# FEDERAL SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND CITIZEN SATISFACTION UPDATE

## FORESEE ACSI E-GOVERNMENT SATISFACTION INDEX (Q3) 2011

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**FORESEE** ®

## HOW MANY OF THE 15 CABINET-LEVEL AGENCIES COMPLY WITH SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES?

**15** have a presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube

**12** label social media icons with a call to action like "connect with us"

**12** use YouTube playlists

**10** use Twitter "lists"

**7** link to an official social media policy

**4** use Twitter "favorites"

**4** post Facebook comment policy

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This quarter's report on the ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index has three parts:

> **Part 1 (page 3):** A special report on social media in the e-government world including an audit of what the 15 executive-level departments are doing and best practices for agencies and departments of all sizes and levels of government.

> **Part 2 (page 14):** A quarterly update on citizen satisfaction with e-government at the aggregate level, including individual satisfaction scores for the 100 federal government sites participating in the Index.

> **Part 3 (page 21):** A quarterly update on how citizens rate the transparency of 36 federal sites participating in the Online Transparency Index.

## PART ONE: THE STATE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Social media continues its exponential growth as people find new ways to connect with each other online, on mobile phones, and on tablets. The private sector has led the way in social media innovation, but the public sector has also embraced it as a critical channel with which to communicate with constituents. Citizen participation in government was one of the key goals of President Obama's Open Government Initiative, and social media provides an excellent, informal way for citizens and their government to share back and forth.

ForeSee conducts research and analysis on social media platforms and marketing campaigns for organizations in both the public and private sector. It is possible to measure and analyze citizen satisfaction with an agency's Facebook or Twitter presence; it's also possible to analyze the quality of traffic that social media sites drive to the website in order to determine where further investments should be made. Usability analysts at ForeSee have also spent the past few months looking at how 15 of the cabinet-level executive departments (see chart on previous page) are using social media to connect with citizens and how they are promoting their involvement in social media on their main departmental websites.

In order to develop best practices that can be used across all government sites, regardless of size, ForeSee conducted an expert usability review of the 15 executive department websites in order to:

> Gauge how many participate in social media and how they do so;

> Uncover any trends in how they promote social media interaction from their main department home pages;

> Examine their profiles on social platforms to see how they are making use of them.

Several clear themes and best practices emerged from the research that should serve as useful guidance for federal, state, and local government websites.
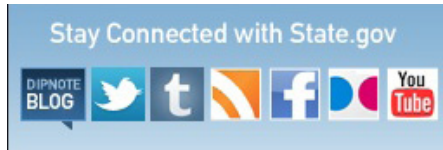
## SOCIAL MEDIA PARTICIPATION

All 15 executive departments are participating in the three most popular social platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube). Many are using other new media and communication tools, as well, and often group all subscription, new media and social media links together in one place. For example, links to Flickr, email newsletters or alerts, blogs, RSS feeds, podcasts, videos, webcasts, widgets, and mobile platforms often appear with Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube links, all in the same area of the website.  These links provide citizens with easy access to useful and often cost-effective interactive resources located in a convenient central starting point.

**Best Practice:** Group the same set of social media links and/or links to new media and communication tools together on every page of the site. Presenting these links together consistently will help visitors identify them more easily as alternate ways to interact with the agency or department (11 of 15 agencies do this).

## LABELING AND MESSAGING

All executive agencies except for the Department of Energy have links to social media platforms on their websites with icons (for example, the blue and white, square "f" for Facebook). Some sites also provide a supplementary text label to clarify which platform i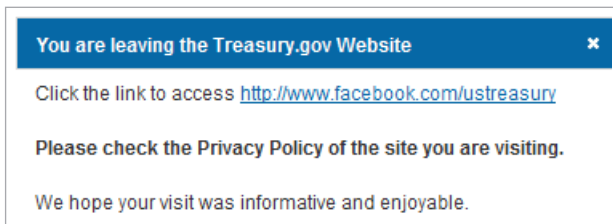s identified by the icon. All but three departments (Homeland Security, Treasury, and Interior) label their social media links with a call to action like *Stay Connected* or *Connect with Us.*

**Best Practices:**

> Use conventional icons for common social platform is critical so visitors can easily recognize them (14 of 15 agencies do this).

> Label social media links with a clear call to action such as (*Stay Connected, Connect with Us*, etc.) helps visitors understand that clicking on these links is a way to interact with the organization (12 of 15 agencies do this).

## LINK APPEARANCE AND BEHAVIOR

Approximately one-half of the sites provide some sort of disclaimer indicating visitors will be visiting a site outside of the domain of the department when they click on a social media icon or widget. In addition, only one-third of e-government websites open social media sites in a new browser window when visitors click on these links; the others simply redirect the user to the social platform in the same tab, ending the experience with the federal website itself.

**Best Practices:**

> Organizations with an official privacy policy or policy governing their use of social media should provide a disclaimer letting visitors know they are moving offsite once they click on a social network link; alternatively, links to these policies can appear on the organization's profile page on the social network (8 agencies do this).

> Opening social media sites in a new browser window ensures visitors maintain access to the main organization website while browsing content on social networks. This also eliminates their need to use the back button to return to the organization's website (5 agencies do this).

## AGGREGATE SOCIAL MEDIA PAGE

Almost half of the 15 departments have more than one presence on a single social media platform. These presences might reflect specific campaigns, related officials, or serve as information sources for special segments such as job seekers or those interested in a specific topic addressed by that department. As a result, many have created an aggregate social media page listing all of their presences or accounts  on each platform. The presentation style of these pages varies; some merely list all of the associated accounts, while others include the conventional platform icon as well as a description of the information provided through each presence.

Another common departmental use for these pages is to let visitors know why and how they are using social media and set expectations around visitor privacy or appropriate interaction on these platforms.

**Best Practices:**

> Organizations that have a number of presences on one or more social platforms should create an aggregate social media page that lists all of the options with which citizens can interact with them via social media (9 agencies do this).

> A link to this page should be available in the global navigation (the highest-level, persistent navigation available on every page, usually at the top or on the left) and/or linked with social media links on each page of the department's site (4 agencies do this).

> Aggregate social media pages should list the name of each profile or presence, the conventional icon for the platform, and provide a brief description of the type of information visitors can expect from the source (2 agencies do this).

> Organizations with social media policies should link to these policies from the aggregate social media page, in order to ensure transparency while providing opportunities for participation (7 agencies do this).

OVERVIEW
**Social Media**

**Twitter**

- USEDGov
- Arne Duncan
- EDGovJobs
- TEACH Campaign
- EDPressSec
- ED_Outreach
- FreeResources
- EDPartners
- Office of Ed Tech
- White House AAPI
- EDCivilRights

**Facebook Pages**

- ED.gov
- Secretary Arne Duncan
- College.gov
- TEACH Campaign
- ED Green Ribbon Schools
- EDPartners
- Presidential Scholars Program
- White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics
- EDCivilRights
- View comment policy.
- Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA)

**YouTube**

- USEDGov
- TEACH Campaign
- College.gov
- FederalStudentAid

# SOCIAL NETWORK BOOKMARKING FUNCTIONALITY, PLUGINS, WIDGETS, AND INTEGRATED SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

For the most part, social network bookmarking functionality, social plugins, and widgets have yet to penetrate these department sites. One-third of the 15 executive department sites provide some form of social network bookmarking functionality which allows visitors to easily share content from the site with their own social networks. In addition, one-third of the studied websites are using some form of platform-provided social plugin, widget, or have otherwise integrated social media content such as Tweets or Facebook posts into their website.

**Best Practices:**

> It may not make sense for every organization to provide social networking bookmarking functionality or other plugins and widgets; however, those who choose to use these tools should make sure they reflect the social networks that are the most popular with their visitors. For example, if visitors to the site are mostly on Facebook and not Twitter, it is best to provide functionality reflecting your work on that platform (6 agencies do this).

> There are many widgets and buttons that claim to work "out of the box". Reading all provided documentation and configuring both the functionality and format of messages to meet the needs of your organization is key to implementing these tools effectively (3 agencies do this).

## TWITTER PROFILES

All 15 departments have customized their Twitter profiles. This might include changing the color of the standard Twitter background or adding images and text to the background. Only one profile lacks the Verified Account trustmark provided by Twitter to let visitors know that they are legitimate accounts belonging to the entity they claim to represent. Two-thirds of the profiles use the word "official" in their Bio and about half use some form of their official name or acronym in their handle to make them easier to identify. Interestingly, while creating Twitter lists is fairly common, with about two-thirds of departments with profiles participating, only four have Favorited a Tweet which shows that a lot more can be done with federal Twitter presences.

**Best Practices:**

> Organizations should use their official logos and customize their profiles to reflect the departmental color scheme, where applicable (all 15 agencies do this).

> Organizations and official personnel should seek a Verified Account trustmark so visitors can be certain that these Twitter accounts are legitimate (14 of 15 agencies do this).

> Using the "Bio" field in Twitter to describe the organization's mission or goals in using the platform can also help to reassure visitors that accounts are legitimate (all 15 agencies do this).

> Organizations should use "Twitter Lists" to create a collection of all related agencies or entities. This step helps visitors to identify other accounts of interest (10 agencies do this).

> Using the "Favorites" feature to highlight content can help visitors connect with popular or important content. It can also serve as a repository of commonly-accessed information, such as tweets with links to news or other regular pieces published by the organization (4 agencies do this).

## YOUTUBE PROFILES

All 15 departments have presences on YouTube and have customized their YouTube Channels through the use of a departmental color scheme and/or custom images displayed in the background. All but three of the departments have used the standard Playlists feature on YouTube to organize videos thematically.  Channel names range from acronyms to formal names and derivations of formal names.

**Best Practices:**

> Organizations should use their official logos and customize their profiles to reflect the appropriate color scheme whenever possible (all 15 agencies do this).

> Using playlists to organize videos thematically will help visitors to locate content of interest more easily. For example, all videos of the same type of content such as official speeches or press briefings can be grouped together so that visitors seeking this content do not have to search for these videos manually (12 agencies do this).

> Organizations should use some form of their official department names in their channel names (all 15 agencies do this).

## FACEBOOK PROFILES

All 15 departments have a Facebook presence and are using at least one standard Facebook Application such as Notes, Discussions, Photos, Links, Events, or Videos. All but four presences have custom pages or third-party tools such as integrated YouTube or Flickr applications. The custom pages are devoted to topics such as Comments, Policies, and Welcome Statements, as well as content to which departments want to draw visitors' attention. In terms of the naming conventions for this platform, all pages have a vanity URL. In addition, the official name for each presence reflects the proper name of each department or the elected official leading the department.

**Best Practices:**

> Organizations should only use applications on their Facebook presences if they will be maintained on an ongoing basis. Standard applications should be turned off if they do not have content associated with them in order to avoid frustrating visitors and providing an unsatisfying experience (11 of 15 agencies do this).

> Organizations should use a separate tab on the profile page for comment policies (policies governing the use, editing, deletion, etc. of comments on federal Facebook pages) if they are too long to fit within a standard field or are more than two paragraphs in length, so that only those who are interested in the information need to view it (4 agencies do this).

> Vanity URLs should reflect the official name of each department or the official leading it (all 15 agencies do this).

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

In any industry, we can learn a lot from what the largest players are doing. In the case of e-government, a thorough audit of the social media practices of the 15 executive departments' usage of social media provides guidance when combined with best practices learned from the private sector.

1. **It is critical to understand social media preferences among site visitors.** Visitors to one agency's site may prefer to interact with that agency on Facebook and appreciate extensive Flickr albums; visitors to another site may not. Not every agency needs a strong presence on every social media channel. Government agencies should also take pains to evaluate how successful their social media activities are by two measures: 1) how satisfied citizens are with social media content and options and 2) how much social media is influencing citizen behaviors (i.e. is it driving them to the website, making them more likely to comment on a rulemaking or write their congressperson, making them more or less likely to visit a regional office, etc.)

2. **Next, agencies should create an inventory of all of their presences on each platform.** This will help all website stakeholders to understand which platforms need to be promoted on the website and determine what opportunities exist (if any) to integrate content from these platforms into the site.

3. **Once a complete listing of all presences has been created, agencies should include a link to each platform in which they participate on each page of the site.** This is critical as visitors can arrive at site pages from many sources. While some will travel linearly through the homepage, others will find site pages through search engines, links on other sites, or links within emails and social media messages. In addition, organizations with multiple accounts on one or more social networks should also create an aggregate social media page and link to it through the global navigation and/or alongside social media links.

4. **Next, agencies should consider providing social network bookmarking functionality so visitors can easily share site content with their social networks.** This practice includes providing widgets such as the Facebook "Like" and the Twitter "Tweet This." New widgets are released all the time, so it is best to monitor which sites are most often used by website visitors in order to provide sharing options that cater to the most popular social platforms.

5. Agencies should also evaluate their profile pages on each platform to ensure each page looks credible to visitors. For example, the official logo of the organization should be used on all platforms and the official name should be used for all user names or handles.  In addition, the correct use of profile fields and functionalities can bolster the credibility of government profile pages. For example, all platforms have standard fields such as an "About" field that can be used to state the organization's mission. In terms of functionalities, Facebook applications that are not being used should be turned off so that visitors know there is no content in these areas. On Twitter, organizations can group related entities in lists so followers can see all official personnel or officials affiliated with them. These are just a few examples of how platforms can be modified to meet the needs of the government. Reading platform documentation to learn more about profile fields and functionalities is critical to ensuring social media work is done correctly.

## PART TWO: SATISFACTION WITH E-GOVERNMENT REMAINS STRONG

The ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index is one of the most comprehensive and representative reflections of the citizen experience with federal government websites and serves a critical checkpoint for evaluating the success of government's online initiatives. More than 270,000 surveys were collected for the Index in the third quarter of 2011 alone, and ForeSee has collected more than 880,000 citizen surveys about experiences on federal websites so far this year. Citizens are willing and able to provide feedback to government websites, and many agencies and departments are using that feedback and the methodology of the American Customer Satisfaction Index to determine which site improvements will have the greatest impact on usage, recommendations, and channel loyalty.

Citizen satisfaction, at 75 or higher since late 2009 (with only one exception in the second quarter of 2010, when satisfaction fell briefly to 74.7), shows no sign of waning and maintains an aggregate score of 75.5 in the third quarter of 2011.

Federal websites that are successfully meeting their users' needs should be proud of their achievements, while simultaneously looking for new ways to improve. Unlike the corporate sector, government agencies need to maintain the highest online standards not because their bottom line is at stake (though there are definite cost-savings associated with having a website with high satisfaction scores), but also because they have an obligation and a responsibility to the citizenry.

### E-Government Satisfaction

| Aggregate Scores | Satisfaction |
|---|---|
| Q3 2011 | 75.5 |
| Q2 2011 | 75.5 |
| Q1 2011 | 75.0 |
| Q4 2010 | 75.0 |
| Q3 2010 | 75.3 |
| Q2 2010 | 74.7 |
| Q1 2010 | 75.1 |
| Q4 2009 | 75.2 |
| Q3 2009 | 75.2 |
| Q2 2009 | 73.6 |
| Q1 2009 | 73.6 |
| Q4 2008 | 74.1 |
| Q3 2008 | 73.9 |
| Q2 2008 | 72.9 |
| Q1 2008 | 72.4 |
| Q4 2007 | 72.9 |
| Q3 2007 | 73.3 |
| Q2 2007 | 73.7 |
| Q1 2007 | 73.4 |
| Q4 2006 | 73.9 |
| Q3 2006 | 73.7 |
| Q2 2006 | 74.0 |
| Q1 2006 | 73.5 |
| Q4 2005 | 73.9 |
| Q3 2005 | 73.5 |
| Q2 2005 | 72.6 |
| Q1 2005 | 71.9 |
| Q4 2004 | 72.1 |
| Q3 2004 | 71.2 |
| Q2 2004 | 70.3 |
| Q1 2004 | 70.9 |
| Q4 2003 | 69.1 |
| Q3 2003 | 70.9 |

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# INDIVIDUAL AGENCY/DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM SATISFACTION SCORES

**Q3 ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index: Scores by Category**

| | E-Commerce/Transaction Federal Websites | |
|---|---|---|
| **Dept.** | **Website** | **Satisfaction: Q3, 2011** |
| SSA | SSA iClaim -- socialsecurity.gov/applyonline | 90 |
| SSA | SSA Retirement Estimator -- ssa.gov/estimator | 90 |
| SSA | Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs -- socialsecurity.gov/i1020 | 89 |
| SSA | Social Security Business Services Online -- ssa.gov/bso/bsowelcome.htm | 84 |
| SSA | Social Security Internet Disability Report -- ssa.gov/applyfordisability | 83 |
| PBGC | MyPBA -- https://egov.pbgc.gov/mypba | 83 |
| Treasury | Online Catalog -- catalog.usmint.gov | 82 |
| HHS | SAMHSA Store -- store.samhsa.gov | 81 |
| PBGC | MyPAA -- https://egov.pbgc.gov/mypaa | 76 |
| USDA | Recreation One-Stop -- recreation.gov | 75 |
| GSA | GSA Auctions -- gsaauctions.gov | 71 |
| GSA | Official Site to Buy U.S. Government Property -- govsales.gov | 71 |
| GSA | General Services Administration GSAXcess -- gsaxcess.gov | 63 |
| Treasury | TreasuryDirect -- treasurydirect.gov | 63 |
| | Information/News Federal Websites | |
| **Dept.** | **Website** | **Satisfaction: Q3, 2011** |
| HHS | National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC) main website -- 4woman.gov | 89 |
| DHS | U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Resource Center -- uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/citizenship | 87 |
| HHS | MedlinePlus en español -- medlineplus.gov/esp | 87 |
| HHS | MedlinePlus -- medlineplus.gov | 86 |
| DHS | Federal Emergency Management Agency Ready Campaign -- ready.gov | 85 |
| HHS | HHS Healthy People -- healthypeople.gov | 84 |
| HHS | National Cancer Institute Site en Español --  cancer.gov/espanol | 83 |
| HHS | AHRQ Health Care Innovations Exchange -- innovations.ahrq.gov | 82 |
| DOJ | NIJ main website -- ojp.gov/nij | 82 |
| DOC | National Geodetic Society, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration website -- ngs.noaa.gov | 82 |
| DOD | DoD Navy -- navy.mil | 82 |
| DOC | National Ocean Service website -- oceanservice.noaa.gov | 81 |
| HHS | NIDDK -- www2.niddk.nih.gov | 81 |

| Information/News Federal Websites (continued) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Dept.** | **Website** | **Satisfaction: Q3, 2011** |
| FTC | FTC OnGuardOnline -- onguardonline.gov | 80 |
| HHS | Girls Health -- girlshealth.gov | 80 |
| DHS | U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services -- uscis.gov/e-verify | 80 |
| HHS | National Institute of Child Health and Human Development -- nichd.nih.gov | 80 |
| DOD | Pentagon Channel -- pentagonchannel.mil | 80 |
| HHS | AHRQ Effective Health Care Program  -- effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov | 79 |
| DOD | DoD Air Force -- af.mil | 79 |
| HHS | National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases -- www3.niaid.nih.gov | 78 |
| DOS | U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs alumni website -- https://alumni.state.gov | 78 |
| DOS | Bureau of Consular Affairs -- travel.state.gov | 77 |
| HHS | Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality -- ahrq.gov | 77 |
| DOS | Department of State blog website -- blogs.state.gov | 76 |
| HHS | Health Resources and Services Administration main website -- hrsa.gov | 75 |
| DOT | Federal Aviation Administration -- faa.gov | 75 |
| DOL | Bureau of Labor Statistics -- bls.gov | 75 |
| DOJ | Office of Community Oriented Policing Services -- cops.usdoj.gov | 74 |
| NRC | U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission website -- nrc.gov | 74 |
| HHS | HHS National Health Information Center -- healthfinder.gov | 74 |
| DOD | DoD Marine Corps -- marines.mil | 74 |
| HHS | AHRQ CAHPS -- cahps.ahrq.gov | 73 |
| HHS | National Library of Medicine Clinical Trials website -- nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/clinicaltrials.html | 73 |
| HHS | AHRQ HealthIT -- healthit.ahrq.gov | 72 |
| USDA | ERS main website -- ers.usda.gov | 72 |
| USDA | FSIS main website -- fsis.usda.gov | 70 |
| USDA | FAS main website -- fas.usda.gov | 70 |
| FDIC | FDIC Applications -- www2.fdic.gov | 70 |
| DOC | BEA main website -- bea.gov | 69 |
| DOT | DOT Research and Innovative Technology Administration website -- rita.dot.gov | 68 |
| DOD | Military Health System main website -- health.mil | 67 |
| SSA | Social Security Online:  Frequently Asked Questions -- ssa-custhelp.ssa.gov | 67 |
| DOD | TRICARE -- tricare.mil | 66 |
| Treasury | USTTB website -- ttb.gov | 66 |
| DOI | U.S. Geological Survey -- usgs.gov | 66 |

| | Information/News Federal Websites (continued) | |
|---|---|---|
| **Dept.** | **Website** | **Satisfaction: Q3, 2011** |
| USDA | Forest Service Website -- fs.usda.gov | 61 |
| HHS | HHS -- grants.gov | 59 |
| NARA | NARA AAD - Access to Archival Databases -- archives.gov/aad/index.html | 57 |
| USDA | NRCS website -- nrcs.usda.gov | 53 |
| | **Portal/Department Main Websites** | |
| **Dept.** | **Website** | **Satisfaction: Q3, 2011** |
| DHS | U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Español  -- uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis-es | 85 |
| GSA | GobiernoUSA.gov website -- gobiernousa.gov | 84 |
| NASA | NASA main website -- nasa.gov | 83 |
| HHS | NIAMS public website -- niams.nih.gov | 82 |
| HHS | CDC main website -- cdc.gov | 82 |
| HHS | National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research -- nidcr.nih.gov | 82 |
| HHS | National Cancer Institute main website -- cancer.gov | 82 |
| DHS | U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services -- uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis | 81 |
| DOI | National Park Service main website -- nps.gov | 81 |
| DOJ | FBI main website -- fbi.gov | 80 |
| DOD | Department of Defense portal -- defense.gov | 78 |
| HHS | National Library of Medicine main website -- nlm.nih.gov | 77 |
| GAO | GAO main public website -- gao.gov | 75 |
| FDIC | FDIC main website -- fdic.gov | 74 |
| DOS | Department of State main website -- state.gov | 74 |
| NIST | National Institute for Standards and Technology main website -- nist.gov | 74 |
| GSA | GSA main website -- gsa.gov | 74 |
| PBGC | U.S. PBGC main website -- pbgc.gov | 72 |
| NARA | NARA main public website -- archives.gov | 72 |
| SBA | SBA main website -- sba.gov | 72 |
| DHS | Department of Homeland Security main website -- dhs.gov | 71 |
| SSA | Social Security Online (main website) -- socialsecurity.gov | 71 |
| VA | VA Main website -- va.gov and myhealthva.gov | 70 |
| GSA | USAGov website -- usa.gov | 70 |
| HHS | SAMHSA website -- samhsa.gov | 70 |
| ITC | U.S. International Trade Commission main website -- usitc.gov | 69 |
| Treasury | IRS main website -- irs.gov | 69 |

| Portal/Department Main Websites (continued) | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Dept. | Website | Satisfaction: Q3, 2011 |
| EPA | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency -- epa.gov | 68 |
| HHS | U.S. Food and Drug Administration main website -- fda.gov | 66 |
| DOL | Disability -- Disability.gov | 64 |
| Treasury | Treasury main website -- treasury.gov | 62 |
| Recruitment/Career Websites | | |
| Dept. | Website | Satisfaction: Q3, 2011 |
| DOS | Recruitment website -- careers.state.gov | 81 |
| CIA | Recruitment website -- cia.gov/careers | 81 |
| DOL | Department of Labor Job Listings -- doors.dol.gov | 79 |
| OPM | Recruitment website -- usajobs.opm.gov | 74 |
| OPM | OPM Veterans Employment website -- fedshirevets.gov | 69 |

# WHY SATISFACTION MATTERS

What good is high satisfaction unless it has a proven impact on citizens' loyalty and future actions? User satisfaction, as measured using the ACSI methodology, is proven to have a direct impact on behavior. If federal government agencies focus on improving their websites' priority areas, citizen satisfaction with the sites will also improve. **Citizens who are highly satisfied with a federal government website rate their trust in the agency 59% higher and report being 51% more likely to participate in government by expressing their thoughts to the agency than citizens who are less satisfied.**

| Highly satisfied citizens (scores of 80+) report being… | | Direct Benefit |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **51%** | more likely to participate with the government entity in the future. | Citizens are more likely to participate with and express their thoughts to their government, which strengthens the democratic process. (A few sites also measure likelihood to participate with the government entity online. Highly satisfied citizens rate their likelihood to do so 68% higher for these sites). |
| **59%** | higher ratings of trust in the government entity being measured. | Citizens believe the agency is trustworthy and acting in their best interests, which fosters faith in the democratic process. |

Satisfaction also increases the likelihood that the citizen will return to the website again (by 51%), use it as a primary resource (79%) as opposed to utilizing more costly channels, or recommend the site to others (81%).

| Highly satisfied citizens (scores of 80+) report being… | Direct Benefit |
|---|---|
| **81%** > more likely to use the federal website as a primary channel for interaction with the government<br><br>> more likely to recommend the site to a friend, family member, or colleague. | When citizens use a website to get information or services instead of using an office, call center, or postal mail, it saves the government money on personnel, printed materials, and postage. Estimates indicate that hundreds of millions of dollars could be saved on postage alone. |

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**For these very important reasons, citizen satisfaction is crucial even though it is the means to the end rather than the end itself. The numbers produced by the ACSI methodology are more than just satisfaction scores for each of these agencies. They can be used to predict specific future behaviors of site visitors, and their data can guide them to improvements that will increase these behaviors.**

But even if we believe that high citizen satisfaction is important on e-gov websites, how do we increase it?

The federal websites that are using the ACSI to measure citizen satisfaction and guide improvements are tracking citizen attitudes about a number of website elements. Each site tracks a slightly different list, but the most common elements across all 100 federal websites are:

> **Functionality:** The usefulness, convenience, and variety of online features and tools available on the website.

> **Online Transparency:** How thoroughly, quickly, and accessibly the website discloses information about what the agency is doing.

> **Search:** The relevance, organization, and quality of search results available on the site.

> **Navigation:** The organization of the site and options for navigation.

> **Look and Feel:** The visual appeal of the site and its consistency throughout the site.

> **Content:** The accuracy, quality, and freshness of news, information, and content on the website.

> **Site Performance:** The speed, consistency, and reliability of loading pages on the website.

Without the critical information found only by surveying citizens and scientifically analyzing the results, federal websites will have a hard time making the sorts of improvements that will enhance their value and usefulness to citizens in a cost-effective manner.

## PART THREE:  THE FORESEE ONLINE TRANSPARENCY INDEX

The Online Transparency Index serves as a consistent measure of online transparency and quantifies its impact on citizens' attitudes and behaviors. The Index has grown into a vital tool for measuring the success, failure, or progress of government departments and agencies online, providing a clear direction for improvement.

Research has defined the link between online transparency, satisfaction, and trust, giving government agencies the tools they require to measure their success in meeting the open government directives, identify where and how to improve citizens' views of transparency, and drive citizen satisfaction higher. Improved citizen satisfaction is a key result. It is also a critical component in judging whether or not a website should be consolidated or eliminated—satisfaction speaks directly to users' needs being met.

### Online Transparency Index Over Time

| Time Period | Online Transparency |
|---|---|
| Q4 2009 | 75.4 |
| Q1 2010 | 76.2 |
| Q2 2010 | 75.0 |
| Q3 2010 | 75.8 |
| Q4 2010 | 76.2 |
| Q1 2011 | 76.1 |
| Q2 2011 | 76.7 |
| Q3 2011 | 77.3 |

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Not all agencies and departments are currently measuring online transparency as part of their ForeSee satisfaction models. A total of 36 sites are reported in the Online Transparency Index as a component of their participation in this e-government report. The agencies and departments listed here measure and report this metric as part of an effort to meet the Obama administration's open-government objectives.

The aggregate Q3 2011 online transparency score for the 36 federal sites included is 77.3 on the study's 100-point scale, which has increased from last quarter and is the highest aggregate transparency score measured so far.

# THE FORESEE 2011 E-GOVERNMENT ONLINE TRANSPARENCY INDEX: SCORES OVER TIME

It is important to remember that all agencies on this list have voluntarily submitted their scores.

These results measure only 36 federal websites among thousands, although most of the federal government's

department sites and many large agency sites are represented. Sites that find themselves at the bottom of

this Index would certainly score higher than many others in a comprehensive index. As such, each of the

listed entities should be commended for their efforts.  Looking at these scores over time, we can see that

progress is being made.

The table below provides a breakdown of online transparency scores by website over time.

| Dept. | Website | Q3 2010 Online Transparency | Q3 2011 Online Transparency | Score change Year Over Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| DHS | Federal Emergency Management Agency Ready Campaign -- ready.gov | nm | 86 | n/a |
| DHS | U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Español  -- uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis-es | 85 | 86 | 1 |
| HHS | CDC main website -- cdc.gov | nm | 84 | n/a |
| DOJ | NIJ main website -- ojp.gov/nij | nm | 84 | n/a |
| HHS | SAMHSA Store -- store.samhsa.gov | 80 | 84 | 4 |
| DHS | U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services -- uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis | 82 | 83 | 1 |
| DOC | National Geodetic Society, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration website -- ngs.noaa.gov | nm | 82 | n/a |
| HHS | National Institute of Child Health and Human Development -- nichd.nih.gov | nm | 81 | n/a |
| DOD | Department of Defense Navy -- navy.mil | nm | 80 | n/a |
| DOS | Bureau of Consular Affairs -- http://travel.state.gov | 81 | 80 | -1 |
| HHS | Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality -- ahrq.gov | 78 | 79 | 1 |
| DOD | Department of Defense Air Force -- af.mil | 80 | 79 | -1 |
| DOD | Department of Defense portal -- defense.gov | 76 | 79 | 3 |
| DOD | Pentagon Channel -- pentagonchannel.mil | nm | 79 | n/a |
| DOS | Department of State blog website -- blogs.state.gov | 76 | 78 | 2 |
| NRC | U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission website -- nrc.gov | 76 | 78 | 2 |
| DOD | Department of Defense Marine Corps -- marines.mil | nm | 77 | n/a |

| Dept. | Website | Q3 2010 Online Transparency | Q3 2011 Online Transparency | Score change Year Over Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| DOJ | Office of Community Oriented Policing Services -- cops.usdoj.gov | 75 | 77 | 2 |
| DOT | DOT Research and Innovative Technology Administration website -- rita.dot.gov | 73 | 77 | 4 |
| GSA | GSA main website -- gsa.gov | 73 | 77 | 4 |
| DOS | Department of State main website -- state.gov | 75 | 76 | 1 |
| DHS | Department of Homeland Security main website -- dhs.gov | 73 | 75 | 2 |
| FDIC | FDIC main website -- fdic.gov | nm | 75 | n/a |
| NIST | National Institute for Standards and Technology main website -- nist.gov | nm | 75 | n/a |
| PBGC | U.S. PBGC main website -- pbgc.gov | 71 | 75 | 4 |
| HHS | SAMHSA website -- samhsa.gov | 76 | 75 | -1 |
| DOC | BEA main website -- bea.gov | 75 | 74 | -1 |
| EPA | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency -- epa.gov | 72 | 73 | 1 |
| FDIC | FDIC Applications -- www2.fdic.gov | nm | 73 | n/a |
| Treasury | IRS main website --irs.gov | nm | 73 | n/a |
| DOD | Military Health System main website -- health.mil | 73 | 72 | -1 |
| USDA | FAS main website -- fas.usda.gov | 72 | 72 | 0 |
| NARA | NARA main public website -- archives.gov | 75 | 72 | -3 |
| DOI | U.S. Geological Survey -- usgs.gov | 73 | 72 | -1 |
| Treasury | USTTB website -- ttb.gov | nm | 72 | n/a |
| HHS | U.S. Food and Drug Administration main website -- fda.gov | 72 | 70 | -2 |

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As President and CEO of ForeSee, Larry Freed is an expert on customer satisfaction and authors dozens of research papers and reports on the subject every year. Larry speaks extensively on the topic at private- and public-sector industry events and has been quoted in numerous publications and media, including *CNN*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, *Investor's Business Daily*, *Internet Retailer*, *Internet Retailing*, *Multichannel Merchant*, *DM News*, *Computerworld*, *Federal Computer Week* and *Government Executive*, among many others.

## ABOUT THE RESEARCH TEAM

Rhonda Berg, Research Manager at ForeSee, leads the research team that produces the quarterly E-Government Satisfaction Indices and the quarterly E-Government Transparency Indices. She also serves as an internal consultant regarding statistics, methodology, and survey design. Rhonda has been a research professional for 20 years in a number of industries and holds advanced degrees in business and sociology.

Kamaria Campbell,  Usability Auditor at ForeSee,  conducts expert usability audit reviews of websites across the public and private sector. She also plays an active role in the team's ongoing research into website usability best practices, leading research on emerging trends in the social media space. Kamaria holds a Bachelor's degree from Duke University where she majored in Computer Science and History and a Master's degree from the University of Michigan's School of Information with a specialization in Human-Computer Interaction.

Kathy Totz, Usability Auditor at ForeSee, uses her experience from conducting basic research and academic training to conduct expert usability audits in industries such as financial services, retail, health care, technology, telecommunications, and government.  Kathy received her Master of Science in Information degree from the University of Michigan, specializing in Human-Computer Interaction.  She also holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Cognitive Science from Illinois Wesleyan University.

## ABOUT THE ACSI E-GOVERNMENT SATISFACTION INDEX

The ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index is a special quarterly report of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) in partnership with customer experience analytics firm, ForeSee.

The ACSI, created at the University of Michigan, is the only uniform, national, cross-industry measure of satisfaction with the quality of goods and services available in the United States, both in the private and public sectors. In 1999, the federal government selected the ACSI to be a standard metric for measuring

citizen satisfaction.  More than 100 federal government agencies have used the ACSI to measure citizen satisfaction with more than 200 services and programs and more than 100 websites. The report on offline federal government services is released annually in December. The E-Government Index is released quarterly.

ForeSee collects and analyzes the data for the e-government websites included in the report.  The ACSI e-government scores were calculated based on data gathered from voluntary online surveys of randomly selected 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 online satisfaction (such as navigation, look and feel, search, site functionality, etc.) and quantifies their relationship to overall citizen satisfaction. This cause-and-effect methodology demonstrates the impact of website enhancements in these areas on overall customer satisfaction. In turn, customer satisfaction, as measured by the ACSI, has been proven to predict how citizens will behave in the future. Improvements to customer satisfaction will make citizens more likely to choose to interact with an agency online (the more cost-effective channel), return to the site, and recommend it to others. Monitoring and improving customer satisfaction has a tangible impact on citizen usage of the web channel and on the bottom line.

## ABOUT THE ACSI

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is a national economic indicator of customer satisfaction with the quality of products and services available to U.S. consumers. It is updated quarterly with new measures for differing sectors of the economy, building on the previous year's data. The overall ACSI score for a given quarter factors in scores from more than 200 companies in 44 industries, and from government agencies over the previous four quarters. The Index was founded at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business and is produced by ACSI, LLC.

## ABOUT FORESEE

As a pioneer in customer experience analytics, ForeSee continuously measures satisfaction across customer touch points and delivers critical insights on where to prioritize improvements for maximum impact. Because ForeSee's superior technology and proven methodology connect the customer experience to the bottom line, executives and managers are able to drive future success by confidently optimizing the efforts that will achieve business and brand objectives. The result is better business for companies and a better experience for consumers. **Visit www.foresee.com for customer experience solutions and original research.**