Environmental Protection Agency

Customer Service Plan

October 2012 Update

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:

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:
Managed by EPA, the eRulemaking Program is a federal-wide E-Gov and Open Gov initiative offering the public easy online access to find, view, and comment on rulemakings. All cabinet-level departments and various independent agencies, representing more than 90% of Federal rulemakings issued each year, are served by this fee-for-service program.

Timing: In FY13, the eRulemaking Program will expand the reach of the public participation services available through Regulations.gov by improving upon existing web services to access Regulations.gov data and by adding a new web service that will make the submission of public comments easier and more direct. Substantial improvements to search and navigation on Regulations.gov will also be released. To improve the efficiency of the Federal rulemaking process, the eRulemaking Program will deliver new services for partner agencies to assist in public comment review and management.

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 opportunities to provide Tribes flexibility in grants management to accomplish successful environmental programs while ensuring the integrity of resources. Key changes include streamlined processes to apply for and manage grants.

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 governing statute (Pesticide Registration Improvement Extension Act of 2012) is authorized through FY 2017.

Featured Actions: Continued 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. For the past three years, we have designed and tested this new approach. In FY2013, we will implement it fully, with the goal of transforming the entire website (more than 800,000 files across hundreds of topics) by the end of FY2014.

SIGNATURE INITIATIVE : e-RULEMAKING
EPA/OEI

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The eRulemaking Program enhances access and participation in the regulatory process and improves Partner Agency regulatory processes and transparency of regulatory decisions. Participation in this program allows agencies to fulfill the E-Government Act of 2002 requirement to ensure a publicly accessible website containing electronic dockets for regulations. The eRulemaking Program also supports Executive Order 13563 - *Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review, Executive Order 13609 - Promoting International Regulatory Cooperation,* the *Open Government Partnership National Action Plan,* and the Presidential Memorandum - *Managing Government Records.*

The Regulations.gov web site (www.regulations.gov) provides citizens, small businesses, educators, multinational corporations, civic organizations, and all levels of government one-stop internet access to view, download, and submit public comments on Federal regulations. Agencies shall ensure public regulatory dockets are electronically accessible and searchable using Regulations.gov and accept public comments via the website. With the Regulations.gov Exchange, users can post suggestions and feedback on agency-based initiatives, further enhancing public participation. [

The Federal Docket Management System (FDMS) website (www.fdms.gov), the advanced "back-end" docket management system, provides partner Federal department and agency staff with the ability to post regulatory documents and manage public comments. FDMS is continually improving internal docket management functionalities, electronic recordkeeping, and the ability to publicly post all relevant documents on Regulations.gov (e.g., Federal register documents, proposed rules, notices, supporting analyses, and public comments).

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.

The Regulations.gov website received 394,870 public comments via the online web form, and an average of 1.7 million visits per month and 8.3 million hits per month in FY 2012. Regulations.gov provides public access to more than 3.6 million documents.   As a participating agency, in FY 2012, EPA posted 1,277 rules and proposed rules, 989 Federal Register notices, and 16,518 supporting and related materials associated with these dockets for public access and review on Regulations.gov. In addition, EPA posted over 64,692 comments submitted for consideration in Agency actions. Overall, EPA made available 83,578 documents on Regulations.gov in FY 2012.

The Regulations.gov web site was re-launched in February 2012, providing the public a new way to navigate the site, search and sort data, connect via social media, and learn about the regulatory process. Regulations.gov is designed to increase transparency of the regulatory process. Subsequent releases have included improving search results and the public comment submission process, redesigning the docket folder summary page, and integrating data from the Unified Agenda, a semi-annual publication of regulatory and deregulatory activities under development throughout the Federal government. The eRulemaking Program engages its Regulations.gov stakeholders on a continuous basis to gather feedback on site design, data architecture, and social media.

The new Regulations.gov supports the key objectives in Executive Order 13563 to promote public participation and an open exchange of regulatory information. In addition, it supports the Open Government Partnership National Action Plan to "improve public services," including "expanding public participation in the development of regulations."

The FDMS Beta, deployed June 2012, gives FDMS.gov a new look and feel and offers agency staff improved ways to search for and view regulatory documents contained in FDMS. In the newly redesigned system, the eRulemaking Program replaced end-of-life technology with open source software that modernizes the FDMS user interface and improves system performance while reducing future development and maintenance costs.

Key Customer Group: Customers include Federal, state, local and tribal government agencies; the general public, environmental groups, industry/business, Congress, trade or national press, or associations.

Key Milestones and Timeline:

- Regulations.gov Release 3.3 (Q1 2013)
  This release will feature Search page updates to improve results with targeted searches and provide public users with access to Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) for comment submissions, with the support of partner agencies piloting this effort.

- FDMS.gov Release (Q1 2013)
  This release will provide agency staff features to assist in public comment review, further streamline electronic docket processes, and allow Federal agency users to complete tasks more efficiently.

- Regulations.gov Release 3.4 (Q2 2013)
  This release will feature Search, Docket folder and Document page updates to incorporate additional improvements to general search results and the advanced search page, docket-based search results, further enhance the layout of the new Docket Folder design, and improve the layout of the Document page.

- Regulations.gov Release 3.5 (Q4 2013)
  This release will feature Home, Document and Comment Submission page updates to incorporate custom, user-specific features (such as My recent searches, Remember my search), and will introduce document classifications as a new way to search, continue improvements to the layout of the Document page, as well as the layout of Comment Submission page.

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 Tribal partners, and in coordination with OMB's Administrative Flexibility initiative. This will occur during Q1 and Q2 of FY2013
- The second phase will involve vetting of draft policies on streamlining/burden reduction in consultation with Tribal partners. This will occur during Q3 of FY 2013.
- The third phase will involve issuing final policies in consultation with Tribal partners and approved by EPA's senior-level Grants Management Council. This will occur in Q4 of FY 2013

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. For FY 2013, EPA has an initiative to develop a new EPA-Tribal Partnership Paradigm. One component of that initiative is to provide Tribes flexibility in grant management while preserving the integrity of resources. For example, 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. EPA continues to have regular conference call with the States to identify any areas of concern. The new grants policy developed by EPA and the States, Grants Policy Issuance (GPI) 12-06, "Timely Obligation, Award, and Expenditure of EPA Grant Funds", contains provisions for reviewing terms and conditions and eliminating those that are no longer necessary.

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. This is continuing work.

- 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. EPA developed training slides on bundling of assurances to treat Tribes in the same manner as States.   In September 2012, the slides were distributed to EPA's Regional Grants Management Officers and Regional Indian Coordinators.

- EPA also developed training slides on the proper management of unliquidated obligations (ULOs) under Tribal grants. These slides address common misconceptions Tribes may have related to ULOs and can aid them in better understanding the ULO process. In September 2012, the slides were distributed to EPA's Regional Grants Management Officers and Regional Indian Coordinators.

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 will be working with Tribes to address this issue as part of broader Partnership Paradigm effort described above.

- 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.   EPA will be consulting with the Tribes on the interim Indirect Cost Rate Policy in FY 2013.

4. **Streamline Agency Processes to Reduce Costs and Accelerate Delivery**

- EPA, Tribes and States determined that improvements are needed to streamline 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 issued GPI 12-06, "Timely Obligation, Award, and Expenditure of EPA Grant Funds" in September 2012 which addresses the need for timely obligation of appropriated grant funds as well as streamlining the grants process for States. EPA will be working with Tribes to streamline Tribal grants as part of the broader Partnership Paradigm initiative described above.

- 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. This issue was put on hold to develop GPI-12-06, which streamlines the State grant 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. This issue was put on hold to develop GPI-12-06, which streamlines the State grant process.

SERVICE #2: PESTICIDES RE-REGISTRATION/MAINTENANCE FEE

EPA/OCSPP

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

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

reauthorization of the statute. The goal of the registration review process is to review pesticide 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 OEAEE and OEI

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1. Increase Feedback from Customers

- Continue using online surveys and web traffic statistics 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
- Revise "About EPA" pages to deliver more local information by state, moving away from focusing on EPA's administrative regions. Target: FY2013.
- 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 FY2013.

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 FY2013 to publish epa.gov, which will reduce costs from coding individual pages (the contract and most development took place in FY2012).
- Use canned searches to help people find information rather than maintaining hand-built lists of links.