opportunities for government/industry collaboration and helps agencies identify appropriate and interested corporate partners.

Media Promotion

FCIC has an ongoing nationwide media program to promote federal information through television and radio public service announcements and through the print media. Federal agency information is regularly featured in FCIC "New for Consumers" press releases. FCIC credits and clears each release with the appropriate federal agency. These releases are distributed electronically and in print to all Congressional offices and to approximately 10,000 newspapers and magazines, consumer organizations and state and local government agencies nation-wide. Your FCIC contact can provide you with clips from newspapers and magazines in which "New for Consumers" releases written about your information have appeared.

Finally, FCIC works with magazines such as Family Circle and Parade to develop special promotions for individual publications. FCIC consults with agencies when planning special promotions and obtains agency approval before authorizing high volume or high visibility media placements.

Order Fulfillment and Warehousing Services

The GPO facility in Pueblo, Colorado provides a wide range of warehousing and distribution services—from targeted mailings to ongoing, large-scale receipt and filling of orders from the public. The facility can also meet your warehouse needs for high volume publication storage and management.

In response to *Catalog* orders or media mentions, the Pueblo facility fills requests promptly and accurately. FCIC can provide you with distribution statistics for your publications and estimates for annual distribution. FCIC will work with you during the early stages of the publication development process to customize a low-cost distribution package that covers both individual and bulk order fulfillment.

The cost of distributing publications through FCIC depends on the pricing system your agency chooses.

- a. **Free publications.** The sponsoring agency prints publications, provides copies to Pueblo, and pays for distribution costs. These books are free to the public. FCIC uses a standard inter-agency memorandum of agreement that explains the billing procedure and outlines the specific services provided.
- b. **Low-priced publications (LPP).** Publications in this program must weigh less than three ounces. The sponsoring agency prints and provides copies to Pueblo and the customer pays \$1.00 to cover postage and handling costs.
- c. **Sales publications.** The sponsoring agency turns the publication over to the Superintendent of Documents of the U.S. Government Printing Office for printing and inclusion in the GPO sales program. GPO sets the price to cover printing, postage, and handling costs.

Resources in Spanish

Individuals can access FCIC's extensive Spanish federal information resources online at www.GobiernoUSA.gov and consumer information at www.pueblo.gsa.gov/spanish. These pages link the public to hundreds of federal Spanish-language websites. The *Consumer Action Handbook* is also available online in Spanish at www.consumidor.gov.

FCIC also coordinates an annual direct mail publication offer for Spanish-speaking individuals. FCIC acquires bulk quantities of publications in Spanish from federal agencies and cooperative partners and offers them to consumer protection and counseling organizations, childcare and health care providers, mental health clinics and social services centers in Hispanic communities across the country. There is a reduced distribution charge to agencies for participation in this targeted promotion.

In Summary

FCIC is a central source of federal and consumer information for the general public. Citizens can write, call, e-mail, or visit FCIC's websites to get the most up-to-date federal information to answer their questions. FCIC's toll-free National Contact Center acts as a single point of information about the federal government and its Pueblo address is known throughout the country. Together, these services make FCIC an excellent partner to deliver your agencies' information to the public.

For more information, contact Mary Levy, Director, Federal Agency Services, at (202) 501-1794, or by e-mail at mary.levy@gsa.gov.