



PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

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PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE AND ACCENTURE FEDERAL SERVICES UNVEIL FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND FEDERAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE REPORT

Report reveals what is working well, what needs improving and what actions agencies are taking to strengthen customer experience across eight high-impact service providers

WASHINGTON – The nonprofit, nonpartisan [Partnership for Public Service](#), in collaboration with [Accenture Federal Services](#), today released “[Government for the People: Profiles on the Customer Experience](#)” — a first-of-its kind report compiling customer-experience data, feedback and insights from across eight of the federal government’s high-impact services. Among the services profiled are federal student aid, passport services and health care for veterans.

With continuous improvements in the private sector setting high expectations about what constitutes good service, the public consistently rates the services provided by federal agencies poorly, placing them far behind other sectors and industries. Poor experiences with these services lead to an overall lack of trust in the federal government and, according to the Pew Research Center, that trust remains near historic lows.

“The perception of the federal government as a poor provider of customer service doesn’t tell the whole story,” said Meroe Park, executive vice president of the Partnership for Public Service. “While third-party surveys give low marks to the services that agencies provide, the feedback that people share directly with agencies often tells a different story — with many of our government’s most in-demand services being highly rated. By digging deeper into these specific services and interactions, the federal government can build on its strengths and spread successful practices across government.”

The new report features in-depth customer experience profiles that highlight what is working well, where improvements are needed, and the actions that agencies are taking to strengthen the customer experience. It also highlights concrete steps that federal agencies, the Office of Management and Budget and Congress can take to enhance these services.

The report builds on customer experience data and information on 25 high-impact federal service providers that OMB published last month. Through this effort, the federal government is establishing a standardized framework for agencies to measure, report and act on customer experience data.

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Of the 25 high-impact service providers that the OMB identified, the Partnership for Public Service and Accenture Federal Services profiled eight federal agencies from among those with the highest volume of direct contact with the public:

AGENCY	SERVICE
Transportation Security Administration	Airport security screening and passenger services
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services	Citizenship and immigration applicant services
U.S. Customs and Border Protection	Customs security and screening services
Office of Federal Student Aid	Federal student aid applicant services
Internal Revenue Service	Individual taxpayer services
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services	Medicare customer support services
Veterans Health Administration	Outpatient health care services for veterans
Bureau of Consular Affairs	Passport services

“As many federal agencies make progress on delivering readily accessible, user-friendly services, the private sector continues to innovate and set expectations even higher,” said Kathy Conrad, digital government leader at Accenture Federal Services. “There is growing recognition that agency services and systems need to be designed around customer needs rather than organizational structure, technology or policies alone. Astute federal leaders are now implementing more advanced customer experience practices to keep pace with rising citizen expectations and to better enable customer data and insights to drive decision-making, investments, and enhanced experiences.”

The report identifies several themes from the analysis of these federal services. While the analysis found that agencies delivered a good customer experience in many instances, it also identified challenges and issues customers face. Among the key themes:

- **The American public is highly satisfied with many services and the people who provide them.** While third-party surveys give low marks to the services that agencies provide, the feedback that people share directly with agencies after specific interactions often tells a different story. Many of the government’s most-used services — including speaking with an IRS representative for tax help, applying for a passport or getting answers to a question about Medicare — are highly rated, according to agency customer surveys.
- **There’s a lack of publicly available data.** Agencies collect a lot of data and feedback about the experiences of their customers, but most of those results are not shared publicly, often due to restrictions imposed by the Paperwork Reduction Act. This limits the extent to which services that receive positive customer feedback can be highlighted and constrains government from being held accountable for improving services that are rated poorly.
- **Experiences across federal websites are inconsistent and often confusing.** People find clear, user-friendly information and access to federal services on some agency websites, but struggle to get what they need on others. The average grade for clarity and usability across the eight agency web pages was a B+, with five agencies scoring an A- or higher. Web pages that did not score as highly often used unexplained jargon or packed the site with information that could distract customers from key tasks.

- **Online access to services are limited.** The analysis found that many high-volume federal services do not yet allow users to complete important tasks and transactions electronically, which is out of sync with the public’s everyday experience with commercial services.
- **Many government processes lack transparency.** Customers of federal services may feel as if they are interacting with a “black box” when they apply for a service and wait months without or a clear explanation of next steps. Agencies that provide quick, straightforward information, clarify processes and address customer questions have seen positive results.
- **The recent partial government shutdown had a negative impact on services.** From cancelled taxpayer appointments to delays in Global Entry applications, the 35-day shutdown that ran from December 22, 2018 to January 25, 2019 affected people who needed government services, with some issues continuing long after the shutdown ended.
- **Social media provides valuable insights.** A scan of more than 80,000 online posts about federal services on social media platforms found many examples of useful customer feedback, such as issues with government websites that agencies can easily fix; examples of great service that agencies can reinforce; and questions about processes or forms that agencies can answer.

The Partnership for Public Service and Accenture Federal Services will host their annual customer experience summit on Tuesday, October 8 at the Partnership’s office in Washington, D.C. The summit will include a presentation on the research findings from the new report; a panel discussion with federal executives from Federal Student Aid, the Patent and Trademark Office and the Transportation Security Administration; and a keynote address from the commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service.

For more information and insights on the customer experience profiles and the Partnership for Public Service and Accenture’s recommendations for federal agencies and Congress, visit ourpublicservice.org.

About the Partnership for Public Service

During the past 18 years, the nonpartisan, nonprofit Partnership for Public Service has been dedicated to making the federal government more effective for the American people. We work across administrations to help transform the way government operates by increasing collaboration, accountability, efficiency and innovation. Visit ourpublicservice.org to learn more. Follow us on social [@RPublicService](https://twitter.com/RPublicService) and [subscribe](#) today to get the latest federal news, information on upcoming Partnership programs and events, and more.

About Accenture Federal Services

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