



USA SERVICES

USA Services: Helping Government Help Citizens by Answering Telephone Inquiries

Partner Agency: GovBenefits.gov, a partnership of 10 federal agencies, including the U.S. Departments of Labor (Managing Partner), Agriculture, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, State, Veterans Affairs, and the Social Security Administration.

The Situation

GovBenefits.gov is a free and confidential website that enables citizens to determine their potential eligibility for more than 500 federal and state administered benefit programs. Since inception, the site has featured a “contact us” button that enabled citizens to email project staff to ask questions or request additional information. Although there was a dedicated staff person assigned to respond to the emails, project leadership anticipated that as citizens’ awareness of GovBenefits.gov increased, the number of inquiries received through the “contact us” option also would increase. There was a need to implement a streamlined process for addressing citizens’ inquiries to ensure that the project continued to respond to citizens in a timely manner. In addition, the project unveiled GovBenefits.gov En Español in April 2004 and needed to identify translators who could provide timely and accurate responses to inquiries received in Spanish.

How USA Services Helped:

In November 2003, GovBenefits.gov began its partnership with USA Services to streamline responsiveness to the hundreds of inquiries the site receives each month. Specifically, USA Services tracks inquiries received through the site’s “contact us” page and provides timely responses to citizens and other site visitors in both English and Spanish. USA Services agents are trained on the information available on GovBenefits.gov and are able to respond to general inquiries about the site, and refer citizens to GovBenefits.gov staff for inquiries that require more research or detailed information. USA Services also handles the misdirected inquiries by referring citizens to other on-line resources or agencies. Without USA Services, GovBenefits.gov would have to hire and train an on-site staff person(s), with English and Spanish language skills.

The Outcome:

USA Services is helping GovBenefits.gov provide timely responses to the high volume of citizen inquiries we receive. GovBenefits.gov is able to ensure that citizens receive the information they need by providing a mechanism to ask questions or request additional information. USA Services also helps the project by decreasing the time our staff must spend responding to inquiries. USA Services is playing an integral role in GovBenefits.gov meeting its mission to improve citizens’ access to information about government benefits.

“GovBenefits.gov is a free and confidential website that helps citizens determine their potential eligibility for more than 500 government benefit programs. USA Services helps us provide timely and helpful responses to the high volume of citizen inquiries we receive. They are playing an integral role in GovBenefits.gov meeting its mission to improve citizens’ access to information about government benefits.”

**— Denis Gusty, Program Manager
GovBenefits**

Contact: Stuart Willoughby, (202) 501- 9121, stuart.willoughby@gsa.gov