

Environmental Protection Agency



Customer Service Plan

December 2011

Executive Summary

On April 27, 2011, President Obama signed Executive Order 13571 requiring agencies to develop customer service plans that identify implementation steps for their customer service activities, including a "signature initiative" that uses technology to improve the customer experience. The customer service plans are externally focused and identify 3-5 initiatives that will allow the Agency to deliver services more efficiently. EPA's Customer Service Plan identifies a set of key initiatives that will advance our efforts to streamline service delivery and increase public access to information and answers.

Addressing today's complex environmental issues requires that EPA work transparently and cooperatively with customers to ensure that we meet the Agency mission: *to protect human health and the environment*. To be successful, we rely on effective relationships with a wide range of customers and partners in transforming how we perform our mission and accomplish our five strategic goals:

- *Taking Action on Climate Change and Improving Air Quality*
- *Protecting America's Waters*
- *Cleaning Up Communities and Advancing Sustainable Development*
- *Ensuring the Safety of Chemicals and Preventing Pollution*
- *Enforcing Environmental Laws*

Given the wide scope of our mission and goals, providing excellent customer service is mandatory. We are expanding our networks of customers and partners, and developing new tools to promote more effective dialogue and input. We have begun a new era of outreach at EPA and seek to include a broader range of people and communities in our work and expand our engagement with communities, including those historically under-represented in our decision making process. With this critical and diverse group of stakeholders in mind, this Customer Service Plan focuses on ensuring customers' access to easy to use and understand information while reducing transaction costs. In support of Executive Order 13571, EPA will focus on 4 key areas over the next year:

Signature Initiative: e-Rulemaking

Service Area 1: Streamlining Grant Management and Improving Timeliness of Award

Service Area 2: Pesticide Re-registration/Maintenance Fee

Service Area 3: OneEPA WebSite

SIGNATURE INITIATIVE: eRULEMAKING

Overview: Operated by EPA, the eRulemaking Program is a federal-wide E-Gov and Open Gov initiative offering citizens a single location to find, view, and comment on rulemakings from www.regulations.gov. Thirty-nine departments and agencies, representing more than 90% of federal rulemakings issued each year, are served by this fee-for-service program.

Timing: Beginning in January 2012, the eRulemaking Program will overhaul [Regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) to improve usability, increase public participation in Federal decision-making and provide more opportunities to educate public stakeholders about the regulatory process.

SERVICE 1: STREAMLINING GRANT MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVING TIMELINESS OF GRANTS AWARDS

Overview: Over 40% of EPA's budget is grants to States and Tribes. It is important that grants are provided in an efficient manner and that they are used in a timely manner to lead to the results intended. EPA is looking to provide flexibilities to streamline and improve grant management.

Key Customer Groups: Primarily States and Tribes

Challenges: Delays due to federal budget process can lead to slow award of grants. Additionally, grant reporting frequency needs to be assessed in an effort to reduce burden while maintaining critical data.

Featured Actions: Workgroup has identified some key changes that could streamline grants, including exceptions based reporting, improving the application process, and bundling Tribal grant assurance forms.

SERVICE 2: PESTICIDES RE-REGISTRATION/MAINTENANCE FEE

Overview: The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), section 3(c)(5), states that the Administrator shall register a pesticide if it is determined that, when used in accordance with labeling and common practices, the product "will not generally cause unreasonable adverse effects on the environment." As with other Government licensing programs, EPA collects a fee from pesticides manufacturers to cover the governments costs and, in return, ensures that registration actions are performed in a timely and efficient manner

Key Customer Groups: Pesticides manufacturers.

Challenges: Keeping up with the workload for review and registration of new pesticides, new uses for existing pesticides, and other registration requests in accordance with FQPA standards and Pesticide Registration Improvement Renewal Act timeframes. The authorizing statute (Pesticide Registration Improvement Renewal Act) will expire at the end of FY 2012. Efforts are underway to reauthorize the statute, which could result in changes to both programmatic requirements and fee structure.

Featured Actions: Continued to implementation of registration and registration review programs.

SERVICE 3: ONE EPA WEBSITE

Overview: EPA's website is a valuable communications tool, seen 15 million times monthly by people trying to learn about environmental issues, comply with regulations, help protect the environment, and do business with EPA. Under the One EPA Web project, we will rebuild epa.gov to focus on content that most directly helps people accomplish their tasks online, such as such as learning about an issue, understanding regulatory requirements, finding ways to engage in an issue, or discovering how they can help protect the environment.

Key Customer Groups: Citizens, businesses, scientists, other government agencies

Challenges: Sufficient staff time to devote to identifying audiences and appropriate content; staff and management attention to develop new online systems; the current organizational focus on the website means rethinking how we devote resources to rebuilding; too much time spent publishing every document we own instead of focusing efforts on supporting key audiences' top tasks.

Featured Actions: Building new sites on priority topics, identifying key audiences for each topic and selecting content that best serves the needs of those audiences. Focus is on helping people accomplish their tasks, not overwhelming readers by simply publishing every document. For example, if someone comes to epa.gov to learn how they can help protect the environment, we'll prominently provide specific tips, while maintaining links to regulatory history. We will rebuild at least 20 topic-based websites in FY2012 in an ongoing transformation that will continue into future years.

SIGNATURE INITIATIVE : E-RULEMAKING

EPA/OEI

Overview: Operated by EPA, the eRulemaking Program is a federal-wide E-Gov and Open Gov initiative offering citizens a single location to find, view, and comment on rulemakings from www.regulations.gov. Thirty-nine departments and agencies, representing more than 90% of federal rulemakings issued each year, are served by this fee-for-service program.

Timing: Beginning in January 2012, the eRulemaking Program will overhaul Regulations.gov to improve usability, increase public participation in Federal decision-making and provide more opportunities to educate public stakeholders about the regulatory process.

Overview

Regulations.gov is the premier site for public participation in rulemaking, receiving an average of over 12 million page views per-month in 2010 and providing public access to more than 3 million documents. The eRulemaking Program will overhaul Regulations.gov to improve the user experience by: introducing new browsing and learning functions on the homepage, improving search capabilities, and offering connectivity to other websites for broad information collection. A more user-friendly layout will

assist the public in better understanding the activities available through Regulations.gov. Data sharing and output tools will also be used to improve the usefulness of the site. Distinctive display of social media tools will encourage public discourse regarding rulemakings and will include Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Regulations.gov Exchange. The redesign is in response to Executive Order 13563, Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review, as well as Executive Order 13571 which calls for improved customer service.

Impact and Benefits

The eRulemaking Program provides substantial cost savings to both EPA and participating federal agencies. The Program's [Regulations.gov](#) and Federal Docket Management System collectively have resulted in an estimated \$129 million in costs saved or avoided over the last 5 years. Second, the redesign of [Regulations.gov](#) will increase public transparency and accelerate service delivery. Specifically, the browsable home page and improved search capabilities allow the user to find the documents they are looking for faster and more accurately. Third, improved access to and highlighting of social media tools provides yet another vehicle for the public to have a dialogue with rulemaking agencies and other users. The improved website will enable the public faster access to agency documents, quicker ability to review and make comments, and increased educational applications to better inform the public about the regulatory process itself and the public's impact on that process.

Key Customer Group: Customers include Federal, state, local and tribal government agencies; academics; advocacy groups; non-governmental organizations; regulated business community; small businesses; students; and the public.

Key Milestones and Timeline:

The redesign of [Regulations.gov](#) will be carried out in four (4) stages.

1. The initial stage is to gather data from users of Regulations.gov on specific needs and functionalities that will improve the user experience. The eRulemaking Program consults regularly with its partners on website redesign. The Program team briefs the Advisory Board monthly and the Executive Committee semiannually on its activities and incorporates input from the members. The public has offered comments through online surveys. The eRulemaking team is designing an implementation plan based on the requirements gathered, to meet the needs of the public and partner agencies.
2. The second stage is the launch in late January, 2012 and will include: a redesign of the [Regulations.gov](#) home page with new browsing, learn, and search pages; new [MyRegulations](#) features (e.g., my recent searches, remember my search), integration of social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, [Regulations.gov Exchange](#)), and new data output tools (e.g., APIs and widgets).
3. The third stage, scheduled for deployment in late May 2012, will include: new docket folder (indicating phase of a rulemaking) and improved search results.
4. The fourth phase, planned for late September, 2012, will consist of improving the layout and usability of the comment web form, continuing redesign of the docket folder and [MyRegulations](#) (e.g., prefill web form, track my submissions).

SERVICE #1: STREAMLINING GRANT MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVING TIMELINESS OF GRANTS AWARDS

EPA/OARM and OA

Overview: Over 40% of EPA's budget is grants to States and Tribes. It is important that grants are provided in an efficient manner and that they are used in a timely manner to lead to the results intended. EPA is looking to provide flexibilities to streamline and improve grant management

Key Customer Groups: Primarily States and Tribes

Challenges: Delays due to federal budget process can lead to slow award of grants. Additionally, grant reporting frequency needs to be assessed in an effort to reduce burden while maintaining critical data.

Key Milestones and Timeline:

- The first phase of this effort will be to reach consensus on priority areas for reform in consultation with State and Tribal partners, and in coordination with OMB's Administrative Flexibility initiative. This will occur during Q1 and Q2 of FY2012.
- The second phase will involve vetting of draft policies on streamlining/burden reduction in consultation with State and Tribal partners. This will occur during Q3 of FY 2012.
- The third phase will involve issuing final policies in consultation with State and Tribal partners and approved by EPA's senior-level Grants Management Council. This will occur in Q4 of FY 2012.

1. Increase Feedback from Customers

- EPA will continue to work with Tribal representatives to identify areas of concern and determine where improvements may be made. Tribal feedback to date indicates there are opportunities to achieve greater consistency in reporting requirements for Tribal Performance Partnership Grants (PPGs). EPA will work with Tribes to address this issue.

EPA will continue to hold regular conference calls with State representatives to identify areas of concern and determine methods to increase communication between the Agency and States. One issue identified through these calls is that there may be outdated grant Terms and Conditions. EPA will work with the States to address this issue.

2. Adopt Best Practices for Improving Customer Experience

- EPA is working to expand the use of existing direct implementation tribal cooperative agreement authority (DITCA). The DITCA authority enables EPA to enter into financial assistance agreements with tribes and eligible intertribal consortia to help carry out Agency program implementation. These cooperative agreements can improve efficiency of EPA program implementation in Indian country. EPA is considering efforts to: (1) identify pilot projects where a single DITCA can provide compliance assistance for multiple tribal jurisdictions; (2) target

DITCAs to areas of Indian country with significant facility non-compliance; and (3) track changes to facility compliance. EPA will work to educate program offices and regions on the availability and use of DITCAs by December 30, 2012.

- In 2008, EPA adopted Grants Policy Issuance (GPI) 08-05: Burden Reduction for State Grants. This policy codified actions taken by EPA to address grant-related issues identified under the Agency's State Administrative Reporting Burden Reduction Initiative. EPA will take a similar approach for bundling of assurances for Tribes that would apply to Continuing Environmental Programs (CEPs), project grants, and non-Performance Partnership Grants (non-PPGs). EPA will issue implementing guidance by April 2012.

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

- EPA, Tribal representatives, and National Program Managers will assess the needed programmatic reporting frequency for continuing environmental program (CEP) grants. The group will determine if programmatic criteria can be established for Tribal grants management which, if met, may enable the respective Tribe to reduce the frequency of grant progress reports.
- EPA and Tribal representatives identified that current federal delays in approving Tribal indirect cost rate proposals can jeopardize a Tribe's ability to claim indirect costs under EPA grants. After soliciting Tribal feedback, EPA recently issued an interim Indirect Cost Rate Policy for Tribes that should enhance the indirect cost rate process, and in partnership with Tribes, will evaluate the effectiveness of the Policy.

4. Streamline Agency Processes to Reduce Costs and Accelerate Delivery

- EPA and States determined that improvements are needed to streamline State grant management. Working with the States, National Program Managers and Regions, EPA has launched an initiative to enhance State grant timeliness and more specifically address issues with 1) delays in awarding grant funds after the passage of a full appropriation, 2) delays in obligating grant funds in the first year of availability, and 3) accumulation of unliquidated obligations in awarded grants and the need to accelerate grant outlays.
- EPA and State representatives identified that some pre/post awards forms require routine submissions even when the data on the report shows no positive information. These reports may be more efficiently managed through an exceptions-only reporting process, i.e., the State would only submit the report when there are "positive" data. EPA will work with States to determine which pre/post award forms may follow an exceptions-only reporting process.
- EPA and State representatives identified that grants may be delayed due to the need to obtain intergovernmental review comments either from a State single point of contact or areawide planning agency. Feedback from EPA's State partners suggests that this process is cumbersome and time-consuming, therefore EPA will consult with OMB to determine if there is a flexibility within the existing legal framework to make the process more efficient.

SERVICE #2: PESTICIDES RE-REGISTRATION/MAINTENANCE FEE

EPA/OCSP

Overview: The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), section 3(c)(5), states that the Administrator shall register a pesticide if it is determined that, when used in accordance with labeling and common practices, the product “will not generally cause unreasonable adverse effects on the environment.” As with other Government licensing programs, EPA collects a fee from pesticides manufacturers to cover the government’s costs and, in return, ensures that registration actions are performed in a timely and efficient manner.

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1. Increase Feedback from Customers

- EPA will continue to provide locally-based technical assistance and guidance by partnering with states and tribes on implementation of pesticide decisions. The Agency will address issues including newer/safer products and improved outreach and education. Technical assistance will include workshops, demonstration projects, briefings, and informational meetings in areas including pesticide safety training and use of lower risk pesticides.

2 Adopt Best Practices for Improving Customer Experience

- EPA began promoting reduced risk pesticides in 1993 by giving registration priority to pesticides that have lower toxicity to humans and non-target organisms such as birds, fish, and plants; low potential for contaminating groundwater; lower use rates; low pest resistance potential; and compatibility with Integrated Pest Management (IPM).¹ Several countries and international organizations also have instituted programs to facilitate registering reduced risk pesticides. EPA works with the international scientific community and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member countries to register new reduced-risk pesticides and establish related tolerances (maximum residue limits). Through these efforts, EPA can help reduce risks to Americans from foods imported from other countries.

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

- During FY 2013, EPA will continue to implement registration review of existing pesticides and develop work plans for pesticides entering the review pipeline, adjusting as necessary due to reauthorization of the statute. The goal of the registration review process is to review pesticide

¹ See U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Pesticides: Health and Safety, Reducing Pesticide Risk internet site: <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/health/reducing.htm>.

registrations every fifteen years to ensure that pesticides already in the marketplace meet the most current scientific standards and address concerns identified after the original registration.

4 Streamline Agency Processes to Reduce Costs and Accelerate Delivery

- Through ongoing education and research in environmentally sound pest remediation methods, the program ensures that effective and safe pesticides are available for regular use and for emergency situations. Under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act Section 18, EPA must ensure that, under the very limiting provisions of the exemption, such emergency uses will not present an unreasonable risk to the environment. In such cases, EPA's goal is to complete the more detailed and comprehensive review for potential unreasonable risk conducted for pesticide registration within three years following the emergency.

SERVICE #3: ONE EPA WEBSITE

EPA/Jointly led by OEAE and OEI

Overview: EPA's website is a valuable communications tool, seen 15 million times monthly by people trying to learn about environmental issues, comply with regulations, help protect the environment, and do business with EPA. Under the One EPA Web project, we will rebuild epa.gov to focus on content that most directly helps people accomplish their tasks online, such as such as learning about an issue, understanding regulatory requirements, finding ways to engage in an issue, or discovering how they can help protect the environment.

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Featured Actions: Building new sites on priority topics, identifying key audiences for each topic and selecting content that best serves the needs of those audiences. Focus is on helping people accomplish their tasks, not overwhelming readers by simply publishing every document. For example, if someone comes to epa.gov to learn how they can help protect the environment, we'll prominently provide specific tips, while maintaining links to regulatory history. We will rebuild at least 20 topic-based websites in FY2012 in an ongoing transformation that will continue into future years.

1. Increase Feedback from Customers

- Collect and analyze data about the most-visited pages to inform the choice of topics to build in FY2012. Continue using online surveys to understand what information users are looking for and their top tasks.

2. Adopt Best Practices for Improving Customer Experience

- Prioritize investments based in part on the most popular topics people are currently visiting on epa.gov. Choose which sites to build in FY2012.
- Revise "About EPA" pages to deliver more local information by state, moving away from focusing on EPA's administrative regions. Target: FY2012.
- Review and revise "popular topics" listed on EPA's home page. Target: monthly.
- Conduct training on plain writing and emphasize plain writing on new websites. Target: provide multiple trainings in FY2012.

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

- Deliver quarterly website status updates to senior managers containing such metrics as popular pages, popular searches, and metadata quality, with the goal of educating and focusing attention on the importance of high-quality web development.
- Use heat maps (graphics showing where people actually click) to determine how to lay out web pages.
- Use web traffic reports to inform decisions about which documents to highlight.

4 Streamline Agency Processes to Reduce Costs and Accelerate Delivery

- Launch a new web content management system in FY2012 to publish epa.gov, which will reduce costs from coding individual pages.
- Use canned searches to help people find information rather than maintaining hand-built lists of links.