

# Department of Energy



# Customer Service Plan



## A Message from the Secretary



Over the past two and a half years, the Obama Administration and the Department of Energy have worked to make the federal government more open for the American public and its own employees. Through these efforts, we have significantly expanded the amount and breadth of information available online about our programs and services. We have also transformed the way we communicate with the public by relaunching Energy.gov, making it an interactive, streamlined information platform.

In April, President Obama directed federal agencies to take this ongoing effort one step further and establish Customer Service Plans, improving the public's interactions with the federal government. This plan lays out a foundation for enhancing customer service at the Department of Energy,

building upon our existing initiatives to enable us to be more transparent and more participatory.

While we've made steady progress, our work must continue. I invite you to read over the Department's Customer Service Plan and share your ideas with us on how we can improve. You can join the conversation at Facebook.com/energygov, on Twitter @Energy or send an email to [open@hq.doe.gov](mailto:open@hq.doe.gov).

Steven Chu  
U.S. Secretary of Energy



## Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) strives to ensure America's security and prosperity by addressing its energy, environmental, and nuclear challenges through transformative science and technology solutions. Through this work, the Department serves a range of internal and external customers including DOE's employee and contractor workforce, students, scientists and researchers, businesses and other branches of federal, state and local government, among many others. With this diverse audience in mind, the Department of Energy's Customer Service Plan focuses on improving customers' access to user-friendly, effective information and resources.

As required by Executive Order 13571, *Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service*, the Department will focus on four key service areas over the next year: implementation of the National Training and Education Resource as a next generation web-based learning platform; improvement of the Departmental Directives portal; development of EnerDat as a model to convey energy data; and website reform through the consolidation and reorganization of DOE websites. DOE's customer service initiatives will work to ensure that the Department's customers have timely access to accurate and effective information and services, which are provided in an efficient and courteous manner.

DOE will utilize open platforms and commercial standards, giving internal and external stakeholders better access to the resources they need while reducing costs and streamlining operations. . Securing feedback and support from key customer groups will allow program and support offices within the Department to better tailor their services to the needs of their customers and maximize efficiency while creating high quality products.

In this challenging fiscal environment, these initiatives largely build upon current programs and existing efforts to improve customer service. The new initiatives selected for the coming year have identified ways to secure the necessary resources for successful implementation. As we continue to enhance the Department's customer service initiatives, our plan will be updated to reflect those efforts.

<b>SIGNATURE INITIATIVE</b>
<p><b>Overview:</b> Building on the National Training &amp; Education Resource (NTER), an open platform developed by the DOE Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE), DOE will make educational and training materials available to the public through a new, one-stop resource. NTER will allow for more effective learning through highly interactive learning resources, crowdsourcing, and a streamlined delivery method. In addition it will serve the public through a powerful search technology that allows users to search disconnected and hard-to-find repositories of educational and training content.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> By the end of the December 2012 NTER will provide the first DOE-created courses to the public. Through the remainder of this year DOE will begin to locate and import existing education and training content to improve the offerings for the wide range of customers accessing the site.</p>
<b>SERVICE 1: IMPROVING THE USABILITY OF THE DEPARTMENTAL DIRECTIVES PORTAL</b> <i>Office of Management</i>
<p><b>Overview:</b> The Directives Portal stores, provides access to, and organizes Department of Energy directives. These documents outline the policies, requirements, and best practices to be used by federal and contractor personnel for the Department.</p> <p><b>Key Customer Groups:</b> Federal and contractor employees who manage requirements within DOE organizations.</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b> Users often find it difficult to understand the history and context of different requirements documents used by the Department of Energy. This effort seeks to improve usability while offering more complete context for documents within the Directives Portal.</p> <p><b>Featured Actions:</b> This effort will create a database that is easier to search, adopts commercial standards such as permalinks, and reduces processing time through software automation.</p>
<b>SERVICE 2: ESTABLISH ENERDAT TO IMPROVE THE MODEL USED FOR CONVEYING ENERGY DATA</b> <i>U.S. Energy Information Administration</i>
<p><b>Overview:</b> The Energy Information Administration (EIA) is working to deploy EnerDat as a new model for conveying reliable energy data on the agency’s website to promote sound policymaking, efficient markets, and public understanding of energy and its interaction with the economy and the environment. The initial focus will be on electricity data and on developing a product model with standard operating procedures that will be applied to other energy subjects for future implementation.</p> <p><b>Key Customer Groups:</b> Energy market participants and government policymakers.</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b> To enhance customer understanding of the electricity industry and markets with greater use of publicly available data and innovative display techniques, such as data visualization, interactive graphics, geographic display of information, and downloadable mobile applications.</p> <p><b>Featured Actions:</b> Redesign the electricity pages of EIA.gov to provide new ways for customers to access and interact with the information. This involves standardizing and automating how data is gathered and managed.</p>
<b>SERVICE 3: WEBSITE REFORM</b> <i>Office of Public Affairs</i>
<p><b>Overview:</b> Website reform is part of the Department of Energy’s efforts to achieve Management and Operational Excellence, as mentioned in the DOE 2011 Strategic Plan. Through website reform, the Department will streamline web operations to reduce duplicative and wasteful spending while also improving overall web and digital communications.</p> <p><b>Key Customer Groups:</b> Consumers and businesses.</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b> To consolidate existing fragmented website structures into a single more efficient and cost-effective platform. This will require cooperating between several offices and a comprehensive effort from each</p>

participating office to prepare information and documents for migration into the new content management system.

**Featured Actions:** Reduce, consolidate, and/or move 40% of DOE websites to the Energy.gov platform by winter 2012.

## SIGNATURE INITIATIVE

**Overview:** Building on the National Training & Education Resource (NTER), an open platform developed by the DOE Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE), DOE will make educational and training materials available to the public through a new, one-stop resource. NTER will allow for more effective learning through highly interactive learning resources, crowdsourcing, and a streamlined delivery method. In addition it will serve the public through a powerful search technology that allows users to search disconnected and hard-to-find repositories of educational and training content.

### **Overview**

The DOE Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) created a web-based next-generation learning platform, used to train and certify a new green economy workforce, as part of their mission to “strengthen America’s energy security, environmental quality and economic vitality”.

The open source National Training and Education Resource (NTER), now in beta, offers a sub-internet and search engine for education and training. NTER also offers easy-to-use tools to enhance or augment training and workforce development conducted across the country. A number of agencies, community colleges, technical training institutes and graduate schools are using NTER to provide training, share courses and offer portable certifications to a wide range of customers.

The multi-media, interactive, self-paced training modules can help educate a wide range of audiences, from elementary school students to prospective employees finishing community college or graduate school. While NTER is not intended to replace the need for formal, hands-on training or instructor-led classes, instructors and teachers can use the content in their classroom settings.

As additional courses and educational materials are created from various projects and mission activities they can be added to the NTER system. This will enable the public to access an ever-growing range of science, technology, engineering and math educational content, and vetted technical training curricula to help prepare for energy careers.

### **Impact and Benefits**

As an open source solution, NTER will expand the Department’s delivery of efficient and effective information and resources. DOE’s NTER permits agencies to utilize a shared investment and leverage the development of shared courses.

Executive Order 13571 calls on agencies to identify ways to use innovative technologies to accomplish their customer service activities. An integrated learning environment supports the federal vision for growing our economy and creating jobs, which depends on workers’ ability to maintain skills and competitiveness in a globally interconnected economy, and enables enhanced customer service opportunities.

### **Key Milestones and Timeline**

1. Q4 2011 NTER has launched at [www.nerlearning.org](http://www.nerlearning.org) as a public beta system. Users are welcome to come to the system and take existing courses, though selection will be limited at this time.
2. Q2 2012 NTER will be released as a finished product (v1.0).



**SERVICE #1: IMPROVING THE USABILITY OF THE DEPARTMENTAL DIRECTIVES PORTAL**  
*Office of Management*

**Overview:** The Directives Portal stores, provides access to, and organizes Department of Energy directives. These documents outline the policies, requirements, and best practices to be used by federal and contractor personnel for the Department.

**Key Customer Groups:** Federal and contractor employees who manage requirements within DOE organizations.

**Challenges:** Users often find it difficult to understand the history and context of different requirements documents used by the Department of Energy. This effort seeks to improve usability while offering more complete context for documents within the directives portal.

**1. Increase Feedback from Customers**

- Conduct a survey of key customers to assess the usability and areas of improvement for features within the current website. (*September 2011*)
- Run a sandbox/test version of the new portal for research and feedback from the most frequent users of the directives portal. (*November 2011*)
- Adding a contact form in a highly visible section of the portal to ensure comments, feedback, and questions can be received and processed more quickly. (*December 2012*)

**2. Adopt Best Practices for Improving Customer Experience**

- By merging two separate databases for current and archived directives, the portal will prevent future broken links using a standard similar to the Government Printing Office. (*March 2012*)
- An updated notification/RSS feed system will allow customized notifications for individual users. Users will be able to select the types of information they receive and how often the digest is distributed. (*December 2012*)
- The database will be organized through field tags rather than categories. This allows a deeper level of customization in the display and search capabilities. This upgraded organizational capability will be possible with the new site. (*December 2012*)

**3. Set, Communicate, and Use Customer Service Metrics and Standards**

- Using a contact form built into the portal support emails will automatically generate emails to the contractor and the Contracting Officer's Representative. This will assist the contractor in meeting their goal of responding to support requests within two business days. (*December 2012*)
- The use of field tags connected to directives will allow many features of the website, such as related documents, review dates, and expiration dates will be auto-generated. The posting time of final directives will be reduced from 2 business days to one business day. (*December 2012*)

**4. Streamline Agency Processes to Reduce Costs and Accelerate Delivery**

- The merging of active and archived databases will eliminate the time it takes to move directives from active to inactive status. The new portal will automatically re-label the directive once a superseding document is posted. (*December 2012*)

- Crosslinking documents and references will allow documents to be stored within a central database, reducing the space needed on the portal's server. (*December 2012*)
- The new field tags for directives will allow them to be displayed in an interactive table format rather than a static list. This table will be sortable by each column with the ability to update the columns shown at any time. This will be completed with the new website. (*December 2012*)

**SERVICE #2: DEVELOPMENT OF ENERDAT AS A MODEL TO CONVEY ENERGY DATA**

*U.S. Energy Information Administration*

**Overview:** The Energy Information Administration (EIA) is working to deploy EnerDat as a new model for conveying reliable energy data on the agency's website to promote sound policymaking, efficient markets, and public understanding of energy and its interaction with the economy and the environment. The initial focus will be on electricity data and on developing a product model with standard operating procedures that will be applied to other energy subjects for future implementation.

**Key Customer Groups:** Energy market participants and government policymakers.

**Challenges:** To enhance customer understanding of the electricity industry and markets with greater use of publicly available data and innovative display techniques, such as data visualization, interactive graphics, geographic display of information, and downloadable mobile applications.

**1. Increase Feedback from Customers**

- Research and utilize existing data sources for recommendations regarding automation and product design. *(September-December, 2011)*
- Identify and target the needs of EIA's electricity data product customers through research surveys. *(September-December, 2011)*

**2. Adopt Best Practices for Improving Customer Experience**

- Develop an effective, flexible product design, based on customer research and engagement and consistent with EIA's overall web presence. *(October 2011 – February 2012)*
- Make greater use of data delivery approaches not systematically supported in EIA data products, including data visualization, interactive graphics, geographic display of information, and downloadable mobile applications. This includes publishing an electricity data API to make EIA data available to third party developers. *(October 2011 – February 2012)*

**3. Set, Communicate, and Use Customer Service Metrics and Standards**

- Launch a "beta" site for customer testing and solicit feedback to ensure a site that provides useful and current information for better informed decisions by energy market participants and government policymakers. *(March 2012)*

**4. Streamline Agency Processes to Reduce Costs and Accelerate Delivery**

- Automate information presentation and manage development and automation costs using commercial, off-the-shelf software and internet-based data storage (cloud services). *(October 2011 – February 2012)*
- Organize and store data collected by EIA through its surveys and other available data sources to make it available to support automation in product design. *(October 2011 – February 2012)*

**SERVICE #3: WEBSITE REFORM**  
*Office of Public Affairs*

**Overview:** Website Reform is part of the Department of Energy’s (DOE) efforts to achieve Management and Operational Excellence, as mentioned in the DOE 2011 Strategic Plan. Through website reform, the Department will streamline web operations to reduce duplicative and wasteful spending while also improving overall web and digital communications.

**Key Customer Groups:** Consumers and businesses.

**Challenges:** The changing media environment and rapid expansion of high-speed Internet access over the past few years have fundamentally changed the ways that members of the public and businesses consume information. This creates new opportunities for the Department of Energy to more effectively communicate and increase transparency. As we modernize the Department’s approach to digital communications, we will also realize significant opportunities to save money for taxpayers. Historically, the Department’s website and digital communication efforts have been almost entirely decentralized. Our program offices each have maintained their own distinct websites. Not only do these have a different “look and feel,” but also in many cases have a different underlying infrastructure to support their individual websites – paying for software (a Content Management System, or CMS) as well as hardware (buying and maintaining computer servers to host the websites). Offices also employ a wide range of contractors to maintain and update their websites that modern technologies could eliminate. The result is a fragmented and confusing user experience for consumers and businesses making it hard for these key audiences to find the information and services they are seeking – at an unwarranted high cost for the government and taxpayers.

**1. Increase Feedback from Customers**

- Through an improved Energy.gov, consumers and businesses will be able to engage in real time events using live video chats, social media and email. This real time engagement will allow the Department to better connect consumers and businesses with principals and subject matter experts on key issue areas. Consumers and businesses will also be able to suggest live engagement events of most importance to them through Energy.gov and its related social media channels. *(August 2011)*
- The Department’s New Media Office will conduct several usability studies of Energy.gov with consumer and business audiences to improve the delivery of information and services with those key customers. These usability studies will be used to further develop Energy.gov to serve its primary audiences. *(May 2011 and December 2011)*

**2. Adopt Best Practices for Improving Customer Experience**

- Moving all public-facing DOE Headquarters websites to a one-platform solution via Energy.gov to make it easier for consumers and businesses to find Department of Energy information in one place. *(40% by Winter 2012)*
- Improving the local search functionality on Energy.gov to enable consumers and business to find departmental information and services most relevant to them. *(August 2011)*

### 3. Set, Communicate, and Use Customer Service Metrics and Standards

- Regularly seeking and answering customer feedback via email, online forms and social networks. (*ongoing*)
- Monitoring web analytics to identify peak traffic times and providing additional information and services during those peak times. (*July 2011 and ongoing*)

### 4. Streamline Agency Processes to Reduce Costs and Accelerate Delivery

In order to eliminate wasteful spending and better respond to the growing digital communications demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, website reform will create a centralized online platform, via Energy.gov, to provide consumers and business audiences with clear, consistent and reliable information and services wherever and whenever they want it, while also empowering Department of Energy employees with simple tools and straightforward guidance to communicate and interact with those audiences and each other. Website reform achieves this by moving all public-facing Headquarter DOE websites to one platform. This includes two integral kinds of improvements:

#### 1. “Front End” changes you can see:

In August 2011, a brighter, less cluttered, more strategic Energy.gov was launched making it much easier for public audiences to find the information and services they are seeking. Additional improvements to usability are ongoing as we continue to seek and respond to feedback from stakeholders.

#### 2. “Back End” infrastructure changes you can’t see:

##### a. Open Source Content Management System

In August 2011, Energy.gov was moved into an open source content management system called “Drupal,” which has no monthly licensing fees and is vastly more sophisticated, flexible and user friendly than Energy.gov’s previous out-dated, proprietary CMS. Non-technical staff members can easily learn how to post content and photos or make other routine updates to their websites using the new Drupal CMS. Further, the new Drupal CMS with its sophisticated tagging system will automatically curate web content into relevant web pages exponentially increasing the exposure of web content.

##### b. Cloud Hosting

In support of the [OMB 25-point plan](#), Energy.gov was identified as one of the Energy Department’s Cloud First initiatives, and hosting of the Energy.gov infrastructure was moved to the Cloud in August 2011. The Cloud provides the high-availability, scalability and service required for a cabinet-level Department website, and does so at a cheaper cost than internal hosting options.

The Energy Department’s New Media Office is approaching the website reform initiative in three main phases:

- **Phase One (completed August 2011):** Rebuild the front and back-end infrastructure of Energy.gov to make it a top-of-the-line, leading government website. Include the dozen or so

program office websites that are wholly dependent upon the current, archaic infrastructure in this upgrade:

- Recovery Act
  - Open Gov
  - Office of the Chief Information Officer
  - Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs
  - Office of Economic Impact and Diversity
  - Office of Electricity Deliverability and Energy Reliability
  - Office of the General Counsel
  - Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance
  - Office of the Inspector General
  - Office of Management
  - Office of Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs
  - EnergyEmpowers.gov, etc.
- **Phase Two (expected completion winter 2012):** Migrate program office sites that use the ‘old’ Energy.gov ‘look and feel’ but have their own back-end infrastructure into the new infrastructure. This includes offices such as:
    - Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, including EnergySavers.gov
    - Office of Environmental Management
    - Office of Fossil Energy
    - Office of Nuclear Energy
    - Office of Health, Safety and Security
    - Office of the Chief Financial Officer, etc.
  - **Phase Three (expected completion fall 2012):** Work with remaining program offices that have their own various ‘look and feels’, technology systems, etc. to migrate their sites to the extent possible into the new infrastructure. This includes offices such as:
    - Office of Science
    - ARPA-E
    - Loans Program Office
    - Office of Legacy Management, etc.

These improvements are estimated to save the Department of Energy more than \$10 million within a year.