

Challenge.gov Uses Persistent Cookies Safely To Customize and Enhance Users' Experience.

Like many websites, Challenge.gov uses "persistent cookie" technology to customize and enhance the users' experience with the site.

The most important thing to know is that all persistent cookies used by Challenge.gov are classified as Tier 2 by OMB Memorandum 10-22, [Guidance for Online Use of Web Measurement and Customization Technologies](#). This means that these cookies do *not* collect users' personal information, and therefore can be deployed freely by agencies without requiring signoff from a CIO or a thirty-day public comment period. The guidance does require that the use of cookies—and how to disable them—be explained in a site's [Privacy Impact Assessment](#) and [privacy policy](#); Challenge.gov does both of these things, and agencies do not need to repeat the work done by GSA.

Persistent Cookies Used

Challenge.gov uses persistent cookies in two ways, both of which enhance users' experience on the site while also protecting their privacy:

1. **To "remember" users when they come back to the site, so that they don't have to type in their username and password upon each visit .**

On this site's login form, users see a checkbox titled "Remember Me," which users have the option to check. ChallengePost keeps users' information secure and anonymous by using a 32-byte long MD5 hash, which is a technical term for a type of secure encryption algorithm. By using that, Challenge.gov is able to automatically log users in without ever collecting their name, e-mail address, or any other personal information. This cookie lasts for two weeks; that countdown is restarted every time a user visits the site after logging in with "Remember Me" checked.

2. **To get aggregate metrics on site usage to understand how people are using the site and how we can make it better.**

Challenge.gov uses the popular web metrics service Google Analytics to track overall traffic and return visits to challenges hosted or advertised on the site. This service does not collect any personally-identifiable information, though it may use IP addresses to track what sites and search queries refer visitors to Challenge.gov. Traffic statistics from Google Analytics are only ever reported to us anonymously and in the aggregate, and no information provided by Google Analytics is traceable to any specific individual. Each agency can decide whether to use Google Analytics or not, on a per-challenge basis, with a single click during the challenge creation process. A full list of the persistent cookies deployed by Google Analytics can be found at <http://code.google.com/apis/analytics/docs/concepts/gaConceptsCookies.html>.

Although persistent cookies improve user experience, Challenge.gov will function properly without them. Users can remove, disable, or be warned before accepting persistent cookies by enabling their browser settings; instructions on how to do that are provided at http://www.usa.gov/optout_instructions.shtml, which is in turn linked to by the Challenge.gov privacy policy.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

- Challenge.gov uses persistent cookies to customize the site's user experience, as well as to gain statistics about how people visit and use the site.
- The persistent cookies used by Challenge.gov do **not** collect any of users' personally-identifiable information (PII).
- OMB Memorandum 10-22 provides guidance on how government websites may use persistent cookies. Challenge.gov complies with all of these rules.
- Visitors to Challenge.gov can find a clear notice about how persistent cookies are used on the site's Privacy Policy, which is linked to from every page on the site.
- Challenge.gov provides all visitors with clear instructions on how to disable or modify cookies if they don't wish to use them; the site will function normally without persistent cookies.