

Department of Agriculture

Section 1: Highlights of Agency E-Government Activities

A. Enhanced Delivery of Information and Services to the Public - Sec. 202(g)

Section 202(g) of the E-Gov Act requires agencies to provide information on how electronic Government is used to improve performance in delivering programs to constituencies. In no more than 250 words, describe one IT agency activity or initiative that enhances the delivery of information and services to the public and others, or makes improvements in government operations. This example should highlight how electronic government improved the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of services provided by your agency.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) and the Office of Communication (OC) are leading the Open Data Policy (ODP) implementation and is guided through the Department's Digital Strategy Governance model, and utilizes existing organizations, teams and newly developed councils and working groups. These entities play a critical part in policy implementation. USDA.gov uses best practices and usability standards, and has established internal web standards in addition to the Federal-wide standards set by OMB and GSA. USDA.gov's last redesign addressed user-experience issues by taking a task-centric approach to its information architecture and navigation. USDA takes a task-centric approach to define our information architecture and improve the user experience. USDA.gov uses analytics tools such as Google Analytics and SiteImprove to identify our top tasks, combining those with metrics from all USDA Agencies and identifying trends. These trends are analyzed and incorporated into the user interface/user experience of the web site. In FY15, USDA.gov evaluated it's website and content management platform and started a redesign of the look and feel. USDA.gov has began the early implementation of a Shared Enterprise Open Source framework that leverages a shared platform and economies of scale to share costs and resources. USDA.gov will launch this new platform in early 2016.

B. Public Access to Electronic Information - Sec. 207(f)(1)(B)

Section 207(f)(1)(B) of the E-Gov Act requires that agency websites assist public users to navigate agency websites, including the speed of retrieval of search results and the relevance of the results. Provide the updated URL(s) that contains your agency's customer service goals and describes activities that assist public users in providing improved access to agency websites and information, aid in the speed of retrieval and relevance of search results, and uses innovative technologies to improve customer service at lower costs. For example, include the URL to your agency's Customer Service Plan.

Public Facing Agency URL(s)	Brief Explanation (if necessary)
http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=DIGITALSTRATEGY	Customer Service Plan located http://www.usda.gov/documents/usda-customer-service-plan-nov2011.pdf

Section 2: Compliance with Goals and Provisions of the E-Gov Act

A. Performance Integration - Sec. 202(b)

The E-Gov Act requires agencies to develop performance metrics that demonstrate how electronic government supports agency objectives, strategic goals, and statutory mandates. In no more than 250 words, describe what performance metrics are used and tracked for IT investments and how these metrics support agency strategic goals and statutory mandates. Please discuss performance metrics that focus on customer service, agency productivity, innovative technology adoption and best practices. If applicable, include a description of your agency's evaluation model and how it is used. Provide applicable URL(s) for performance goals related to IT.

For USDA, Information technology (IT) is a tool that supports the accomplishment of mission goals. The USDA’s vision is providing the right mix of IT products and services at a lower cost while delivering greater service to employees and customers. In order to accomplish this, we track IT performance, using requirements set by the OMB, by ensuring USDA’s major investments have at least one metric measuring financial performance, one metric measuring strategic and business results, and three metrics measuring customer satisfaction. Each metric is assigned a target for the current fiscal year, and tracked in the USDA’s IT investment and portfolio management tool. The Department employs a variant of the traditional value measurement methodology to evaluate performance metrics for IT investments where the results are then used to make funding and executive management recommendations and decisions. Notably, this process involves: Strategic Alignment – establishes the level by which the IT investment aligns with the Secretary’s strategic goals and objectives. Value – proving the value of the proposed IT investment to the USDA, ensuring the investment is financially feasible to the mission area. Risk Management– address the safeguarding of IT assets, risk mitigation, disaster recovery, and continuity of operations. Resources Management– optimization of personnel and infrastructure that ensures successful IT performance in supporting USDA needs. Performance Measurement– definition and monitoring of IT investment measures to verify that technical and business objectives are achieved.

B. Accessibility - Sec. 202(c) and (d)

The E-Gov Act requires agencies to consider the impact of implementing policies on persons without access to the internet, and ensure accessibility to people with disabilities. Provide the URL(s) for your agency's website which describes actions taken by your agency in accordance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794d).

Public Facing Agency URL(s)	Brief Explanation (if necessary)
http://www.ocio.usda.gov/policy-directives-records-forms/section-508	

C. Government-Public Collaboration - Sec. 202(e)

The E-Gov Act requires agencies to sponsor activities that use information technology to engage the public in the development and implementation of policies and programs. In

no more than 250 words, describe one example of how your agency utilized technology to initiate government-public collaboration in the development and implementation of policies and programs.

USDA.gov provides the majority of its public meetings on USDA.gov/live and our Department YouTube channel, youtube.com/usda. An archive of our live streams is available and includes symposiums, town hall meetings, Google Hangouts, and other live events. USDA leverages a wide variety of digital broadcast tools and new technologies such as Google + Hangouts, and we house our own TV and Radio studios. USDA.gov/newsroom has links to resources such as our radio and TV programming, and Streaming Media Archives. The Secretary's public schedule is also available on USDA.gov. USDA also leverages various social media platforms to engage and receive public comments. Comments are received through the USDA blog, USDA Facebook page, Twitter, and other social engagement platforms. USDA also uses the IdeaJam platform for public ideation sessions and feedback. USDA.gov plans to utilize our existing broadcast services through our Creative Media and Broadcast Center to share public events through TV and Radio programming. USDA.gov/live is the center of all of our streaming events including Google + Hangouts and national symposiums.

D. Credentialing - Sec. 203

The E-Gov Act seeks to achieve interoperable implementation of electronic signatures for appropriately secure electronic transactions with Government. In no more than 250 words, describe current activities your agency is undertaking to achieve the interoperable implementation of electronic credential authentication for transactions within the Federal Government and/or with the public (e.g. agency implementation of HSPD-12 and/or digital signatures).

OCIO is participating in the pilot of the government-wide Connect.gov solution. As a solution provider for the National Strategy for Trusted Identities in Cyberspace (NSTIC), this service will provide a centralized interface between public citizens, government agencies and FICAM-approved credential providers. The objectives of this initiative are to reduce authentication costs while making it easier for public citizens to securely connect with USDA online services. OCIO has implemented and released a software development kit that enables mobile applications to use USDA's eAuthentication Service. By standardizing authentication for mobile applications, this solution enables faster deployment of new mobile applications. OCIO is continuing to work with the General Services Administration, the USDA National Finance Center (NFC), and other USDA enterprise programs such as the USDA Enterprise Learning Management Service to implement a Federated authentication service, building upon USDA's existing E-Authentication solution. This solution enables non-USDA federal agency customers of these services to their own agency credentials, including PIV credentials, for access and authentication to these GSA, NFC, or USDA services. OCIO continues to support USDA customer-facing programs, such as the NRCS Client Gateway, by enabling a secure electronic credential service that provides secure identity verification and authentication credentials for over half a million public citizens who access USDA online services.

E. USA.gov activities - Sec. 204 and Sec. 207(f)

In accordance with Section 204 of the E-Gov Act, www.USA.gov serves as an integrated internet-based system for providing the public with access to government information

and services. In accordance with Section 207(f)(3), provide the URL(s) your agency's activities on www.USA.gov.

Public Facing Agency URL(s)	Brief Explanation (if necessary)
http://www.usa.gov/Agencies/Federal/Executive/Agriculture.shtml	

F. eRulemaking - Sec. 206

The E-Gov Act seeks to assist the public, including the regulated community, in electronically submitting information to agencies under Federal requirements, by reducing the burden of duplicate collection and ensuring the accuracy of submitted information. In no more than 250 words, provide a description of your agency's use of online electronic regulatory submission capabilities, specifically the usage of www.Regulations.gov and the Federal Docket Management System (FDMS).

In FY15, USDA posted 274 rules and proposed rules, 711 Federal Register notices, and 61,027 public submissions via Regulations.gov. Overall, USDA provides the public access to 375,638 documents in Regulations.gov. The eRulemaking Program also offers a streamlined internal rulemaking business process through agency access to FDMS.gov. USDA had 228 staff using FDMS.gov in FY15, and created 163 regulatory dockets in FDMS for regulatory actions published in FY15.

G. National Archives Records Administration (NARA) Recordkeeping - Sec. 207(d-e)

The E-Gov Act requires agencies to adopt policies and procedures to ensure that chapters 21, 25, 27, 29, and 31 of title 44, United States Code, are applied effectively and comprehensively to Government information on the Internet and to other electronic records. In no more than 250 words, describe your agency's adherence to NARA recordkeeping policies and procedures for electronic information online and other electronic records. Additionally, please indicate the number of electronic records that have been scheduled with NARA and any pending scheduling for electronic systems at your agency.

The USDA has well-established processes and procedures to ensure the proper management, scheduling, and disposition of USDA records at <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/policy-directives-records-forms/records-management> (protected by USDA's eAuthentication Service). The USDA's Records Management Officer leads the department-wide effort to comply with the detailed requirements of NARA Bulletin 2006-002, "NARA Guidance for Implementing Section 207(e) of the E-Government Act of 2002" and the requirements of the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Circular A-130. USDA has developed guidelines and procedures that increase instructions for electronic records and better integrated management of electronic records into IT governance. USDA has also revised its policy to emphasize that records management requirements must be considered during the business process design, enterprise architecture, and system development processes. It is USDA policy to use NARA's General Records Schedule (GRS) whenever possible for disposition instructions concerning USDA records. For records that are not covered by NARA's GRS, USDA submitted 15 schedules in FY2015 still pending NARA's review and approval. Agriculture Department's records

schedules are posted on NARA’s public website at: <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/rcs/schedules/index.html?dir=/departments/department-of-agriculture>. In addition, USDA has an approved records retention schedule for its public facing and internal websites. USDA will continue to explore ways to improve the Department’s records management capability based on programmatic needs and identify systems that require electronic records management schedules. USDA will continue to create and submit records retention schedules for newly identified electronic records determined to be unclassified, USDA evaluates and schedules these systems at the agency-level.

H. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) - Sec. 207(f)(A)(ii)

The E-Gov Act requires agency websites to include direct links to information made available to the public under the Freedom of Information Act. Provide the updated URL for your agency's primary FOIA website.

Public Facing Agency URL(s)	Brief Explanation (if necessary)
http://www.dm.usda.gov/foia/	

I. Information Resources Management (IRM) Strategic Plan - Sec. 207(f)(A)(iv)

The E-Gov Act requires agency websites to include the strategic plan of the agency developed under section 306 of title 5, US Code. Provide the updated URL to your agency's IRM Strategic Plan. This plan should encompass activities in FY14. If your agency does not have an updated plan, please provide the URL to the most recent plan and indicate when an updated plan will be available.

Public Facing Agency URL(s)	Brief Explanation (if necessary)
http://www.ocio.usda.gov/strategic-plan	

J. Research and Development (R&D) - Sec. 207(g)

If your agency funds R&D activities, provide the updated URL(s) for publicly accessible information related to those activities, and specify whether or not each website provides the public information about Federally funded R&D activities and/or the results of the Federal research.

Public Facing Agency URL(s)	Brief Explanation (if necessary)
http://www.fs.fed.us/research/	Yes. This website provides public information about R/D activities and/or the results of the Federal Research.
http://cris.nifa.usda.gov/	Yes. This website provides public information about R/D activities and/or the results of the Federal Research.

Public Facing Agency URL(s)	Brief Explanation (if necessary)
http://www.nal.usda.gov/research-and-technology/research-and-development	Yes. This website provides public information about R/D activities and/or the results of the Federal Research.

K. Privacy Policy and Privacy Impact Assessments - Sec. 208(b)

The E-Gov Act requires agencies to conduct a privacy impact assessment; ensure the review of the privacy impact assessment by the Chief Information Officer, or equivalent official, as determined by the head of the agency; and if practicable, after completion of the review under clause, make the privacy impact assessment publicly available through the website of the agency, publication in the Federal Register, or other means. In no more than 250 words, describe your agency's adherence to this provision, including adherence to OMB's guidance pertaining to the use of IT to collect, maintain, or disseminate identifiable information, or when new systems are procured for this purpose. In addition, describe your agency's process for performing and updating privacy impact assessments for IT.

USDA adheres to OMB guidance regarding the collection, maintenance, and dissemination of personally identifiable information. In FY15, USDA continued its social security number (SSN)/tax payer identification number (TIN) elimination, encryption and/or masking effort by reaching out to USDA agencies that were still reconciling their inventory in FY2014. The SSN/TIN project is a continuous monitoring effort for USDA which saw a reduction of 4% in the number of systems eliminating or mitigating SSN/TIN via encryption or masking. The Department continues to take a holistic approach to reviewing agency SSN/TIN reporting by comparing the review of the SSN/TIN holding report with privacy documentation reviews. The collaboration and reviews have made an impact on the agencies to minimize PII as a standard when reconciling their system inventory. The Privacy Office facilitated several collaboration sessions with the agencies on a weekly basis during the summer of FY15. During these sessions, the Privacy Office in collaboration with the agencies made several revisions and improvements to the Privacy Threshold Analysis (PTA) and Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) templates and guidelines. In addition, the Privacy Office posted forums on USDA Connect – Privacy Committees to reach out to others for recommendations/comments. The Privacy Office was able to hire collegiate resources through internship programs. This initiative benefited interns, USDA, and privacy compliance. The interns took on the project to identify and assist the agencies in addressing reconciliation of PIAs. These outreach efforts improved the quality and integrity of PIAs. Overall, USDA’s numbers have improved in compliance and privacy reporting.

K2. Privacy Policy and Privacy Impact Assessment Links - Sec. 208(b)

In addition to the narrative provided above in section K., provide the updated URL(s) for your agency's privacy policy and the website where your agency's privacy impact assessments are available.

Public Facing Agency URL(s)	Brief Explanation (if necessary)
http://www.ocio.usda.gov/about-ocio/policy-and-directives-pd/privacy-office	http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=Privacy_Impa

Public Facing Agency URL(s)	Brief Explanation (if necessary)
	ct_Assessment.xml&contentidonly=true

M. Agency IT Training Programs - Sec. 209(b)(2)

The E-Gov Act calls for agencies to establish and operate information technology training programs. The act states that such programs shall have curricula covering a broad range of information technology disciplines corresponding to the specific information technology and information resource management needs of the agency involved; be developed and applied according to rigorous standards; and be designed to maximize efficiency, through the use of self-paced courses, online courses, on-the-job training, and the use of remote instructors, wherever such features can be applied without reducing the effectiveness of the training or negatively impacting academic standards. In no more than 250 words, describe your agency's IT training program, privacy training program, cross-agency development programs, and competencies reviews for IT workforce.

In FY2015, the USDA provided the following IT training curricula: AgMAX – nearly 230 USDA staff have taken training on this recently implemented Departmentwide application that serves as the core IT investment and portfolio management repository tool. AgMAX, captures necessary IT investment information for the USDA’s repository of major and non-major IT investments so that informed decisions can be made on the health of each investment as well the capability of generating the necessary OMB submissions to the monthly IT Federal Dashboard and the annual USDA IT Portfolio Summary and Major IT Investment Business Cases. Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers (FAC-P/PM) –USDA offered training courses for those USDA staff responsible for managing major and non-major IT investments in the USDA portfolio. FAC-P/PM focuses on the essential competencies needed by program and project managers for successful accomplishment of their day-to-day activities. In support of the continued efforts to standardize FAC-P/PM certification training requirements, USDA implemented a curriculum designed to develop professional program and project managers. In FY 2015, 20 USDA staff took courses targeted to satisfy Entry (Level 1) certification including Managing Federal Projects, Scheduling and Cost Control for Federal Government Projects, and Leading Government Projects. Also in FY2015, 20 USDA staff took courses targeted to satisfy Senior (Level III) certification including Program Management for Federal Government, Advanced Earned Value for Federal Government Project Managers, and Leading Federal Government Project Managers.