

Department of Commerce



Customer Service Plan

September 30, 2011

Open Government Initiative
TRANSPARENCY + PARTICIPATION + COLLABORATION



OPEN GOV



Department of Commerce Customer Service Plan



THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



**Department of Commerce
Customer Service Plan**



Table of Content

Executive Summary 1

Initiative #1 – CommerceConnect 2

Initiative #2 – International Trade Administration’s Export.gov NextGen 3

Initiative #3 – U.S. Patent and Trademark Office: Data Visualization Center 4

Initiative #4 – U.S. Patent and Trademark Office: Green Technology Patent Applications 5

Initiative #5 – U.S. Patent and Trademark Office: Teaming with Google to Provide Bulk Patent and Trademark Data Available to Public “Patents on Google” 6

Initiative #6 – Economic Development Administration (EDA) – EDA Grant Process 6

 A. Service 1: EDA Best Practices Microsite 6

 B. Service 2: Create a Business-Driven IT environment 7

Initiative #7 – Bureau of Economic Analysis: Interactive Data on BEA.gov 7

Initiative #8 – U.S. Census Bureau: Economic Indicator Search Tool 9

Initiative #9 – National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration: Deepwater Horizon Institutional Repository 10



Department of Commerce Customer Service Plan



Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Commerce (Commerce) creates the conditions for economic growth and opportunity by promoting innovation, entrepreneurship, competitiveness, and stewardship informed by world-class scientific research and information.

Commerce places a premium on effectively and efficiently delivering customer services. Customer Service is one of the six major themes of the Department's Strategic Plan and Balanced Scorecard, which the Secretary uses to track each bureau's progress towards key programmatic and management goals on a quarterly basis. Accordingly, Commerce includes customer service goals and objectives in the performance plan for every employee throughout the Department.

A wide range of customers depend on Commerce for information critical to sound business decisions. The Department has actively upgraded access to this information through the Administration's Open Government initiative, contributing over 263,000 data sets to Data.gov.

As required by Executive Order 13571 on Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service, Commerce has developed a plan that identifies specific actions and initiatives to further advance its customer service delivery over the next year, focusing on key service areas and technology-driven initiatives. This plan outlines the key elements of these initiatives.

Our first initiative is Commerce Connect, a collaborative partnership of all Commerce bureaus to streamline public access, through a one-stop model, to over 70 Department-wide programs that support U.S. businesses. Our other initiatives represent best practices of individual bureaus.

The International Trade Administration is upgrading the content and navigability of its web site in support of the National Export Initiative. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is pursuing several projects to provide ready access to its backlog and pendency metrics, to accelerate its examination of patents for environmentally-friendly and conversation technologies, and to make bulk patent and trademark data readily available to the public, free of charge, on Google.

The Economic Development Administration will implement customer surveys on its upgraded grant application process, launch a microsite to highlight best practices in regional innovation, and facilitate the exchange of innovative ideas and perspectives in economic development. The Bureau of Economic Analysis has upgraded the features and functionality of its web site and will survey users for their feedback. The U.S. Census Bureau has implemented a search tool that enables readily searchable and exportable access to detailed economic data. Lastly, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration is working to preserve and enable searchable public access to the extensive multi-agency data related to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.



Department of Commerce Customer Service Plan



Initiative #1 – CommerceConnect

Overview: The goal of CommerceConnect’s customer service plan is simple – to serve as an economic accelerator by continuously improving access to Department of Commerce business assistance programs, resources, services, and information for emerging entrepreneurs as well as established companies.

Developed and supported by a collaborative partnership of all Commerce Department Bureaus, CommerceConnect provides the public with streamlined access to more than 70 U.S. Department of Commerce programs through a one-stop model operated through a national call center, an interactive virtual business assistance website, and a network of specially trained Commerce Specialists in existing U.S. Department of Commerce bureau field offices.

CommerceConnect is using technology to enhance customer service. Namely, a cloud-based customer relationship management (CRM) system is used to:

- Manage client contact information, interactions and disposition of assistance requests
- Maintain program content and information about business resources
- Populate external content on the CommerceConnect website
- Accept client inquiries and requests for service through a web intake process
- Facilitate cross-referrals among Commerce business units
- Manage and track performance outcomes and success stories

Impact and Benefits: CommerceConnect streamlines business access to government services and solutions by providing a “one-stop-shop” for information, counseling, and access to the breadth of services that help a business transform itself into a viable and competitive enterprise. CommerceConnect is designed to assess and meet businesses needs – whether it’s export promotion, access to capital, contract opportunities, intellectual property protection, management and technical assistance, or guidance on how to make operations more efficient. Through one-stop touch points, including a call center, web portal, regional partnerships, and existing Commerce field offices across the country CommerceConnect efficiently and effectively connects U.S. businesses with Department of Commerce and other federal, state, local and nonprofit partner programs, products and services that meet their needs at every point in their life cycle.

Timing: CommerceConnect is fully operational and is expanding its services across the country through existing Department of Commerce bureau field office locations. To date, 19 field locations have been trained and activated. CommerceConnect anticipates expanding to have



Department of Commerce Customer Service Plan



trained specialists within 30 existing bureau field offices in FY 2012, integrating Commerce grantees and developing a new virtual interface with strategic partners including the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee (TPCC).

In October, CommerceConnect will launch the beta version of a new website that will feature a resource matching self-service tool to link businesses to targeted solutions.

Initiative #2 – International Trade Administration’s Export.gov NextGen

Overview: Through Export.gov NextGen, the International Trade Administration (ITA) seeks to make it easier for U.S. companies to learn about exporting, become exporters, and expand their exports--all in support of the National Export Initiative. By adopting industry best practices of providing information based on the company’s level of experience, we will give them the right information at the right time. We will streamline how U.S. companies interact with ITA and, by extension, the other agencies of the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee (TPCC). This initiative also supports the White House direction that executive branch agencies assist small businesses and exporters in obtaining information they need on relevant federal programs and services.

Key Customer Groups: Export.gov’s main audience is U.S. companies who want to learn about exporting, become exporters, and expand their exports. ITA and the other TPCC agencies also interact with U.S. industry and trade associations, educational institutions, banks, non-governmental organizations and for profit companies that are in the export business. The term customer herein refers to any individual or to any entity, including a business, tribal, State, or local government, or other agency, to which the agency directly provides significant services.

Impact and Benefits: The most significant benefit of this initiative will be the reduction in how long it takes a customer to find all of the export related information relevant to them. Currently, customers have to visit many sections of the site to find market research, trade events, and trade leads. Export.gov NextGen will push all of the relevant information to the customer’s portal (myexport.gov) page so that it is all available in one place.

The next most significant benefit will be the integration of the customer’s account and automated completion of related forms. Currently, a customer has to fill out individual forms for every event they want to register and for every product or service they want to buy. Export.gov NextGen will reduce the burden on the customer in that it will pre-populate the fields on the form from the customer’s profile information. We will only ask the customer to review the information and respond to questions that are not yet in the customer’s profile.



Department of Commerce Customer Service Plan



Another significant benefit will be the introduction of web 2.0 features and functionality. Customers will be able to comment and rank every page on the site. Customers will be able to have online chats with knowledgeable staff. Customers will receive alerts about events and other information that is relevant to their needs.

Key Milestones and Timeline:

- Initial requirements and Design – 1/12
- Feature development and fine tuning – 3/12
- System Design – 3/12
- Production environment implemented 6/12
- Staged implementation – 7/12

Initiative #3 – U.S. Patent and Trademark Office: Data Visualization Center

Overview: The USPTO Data Visualization Center found on the USPTO Web site is a tool which gives the public access to traditional measures of pendency as well as several new pendency tracking measures for both patents and trademarks. USPTO operations information is displayed in a convenient dashboard format. The patents dashboard provides pendency information as well as other critical performance indicators such as the number of applications in the backlog, production, actions per disposal and our staffing levels. Similar information is available regarding the Trademark Operations. This information helps the entire Intellectual Property (IP) community to better understand our processes, and enable applicants to make more informed decisions about their applications, especially as more opportunities are developed for applicants to control the timing at which their applications are examined. The new dashboard, which is updated monthly for patents and quarterly for trademarks and policy and external affairs, issued internally by the USPTO to analyze and improve our processes and to track the effectiveness of our improvement efforts. The dashboard information can be found at www.uspto.gov/dashboards.

For those who really want to dive into the numbers, a more detailed spreadsheet is available for each patent and trademark measure with additional data. Stakeholders and customers are encouraged to watch our progress as the programs and initiatives started over the past year begin to show results. For instance, currently the number of actions per disposal is dropping, indicating improved patent examination efficiency.

Key Customer Groups: The entire Intellectual Property community and the general public.

Challenges: The USPTO intends to further refine the dashboard and welcomes stakeholder and customer input about ways to improve it. A dedicated mailbox has been set up for comments.



Department of Commerce Customer Service Plan



Featured Actions: The USPTO Data Visualization Center was unveiled in September 2010. In May 2011 the USPTO added measures from both Trademarks and the Office of Policy and External Affairs to the Visualization Center.

Initiative #4 – U.S. Patent and Trademark Office: Green Technology Patent Applications

Overview: The Green Technology Pilot Program provides accelerated examination of patent applications for innovations related to environmentally friendly and energy conservation technologies. Since the pilot program began in December 2009, a total of 2,407 petitions have been granted to green technology patent applicants, and 470 patents have been issued.

Program statistics show that program participants can obtain a patent more quickly as compared to the standard examination process. Currently, the average time between the approval of a green technology petition and the first action on an application is just 64 days. In several cases, patent applications in the green technology program have been issued within a year of the filing date. Earlier patenting of these technologies can help inventors to secure funding, create jobs, and bring vital green technologies to market much sooner.

Key Customer Groups: Applicants seeking patents in environmental quality, energy conservation, the development of renewable energy, or the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Challenges: Patent applications are normally taken up for examination in the order they are filed. Under the extended pilot program, for the first 3,000 applications filed on or before Dec. 31, 2011, in which a grantable petition for special status is filed, the agency will expedite examination. To be included in the program, petitions for expedited processing of an application must meet several requirements, including that they be filed electronically, they must be directed to a single invention, and must state how the invention materially enhances the quality of the environment.

Featured Actions: Since its inception in December 2009, the program has been expanded in response to stakeholder feedback to eliminate requirements that limited the scope of eligible technology to certain US Patent Classifications. In November 2010, the program was extended to run until December 31, 2011, or until 3,000 petitions are granted.



Initiative #5 – U.S. Patent and Trademark Office: Teaming with Google to Provide Bulk Patent and Trademark Data Available to Public “Patents on Google”

Overview: The USPTO is teaming with Google to provide bulk patent and trademark data available to public. The USPTO has entered into a no-cost, two-year agreement with Google to make bulk electronic patent and trademark public data available to the public in bulk form. Under this agreement, the USPTO is providing Google with existing bulk, electronic files, which Google will host without modification for the public free of charge. This bulk data can be accessed at <http://www.google.com/googlebooks/uspto.html>. This arrangement is to serve until the USPTO can bring this capability in-house. Until now, the USPTO’s public data in bulk form has been provided solely as a fee-based service.

Key Customer Groups: IP community and the general public.

Challenges: The USPTO does not currently have the technical capability to provide this public information in a bulk machine readable format that is desired by the intellectual property (IP) community. The USPTO estimates that nearly ten terabytes information will be made available.

Featured Actions: The USPTO and Google will be working together to make additional data available in the future, including patent and trademark file histories and related data.

Initiative #6 – Economic Development Administration (EDA) – EDA Grant Process

Overview: Beginning in the first quarter of 2011, EDA implemented a new grant application process that was more transparent, accountable, and competitive, reducing the responsive time to applicants. Using Survey Monkey, EDA will now survey applicants on the new application process in order to continue improving the process as well as adapting to the needs of the applicants.

Timing: The first survey will be implemented in the first quarter of 2012.

A. Service 1: EDA Best Practices Microsite

Overview: There are many tools in economic development that strive to improve the standard of living for communities. However, there lacks a central location where communities can go to learn about some of the best practices in the areas of regional innovation clusters, entrepreneurship, trade and exports, green growth and regional strategies. It is for this reason; EDA will design and launch an EDA Best Practices Microsite. The site will have information



Department of Commerce Customer Service Plan



and examples that communities can use to enhance their regional economic efforts. It will provide practical information for today's complex challenges.

Key Customer Groups: Economic development organizations, policy makers and community members interested in improving the community in which they live.

Challenges: The challenge is to create a site that is valuable and has the most current information. In order to make the site relevant, there needs to be state of the art applications, a means for coordination and discussion about successful implementation techniques.

Featured Actions: The following action steps will support this effort: 1) design of the website, 2) information to be housed on the website, 3) identification of case studies to be highlighted, 4) launch of the website and 5) continue maintenance.

B. Service 2: Create a Business-Driven IT environment

Overview: Provide venues for the exchange of innovative ideas and perspectives in economic development

Key Customer Groups: EDA employees and grantees

Challenges: Creation of an Office of Information Technology service desk, establishing service ticket metrics, and OIT staff certification.

Featured Actions: The following action steps will support this effort:

- Improve project management services,
- increase utilization of DOC enterprise IT services, and
- Improve staff capabilities

Initiative #7 – Bureau of Economic Analysis: Interactive Data on BEA.gov

Overview: BEA produces many of the nation's most closely-watched economic statistics. Our numbers show the health of the economy through its GDP statistics; the impact of each industry on the U.S. economy; economic activity by region, state, and metropolitan area; and economic transactions between the U.S. and other countries. BEA produces thousands of economic series to meet critical data needs of businesses, policymakers, academia, and the American public.

In an effort to keep these key economic statistics easy to access and easy to understand, BEA has developed a new Interactive Data System. The wealth of data on BEA.gov is now available, in a prototype format, to the public with an improved look and feel, easier search and navigation capabilities, and greatly enhanced analytical capacity.



Department of Commerce Customer Service Plan



BEA pays close attention to its customer feedback. As a result of this feedback, the Bureau has embarked on a project to improve the information architecture, look and feel, and usability of its Web-based products. Not all of BEA's data products share common IT platforms or even a common look. After conducting a Web usability study, BEA carried out a major overhaul of its public Web site. Tables and charts that appeared distinctive and seemingly unrelated now appear seamless, and BEA customer ability to cull, view, and analyze the data has been significantly improved.

BEA set out to ensure that its Web site presented common features and functionality across all of its data pages, all using the same navigation tools. With the new prototype system, our customers can now navigate between different data sets through a common Interactive Data System—a system with greater functionality for charting, graphing, and downloading data files. Benefits to BEA customers include:

- Easier and faster data searches, providing more efficient use of customer time spent on the Web site;
- Data products that have the same look and feel across the entire Web site;
- New integrated and interactive charting and mapping functions;
- Data that can be downloaded in multiple formats, providing usability to almost any software the customer is using;
- New cutting-edge data visualization capabilities that allow the data to be looked at in picture format;
- New personal accounts that allow the customer to save their queries and data searches—the customer does not have to start their search from scratch each time; and
- The ability to insert fully-formatted color charts and graphs into papers, presentations, and PowerPoints.

This new tool delivers an improved customer experience behind the scenes, as well. The new application loads faster than the legacy system, while also reducing the strain on BEA's Web servers, reducing costs and improving service delivery.

BEA continues to collect customer feedback on the new system, and will remain committed to implementing improvements that meet the needs of our customers (Customer Satisfaction on BEA's Web products is one of BEA's Balanced Scorecard measures). The feedback on the new Data Interactive System has been very positive and will continue to be improved through ongoing customer feedback.



Initiative #8 – U.S. Census Bureau: Economic Indicator Search Tool

Overview: The United States Census Bureau produces several of the nation’s most closely-watched economic indicators of the health of the U.S. economy. They are key inputs to the national accounts. They are used by numerous monetary and budgetary decision makers, economists, business analysts and researchers for making corporate investment decisions. When they are released each month and quarter, they move financial markets. Today, more than ever, our customers demand and expect to receive these numbers via high value, machine-readable datasets that can be easily accessed and manipulated. Yet, until now, these crown jewels of economic data have been disseminated mainly via static, PDF-based reports.

To address rising customer expectations for more usable economic indicator data, the Census Bureau developed the Economic Indicator Search Tool. By September 2011, all economic indicators were available to the public via this searchable database. This new tool is now in production with updates provided each month and quarter on the day of release, providing data users with on-demand, detailed economic indicator data at their fingertips.

The new tool is a long-awaited one-stop shop for accessing data from the economic indicators, and a welcome alternative to frustrating searches. It is easy enough for anyone to use – just follow the numbers. You can get data fast--and then export it into a spreadsheet. The tool provides modern features and highly granular data. It uses state-of-the art open source software and employs modern development techniques that make it inexpensive to produce. Benefits to US Census Bureau customers include:

- Easy and fast data searches, going beyond PDFs, to provide a one-stop shop for economic indicator data on demand;
- Internet-based searches that provide quick and smart access to customer-selected data;
- Data that can be downloaded in multiple formats for further manipulation or charting;
- State-of-the-art Web features with access to data or explanatory notes in one click, and
- Highly granular time series data that are updated with each new data release.

Feedback on this new application has been very positive; the number of internet hits has grown by 800 percent since the application first went live last year.

The U.S. Census Bureau plans to stay in close contact with its customers to elicit new requirements for this tool. We anticipate improvements to the interface and navigation, increasing survey coverage beyond the economic indicators, incorporating data visualization features such as user-defined data display groups, introducing moving averages to supplement the basic period-to-period changes, and linking the data to an economic dashboard on the



census.gov main page as part of the overall improvements being made to the Census Bureau website.

Initiative #9– National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration: Deepwater Horizon Institutional Repository

Overview: The Deepwater Horizon (DWH) oil spill forced multiple agencies to work together, creating unprecedented volumes of data and information across disparate communities and operations. NOAA’s stewardship mission and role in the DWH response placed a complex array of data and information within its domain and custody. Consistent with its core mission and obligation to public transparency, NOAA is working to preserve these federal assets and make them available to the public and to other agencies as well as to scientific and academic communities.

Although most of this data and information is being preserved and made publicly accessible, it can require expert knowledge to find and use data from a single agency, with even more skill required to search across multiple agencies.

To improve access and usability, NOAA is publishing a searchable index of all DWH data and information preserved within NOAA National Data Centers (NNDC) and NOAA Central Library (NCL). NOAA has partnered with the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) to develop a DWH Institutional Repository (DWH-IR) to support online discovery and dissemination of NOAA’s DWH data and information in digital form.

Impact and Benefits: The DWH-IR is designed to be scalable and reproducible in order to serve all DWH community members, including federal, state, and local governments, and academic and scientific institutions. The model enables each agency to maintain ownership and management of its data and information, with the IR providing a common point of access with standardized access tools.

A fully functioning DWH-IR will result in:

- Increased public transparency by preserving and publishing soft information such as analytical reports, public briefings, images, and videos in addition to observational data
- Increased efficiency for answering customer inquiries by combining soft information with hard data in a comprehensive, cross-referenced, searchable index
- Reduced direct customer contact for FOIA and, potentially, eDiscovery requests by providing easy-to-use self-service tools for online access to publicly cleared records



Department of Commerce Customer Service Plan



Key Milestones and Timeline:

- Phase I funding received by OCIO and NCL and planning began on DWH IR Pilot – 5/27/2011
- Signed NOAA NTIS MOU and began ingesting DWH files from NCL into DWH-IR – 8/12/2011
- Launch DWH IR Phase I Pilot Site – 10/14/2011
- Phase II funding and planning – Q1 FY2012
- Begin Phase II – Q2 FY2012
- Multiple levels of restricted access
- Multiple agency holdings
- Initial Phase II release – Q4 FY2012