



U.S. DIGITAL SERVICE

Impact Report

2024

A note from our Administrator

Since the U.S. Digital Service (USDS) was founded in 2014, we have jumped in to help tackle the most challenging technology implementation problems across the government, bringing top-notch technical talent into government and partnering with federal agencies to get things done right for the public.

Our work has spanned 31 agencies and over one hundred programs, with profound impacts—including helping working families, Veterans, refugees, students, children, small businesses and retirees. We have helped make their lives easier and the departments that serve them more efficient and effective. Along the way, we have opened doors for agencies to think differently about what is possible by encouraging them to ask questions like:

- How can technology simplify rather than complicate their work and services?
- How can they increase efficiency while decreasing IT spending?
- How can they use technology tools to make their services more accessible to their customers and build trust with the public?

I have been here for six of the nearly ten transformational years and have seen the changes. Some things have stayed the same—we still jump in and roll up our sleeves to tackle tech challenges from the ground up, debugging networks, running scrums, using technologies better, and testing tools with real users. But over that time, we have also demonstrated the ability to catalyze broader transformational change. Through consistent on-the-ground execution and agency commitment to building a stronger technology organization, we have helped enable agencies like the VA and CMS by building in-house digital services teams who've improved service delivery and increased trust with the American public.

Other agencies have taken note and are working with USDS to scope an internal digital service capacity.

The most important thing we have done, and continue to do, is to bring top-notch tech talent into the federal government and retain it. Over the last decade, we have recruited over 700 Digital Service Experts into federal service. They understand the transformational impact they can have by bringing their expertise to the federal government to work on services that change lives.

Yet even at our current size – the largest in our history – we now get far more requests for USDS's help and engagement than we can meet. This is a sign of shifting expectations and ambitions, but also reflects a vast need for more technical talent across the government.

This report demonstrates the tremendous impact that USDS has had and serves as a call to action for all of us to find a way to do even more. In the pages that follow, you'll see how building the right teams can catalyze a 53% increase in customer satisfaction at Social Security Administration (SSA), can reliably deliver 750 million COVID-19 tests across the country, and change how the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) collects data to make us ready for the next pandemic.

The return on investment for technical talent in government is huge. USDS is the proof of concept and leader at the highest level, bringing technical expertise and driving enormous improvements across the government. We are excited to share these stories of impact and even more excited about the impact yet to come.

Sincerely,
Mina Hsiang
Administrator, The U.S. Digital Service

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USDS delivers better government services to the American people through technology and design.

THE PEOPLE AT USDS

USDS is a group of skilled technology professionals who work on short-term appointments to implement best practices from the private sector into the federal government. They aim to improve how government services are delivered to millions of Americans and federal employees by providing new technology perspectives and using their expertise in designing, creating, and implementing appropriate technology solutions. The talented team at USDS possesses unique capabilities, enabling agencies to accomplish their goals and objectives better.

HOW USDS WORKS WITH AGENCIES

Agencies are where the real work happens. To support their work and evolution, USDS partners with agencies by assigning small, interdisciplinary teams to work hand-in-hand with agency staff and contractors to deliver critical programs through technology and design. USDS can help an agency procure new technology, improve existing systems, or develop its own technical capacity, and learn by doing the work together. USDS transfers knowledge and expertise to agency staff, helps them hire additional talent, evolves their processes, and updates expectations. As the agency builds the right capabilities, USDS staff are recalled to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and assigned to another project.

Since its founding, USDS has collaborated with 31 federal agencies. It has four project categories in its portfolio:

- **Agency transformation:** Agencies looking to modernize or transform their technical capabilities come to USDS for help with implementation, process evolution, and technical staffing expertise.
- **Policy implementation consultation:** As part of OMB, USDS provides perspective on the technology implications of policy decisions.
- **Program implementation:** USDS helps agencies design and establish new programs or capabilities.
- **Rapid response:** In response to urgent situations, USDS deploys teams quickly across the interagency to solve critical problems. This can be in response to situations such as infant formula shortages or a national security need.

THE LONG-TERM VALUE AND IMPACT OF USDS

USDS enables the government to consistently deliver digital services to the American public, catalyzing long-term change and resulting in secure, efficient, and mission-serving technology. Over the last 10 years, USDS has partnered with agencies to deliver material improvements to the American public. Some of the short- and long-term impacts include:

- 18.25 million Veterans able to use simpler, more accessible tools for health and benefit services
- 53% increase in customer satisfaction for 180 million annual SSA.gov visitors
- Over 749 million free COVID-19 tests delivered
- 130% increase in the number of rural and under-resourced families with broadband internet through the Affordable Connectivity Program
- 388 million bottles of infant formula, imported in a crisis, and deployed to the places that needed it most based on new data and analytics
- 900+ acquisition professionals who are now prepared to skillfully and efficiently help the government buy technology products and services, due to their certification through Digital IT Acquisition Professional training program (DITAP)

The following examples demonstrate the breadth of issues USDS has been working to address, the diverse range of roles it has played, and the significant impact it has had so far. The 2024 USDS Impact Report outlines eleven USDS projects and their implications. Upon reflection of the progress that USDS has made possible, it is evident that there have been tangible improvements in government services. However, more work must be done to enhance government services for the American public.

Internal Revenue Service

Filing taxes for free with IRS' Direct File

CHALLENGE

Individual taxpayers in the United States spend about [nine hours and \\$150](#) preparing their taxes each year. Additionally, many federal aid programs, such as the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit, are distributed through the tax system, and one in five eligible taxpayers don't claim these valuable credits. Although taxpayers have options for preparing their tax returns, there was previously no easy, free, online way to do so with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), which shaped their opinions of the agency.

IRS began the [Direct File launch with U.S. Digital Service](#) (USDS) and expanded to include the General Service Administration (GSA) 18F and two small business vendors. It was introduced in 12 states, offering taxpayers a new option for filing taxes. Through the launch of Direct File, the IRS is demonstrating its commitment to improving public interactions and providing taxpayers with more choices.

SOLUTION

The product and new ways of working

Starting in June 2023, USDS led the development of Direct File for the IRS, with a scheduled launch date of January 2024. USDS worked closely with the IRS, GSA's 18F, and small business contractors to create blended teams. This approach allowed the Direct File team to demonstrate new design and agile development methods to the IRS, with small teams delivering iterative improvements to build the product.

The teams set standards and best practices from the start to ensure the Direct File pilot would

be user-friendly and could be completed within the set timeline. The team focused on the following considerations to ensure that all taxpayers could accurately and confidently complete their taxes:

- The teams interviewed, observed, and usability tested the service with taxpayers with various attitudes, aptitudes, abilities, and access needs.
- Uses inclusive design and plain language best practices to help taxpayers understand complicated tax concepts, reduce anxiety, and establish trust.
- Available in Spanish and has undergone usability testing in Spanish.
- Accessible, [508 compliant](#), and user-friendly for taxpayers with disabilities.

Customer support: one team, one dream

During the tax filing season, USDS worked with the IRS to provide integrated customer support through live chat within the tax filing system. Trained representatives handled 38,600 taxpayer interactions and collaborated closely with the product team to implement over 1,000 changes and deploy new product versions weekly.

Starting small to get it right

The Direct File service was gradually introduced to taxpayers over several weeks, starting in January 2024. This approach allowed the team to thoroughly test the new service and continuously improve the taxpayer experience before making it available to larger audiences. USDS and the IRS partnered to drastically improve the tax filing experience by delivering this solution from design to product and customer support operations.

Internal Revenue Service

IMPACT

Over 140,000 people in the 12 pilot states filed their taxes for free directly with the IRS and received over \$90 million in federal tax refunds. Those federal tax refunds provided access to the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, two of the country's largest and most effective antipoverty and anti-child-poverty programs.

In addition to refunding taxpayers, Direct File users who completed a post-submission survey said their experience with Direct File "increased their trust in the IRS" by 86%. Following a successful filing season pilot and feedback from various partners, the IRS announced on May 30, 2024, that it will [make Direct File a permanent option](#) for filing federal tax returns starting in the 2025 tax season.

Within the IRS, the Direct File team's approach to design, blended teams, and agile development methods has drawn the attention of other departments. IRS Commissioner Werfel attributed agile methodology as the key to successfully deploying Direct File. USDS will continue to partner with its IRS IT partners to expand agile development at the agency.

140,803

tax returns accepted

33

user research studies conducted

90%

of taxpayers rate their experience
"Excellent" or "Above Average"

+74

Net Promoter Score

86%

of users say that their experience with
Direct File increased their trust in the IRS

\$90M

refunds claimed

"Ultimately, and this is a little geeky... it was agile technology that was the eye-opener. There's a whole discipline around how you move more quickly to deliver incremental functionality, strip through bureaucracy to make decisions more quickly and take calculated risks more regularly. Here, by sizing this [Direct File release] in an increment that had an impact, we could be more agile, have exceptional certainty, and launch something we can all learn from."

— IRS Commissioner Daniel Werfel, during a testimony in front of the Senate Finance Committee

Social Security Administration

Increasing customer satisfaction on SSA.gov by 53%

CHALLENGE

The Social Security Administration's (SSA) website is visited by 180 million people annually seeking information and services, making it the second-most visited federal website. It is essential for accessing and managing benefits such as Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Retirement benefits for more than 72 million people and maintaining personal records, including Social Security numbers.

Before its relaunch in December 2022, SSA's former website contained over 78,000 content pages, though most customer traffic was spread over fewer than 100 pages. Sometimes redundant and complicated information could drive customers to seek in-person assistance at local Social Security offices or by phone, two service channels that faced staffing shortages and technology challenges. Staying committed to improving the customer experience, SSA recognized the need to revamp its website to make its programs more accessible and transparent.

In 2021, SSA enlisted USDS for its track record of helping agencies deliver government services quickly, reliably, and cost effectively. Using leading technology and design approaches, USDS helped SSA meet its goals of improving customer experience, adopting a modern content platform, and building long-term agency capacity.

SOLUTION

USDS partnered with SSA to observe customers and discover how they engaged with the SSA website. Collected insights informed recommendations for design and modern development practices to ensure customers can better use the website to complete high-priority tasks such as

- apply for benefits,
- sign up for Medicare, and
- apply for SSI

The partnership created momentum to improve service delivery through several technical building blocks:

- **Task-focused information architecture** transformed a static homepage with broad categories of topics to a simpler interface with actionable links for common tasks such as applying for benefits, signing up for Medicare, and checking eligibility.
- A **conversational eligibility screener** replaced complicated policy language, creating a more user-friendly eligibility process. As a result, 50.2% of SSA customers start an online application when they discover they may be eligible for benefits.
- **Clear, organized content** in plain language provides reliable, consistent information to customers so they can make critical decisions. One million more customers per week log into SSA.gov to complete tasks, and less time is wasted second-guessing and interpreting complicated language.
- Building a **modern development infrastructure** that includes a content management system, a content delivery network, and cloud services is expected to save taxpayers an estimated \$285 million over five years. Enhancing the site's performance and reliability has replaced expensive and time-consuming development support.
- Implementing the **U.S. Web Design System** has increased mobile device usability, removing the need for customers to sift through pages of lengthy content.

Social Security Administration

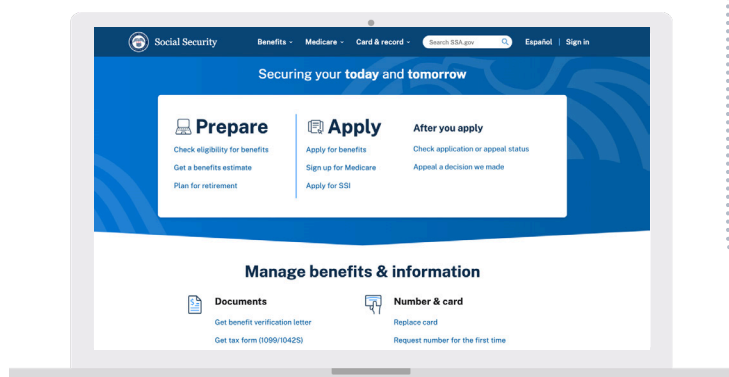
IMPACT

USDS's most impactful contribution to its partnership with SSA was advocating for the agency to establish a cross-disciplinary team to continue the digital transformation. The new team establishes sustainable standards and processes, shares research findings, and develops data-driven strategies to improve design and development solutions for the public.

Visit [SSA.gov](https://ssa.gov) to see the live result of the partnership between USDS and SSA.

“We have millions of people visiting the site, some during challenging times in their lives, so there is a deep sense of responsibility to improve their experience.”

— Suran De Silva, Director,
Web Strategy at SSA



\$285M

in projected estimated savings over five years in infrastructure expenses

99.9%

UPTIME*

since the launch in December 2022

**The amount of time a service or system is available and operational*

50.2%

OF CUSTOMERS

start an online application after learning they are eligible through the newly revamped, straightforward eligibility screening process

1M

more logins per week since relaunch of SSA.gov in December 2022

53%

INCREASE IN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

from the relaunch of SSA.gov in December 2022 to September 2023

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Building software tools that saved frontline COVID-19 testers 400,000 hours

CHALLENGE

In the early months of 2020, the U.S. was hit hard by COVID-19. After over [118,000 cases in 114 countries and 4,291 deaths](#), the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020. With the virus spreading rapidly and invisibly, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) struggled to track active COVID-19 cases across states, territories, and tribal nations to understand it better and contain its spread.

CDC needed two functions that didn't exist: user-friendly software for frontline workers to collect COVID-19 test results and automation that would route those results to the appropriate municipality and then to CDC.

SOLUTION

Working alongside volunteers and workers at temporary and pop-up testing sites, USDS collaborated with CDC and quickly deployed teams to observe, prototype, and build software tools nationwide in six weeks to meet demand. In the field, the project teams employed multiple approaches to develop a product to solve critical issues:

- Observing and interviewing government workers from over 20 local and state public health departments to understand their needs.
- Building, testing, and improving the tools to address the identified needs over time.

The project team spoke to more than 100 people during the process and gained insights that led to developing functional and time-saving products, improving the ability to test more efficiently. CDC and USDS iteratively built and adjusted the software tools based on feedback from stakeholders and users.

Using innovative thinking and technology best practices, the project team built two browser-based software tools that are easily deployable, cost-effective, fast, and accessible from any computer:

- **Simple Report** allows testing sites to collect and store test results and speed up workflow.
- **Report Stream** standardizes and routes test results from testing sites to the correct public health departments. These public health departments can send results easily to CDC for further data analysis.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

IMPACT

As of early 2024, Report Stream routed more than 40 million COVID-19 test results to the correct public health departments, significantly increasing the data available for monitoring disease outbreaks and improving the accuracy and speed of reporting.

The Simple Report system has connected with over 15,000 testing sites, including non-traditional healthcare organizations such as schools, nursing homes, and cruise ships. These software tools have saved workers countless hours of manual labor. Furthermore, they have been repurposed for other viral diseases such as Mpox and seasonal flu outbreaks.

This rapid response project began a years-long partnership between USDS and CDC, setting the stage for future high-impact projects like Vaccines.gov/Vacunas.gov and the further modernization of CDC systems.

Visit [USDS.gov/projects](https://usds.gov/projects) to learn more about the partnership between USDS and the CDC.

15⁺k

FACILITIES

connected to CDC's test data reporting platforms

40⁺M

COVID-19 TEST RESULTS

sent to public health departments

45⁺

local, state, tribal and territorial public health departments using Simple Report and/or Report Stream

400K

working hours saved from 2020-2022

6

WEEKS

from start of project to first Simple Report test result delivered

The Department of Health and Human Services: Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services

Cutting red tape for Americans renewing health coverage and government workers

CHALLENGE

After the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) ended on March 31, 2023, many federal benefit programs' continuous enrollment conditions ended. This meant that individuals on Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage needed to complete an annual eligibility renewal to maintain coverage. As a result, state agencies and government workers faced significant challenges as they tried to rapidly manage growing caseloads for tens of millions of Americans seeking to renew their health coverage.

- Eligible enrollees would maintain continuous health coverage without unnecessary red tape and burdensome paperwork.
- Eligibility workers would need to process fewer paper submissions and could focus on more complex cases, improving accuracy and program integrity.
- State agencies would reduce their backlogs and costs while making their systems more compliant with state and federal law.

SOLUTION

USDS partnered with the Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services (CMCS) and state Medicaid agencies to rapidly implement more efficient and accurate renewal processes. The team interviewed state agencies and government workers and found that the legally required ex parte (automatic) renewal process was inefficiently implemented in many states. This process uses federal data and systems and state government data sources to renew eligible enrollees more efficiently, with less red tape and burden on state workers.

While some states were able to complete over 50% of their renewals through the lower cost ex parte process, other states were completing less than 10% of renewals through the ex parte process.

This insight indicated that improving the software that powered the ex parte renewal process in struggling states could yield significant time and cost savings for those states. It would be a win-win-win for eligible enrollees, state eligibility workers, and state agencies:

The USDS-CMCS team ran its first on-the-ground pilot in Michigan, where they worked with state staff and vendors to pull and analyze data showing how enrollees were moving through the states' systems. Together, they found ways to better align the renewals software with state policy goals and integrate more data sources into the system. Once implemented, the changes improved system compliance, saved thousands of eligibility worker hours each month, and more than doubled the number of people being renewed with less red tape. Following this success and high demand from state agencies across the country, the USDS team and CMCS rapidly launched in-depth technical assistance for ten states across diverse geographies, populations including Wisconsin, California, South Carolina, Hawaii, Kansas, New York, New Jersey, Alaska, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania.

The Department of Health and Human Services: Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services

IMPACT

As of January 2024, partner states that have implemented changes with the USDS-CMCS team increased their monthly ex parte rates by an average of 21% and decreased their procedural termination rate by 10%. In 2024, these improvements are estimated to save over two million hours of state worker time and improve the experience of maintaining health coverage for millions of eligible Americans.

These changes have made ex parte software more accurate and improved state policymakers' control over implementation—ultimately improving systems compliance. Reducing caseloads has allowed eligibility workers more time to focus on complex cases and improve program integrity.

While investigating state ex parte systems, USDS and CMCS also uncovered and fixed a significant common system error that impacted 29 states and was responsible for the improper loss of coverage for over 400,000 children and families in Medicaid and CHIP. As a result of this fix, improperly disenrolled people regained their coverage and retroactively had their healthcare coverage reinstated for their period of improper unenrollment.

Notably, many of these improvements to ex-parte systems and renewal processes will continue to benefit CMCS and states over the long term. More compliant and accurate state systems will continue to save millions of hours of state worker time each year and keep millions of eligible Americans in their health coverage with less red tape.

USDS delivered sustainable, long-term policy and delivery impact in the Medicaid enrollment process. View live results of the project at [CMS.gov](https://www.cms.gov).

10

STATES

supported through in-depth technical assistance across diverse geographies, populations, and needs

5+M

AMERICANS

estimated to be renewed for health coverage with less red tape via ex parte processing in 2024

2+ M

HOURS

of worker processing time estimated to be saved in 2024

~400K

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

reinstated for coverage across 29 states as a result of actions taken by CMCS and supported by USDS

The White House, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Agriculture, and the Food and Drug Administration

Addressing a historic formula shortage for desperate parents of babies in the US

CHALLENGE

In mid-2022, a manufacturer product recall on infant formula, combined with weakened supply chains after the COVID-19 pandemic, caused a significant decrease in the availability of infant formula, especially specialty formula for babies with intolerances, allergies, and metabolic issues. Parents and caregivers of infants who did not have other options to feed their children became desperate and panicked.

In May 2022, the actual in-stock rates of formula were only 47%, a significant drop from the post-COVID-19 average of 85-90%. However, there was no centralized system to keep track of these rates. The commercially available data sources showed conflicting, and often much higher, in-stock rates. By June 2022, retailers reported historically low in-stock rates, as low as 19% for formula at some major retailers. As most infants in the U.S. depend on formula for food, this shortage caused concern among parents, leading to panic-buying that worsened the situation.

SOLUTION

In order for the federal government to design solutions, it needed real-time data about the amount of formula available in any given location. USDS was called on to help with this rapid response project. USDS quickly created a weekly, caregiver-centric pulse monitor, and convened all available data sources, including quantitative retailer data and qualitative accounts of caregivers posting photos of empty shelves online. The monitor served as a consistent source of information for leaders across the various agencies, worked on the shortage, provided vital data, and importantly, negated myths and inaccurate data.

Research and Data Analysis

- USDS found that families needing specialty formula were the most vulnerable when they substituted the **specialty formula** for generic formulas due to lack of supply.
- USDS also determined that families who use The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC program) buy **56% of all the formula sold in the U.S.** and that these families are more likely to be low-income, non-white, and rural.

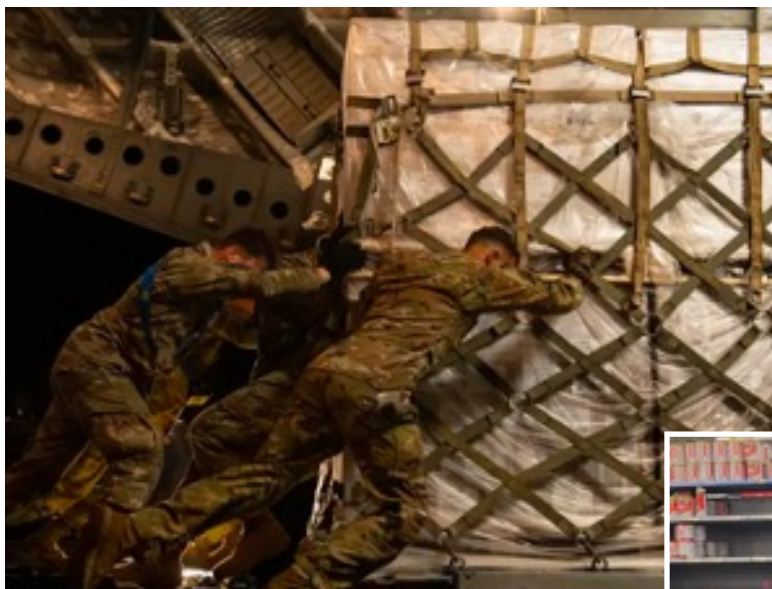
The USDS project team collaborated with retailers and manufacturers and conducted several data analyses to understand the supply chain better and identify areas where government policy could make the most positive impact.

The results of the data analysis supported the development of Operation Fly Formula, which authorized the U.S. Department of Defense to use their planes to fly infant formula from other countries that the Food and Drug Administration had determined met the U.S.'s health and safety standards into the country. President Biden also leveraged the [Defense Production Act](#) to quickly ramp up greater manufacturing capacity.

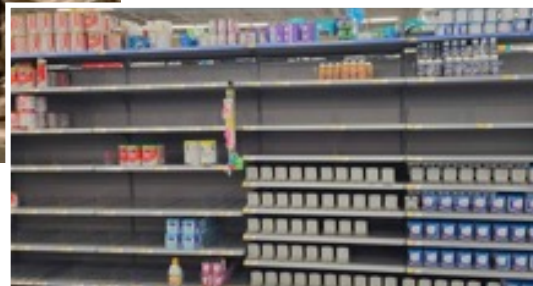
The White House, the Department of Health and Human Services,
the Department of Agriculture, and the Food and Drug Administration

IMPACT

By October 2022, infant formula in-stock rates were at 40% and climbing, double the stock available at the height of the crisis. USDS also helped the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) relaunch its Infant Formula webpage in May 2022 by conducting user research with parents to learn their questions and asking doctors to provide medically sound answers. This research informed the content and a new visual hierarchy for the webpage.



*Photo of Operation Fly Formula flight
being loaded with infant formula*



*Photo taken by USDS staffer at a
retail outlet in Bossier City, LA on
June 7, 2022*

80%
IN-STOCK RATES
currently from the
historically low formula
in-stock rate of 19%

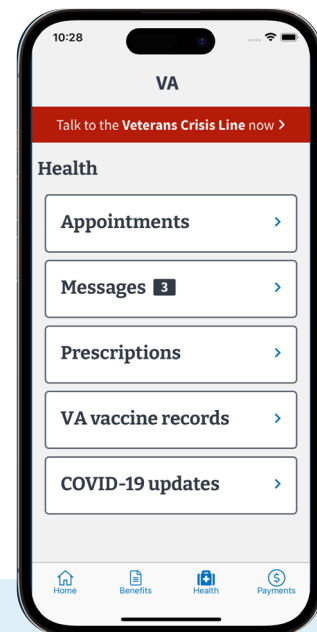
The Department of Veterans Affairs

Ensuring America's 18.25 million Veterans have access to the benefits they have earned

Services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are essential to the 18.25 million Veterans and their families in the United States. The Veterans Health Administration, which operates under the VA, is the most extensive healthcare system in the U.S., serving around 9 million Veterans annually through its 1,200 facilities.

The partnership between USDS and the VA began in response to a customer service crisis at the VA. At that time, Veterans were experiencing long waits and obstacles in almost every interaction, from enrolling in benefits to receiving healthcare. In early 2015, USDS began a long-term engagement with the VA to address these issues.

Currently, USDS is working with the VA's Office of the CTO to improve Veterans' lives by developing better software using efficient design, engineering, and product management. The most significant and impactful collaborations include the redesign of VA.gov, which receives 20 million site visitors annually, and creating the popular and highly-rated Health and Benefits Mobile app, which provides simplified, personalized access to commonly used services.



IMPACT

VA's digital modernization work is an important aspect of the agency's effort to build Veteran trust in the VA. Since the relaunch of VA.gov in 2018, overall trust score has risen from 70.4% in FY18 to 79.3% at the end of FY23.

VA.gov

- 19 million monthly unique VA.gov users
- 1.7 million monthly unique signed-in users
- VA website customer satisfaction has increased by over 12%

Health and Benefits mobile app

- 2.14 million lifetime app downloads
- 960,400 monthly active users
- 1.4 million monthly appointment detail views
- 4.8-star rating
- 112,000 ratings

The United States Postal Service and the
Department of Health and Human Services

Delivering 749 million free COVID-19 tests

In late 2021, a new and more infectious variant of COVID-19 made its way through the U.S. population. In response, the White House initiated an ambitious program that allowed every U.S. household to order free, at-home COVID-19 tests.

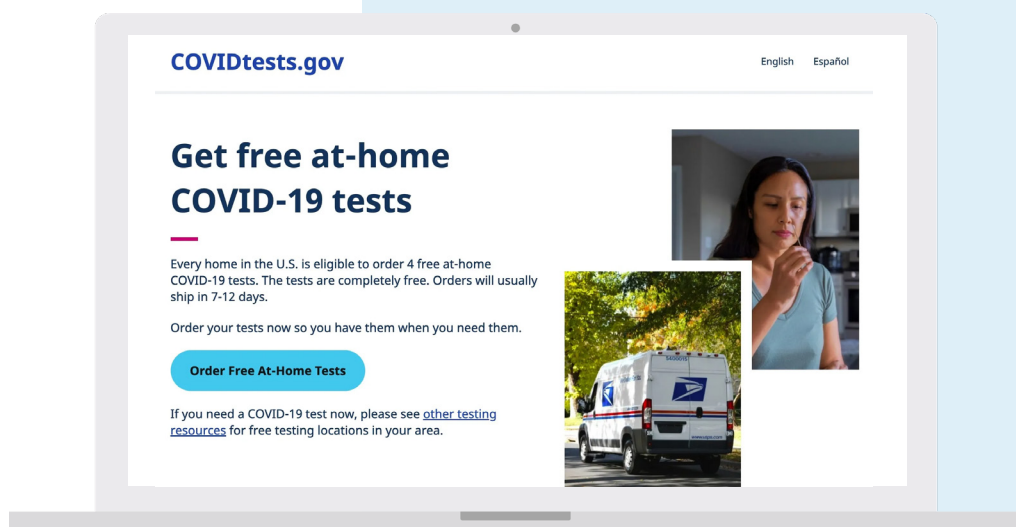
USDS collaborated with the United States Postal Service (USPS) and HHS' Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR) to make the simple, reliable, and accessible technology required to implement this program. The combined teams deployed the USDS model of human-centered design and modern technology to build a simple website that made it quick and easy for the public to order COVID-19 tests.

The launch of COVID.gov/tests was successful, as it processed up to 10 million orders per hour. The simple website interface allowed a variety of households to use the application and the infrastructure was able to accommodate the significant order volume.

IMPACT

Within 48 hours, 50% of residential addresses had already ordered a COVID-19 test kit from the site.

- USPS shipped over 749 million COVID-19 test kits out to the American public.
- The site's infrastructure was stable enough to receive more than 58 million COVID-19 test kit orders within the first 48 hours of its launch.



The Department of Health and Human Services

Connecting new parents to federal benefits faster with three customer-centered solutions

As part of an interagency Life Experience Research Team, including professionals from:

- the Office of Management and Budget (OMB),
- the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS),
- General Services Administration (GSA),
- the Department of Labor (DOL),
- the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD),
- the Department of Agriculture (USDA), and
- and the Department of Education (ED),

USDS conducted extensive research nationwide with [121 participants](#), documenting their experiences during pregnancy and childbirth and how they interacted with the federal government from the birth of their child to age five. Based on their findings, the teams developed and piloted three customer-centric solutions to alleviate the burden and provide better support and resources to these families:

- The **Alumni Peer Navigator (APN)** services help moms access social-emotional support, federally funded programs, and community resources, such as Medicaid, WIC, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), in a culturally responsive way.
- The **Newborn Supply Kit** provides families with basic physical supplies and resources crucial to the first few weeks after birth.
- **Notify.gov** sends families text message reminders and guidance to help families know about, enroll in, and re-certify for federal benefit and support programs.



IMPACT

The human-centered design research process that USDS contributed to the interagency team—a problem-solving method that prioritizes research and collaborative creativity to develop solutions for people’s needs—is helping to modernize and implement services that are simpler, more accessible, and equitable.

- **APN services** launched in six community-based organizations under Health Resources and Services Administration’s (HRSA) Healthy Start program in July 2023. Fifteen navigators helped over 200 families across the U.S. in Atlanta, Baton Rouge, Turtle Mountain Reservation, Harlem, Pee Dee, and Los Angeles. 54% of 39 surveyed families felt less lonely with a peer navigator. Health Start pilot site leadership reported 100% positive impact by APNs on care teams.
- The **Newborn Supply Kit** has distributed 3,000 kits to families in Arkansas, Louisiana, and New Mexico. The team also launched a new, easy-to-understand website, hhs.gov/newbaby, with content from the federal government.
- **Notify.gov for Families** has partnered with Norfolk’s Department of Human Services in Virginia to send Medicaid renewal reminders using a federal notification system, Notify.gov. They have successfully sent over 5,000 text message reminders to help keep eligible families covered during the Public Health Emergency unwinding.

Federal Communications Commission

Closing the digital divide by bringing internet to 23 million underserved households

The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) helps households afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare, and more. However, since the initial outreach program had not begun, it was only reaching 10 million out of 48 million potential households. The FCC enlisted USDS to help reach more of the eligible population.

The USDS project team evaluated the existing technical foundation of the program and conducted user research and data analysis to identify common barriers to access. Based on qualitative and quantitative research and data, the USDS team recommended high-impact, low-lift changes to the program and the enrollment process. The changes included reducing the number of steps and simplifying the language in the online form to prevent families from dropping out during the application process.

Together, FCC and USDS designed and implemented a simplified application and enrollment process, increasing access to affordable, high-quality broadband to 23 million households in America, including rural homes.

130%

increase in ACP enrollment
after USDS engagement
(from 10 million to 23 million households)

“The Affordable Connectivity Program application enhancements will streamline the process and ensure that benefits reach as many households as possible with as little friction as possible.”

— Cori Zarek, Deputy Administrator
at the U.S. Digital Service

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Increasing access and understanding of health care for millions of people

The Digital Service at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (DSAC) originated with the launch of the Health Insurance Marketplace in 2014 and was started by a team of current and former USDS staff. CMS has continually invested in technology talent and innovation to ensure adequate, up-to-date health care coverage and to promote quality care for beneficiaries.

CMS provides health coverage to systemically vulnerable populations—people over 65, people with low income, people with disabilities, pregnant women, and children—through its core programs:

- Medicaid and CHIP (87 million beneficiaries)
- Medicare (65 million beneficiaries), and
- The Health Insurance Marketplaces (21 million customers¹)

DSAC's team of engineers, designers, and product managers tackle projects that make health care and health care information more seamless and accessible for hundreds of millions of people, and USDS continues to partner on specific projects to support that mission.



IMPACT

DSAC has:

- Partnered with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to re-launch the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and decreased average answer speed from 2.5 minutes to 42 seconds
- Increased the completion rate of the complaint form on the No Surprises Act website—a website that educates providers and patients on laws promoting up-front medical billing information
- Launched FindSupport.gov/ EncuentraApoyo.gov to help people on Medicare, Medicaid, and Marketplace health plans access mental health care

¹ <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/marketplace-2024-open-enrollment-period-report-final-national-snapshot>

The Department of Health and Human Services

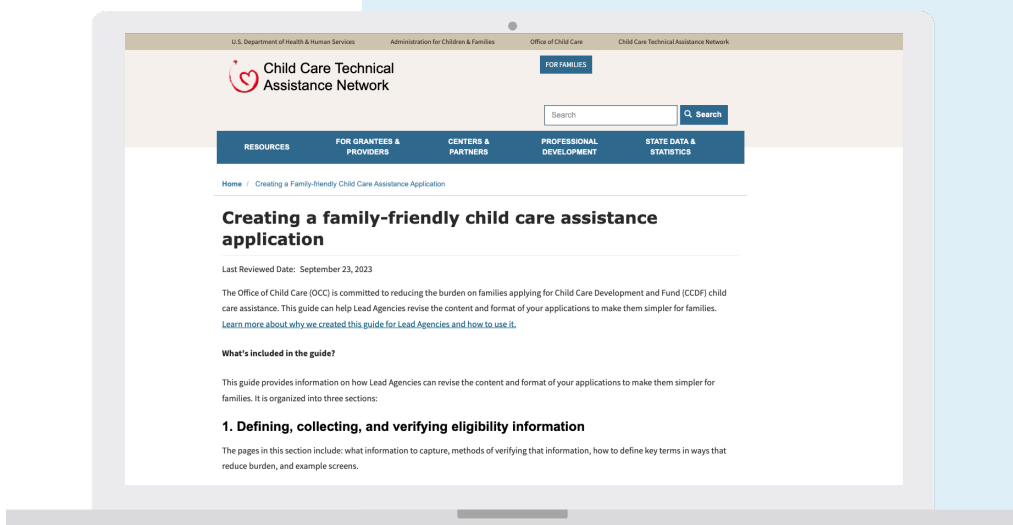
Reducing the burden of child care assistance applications

The child care assistance program administered by the Office of Child Care (OCC) at HHS helps nearly one million families with lower incomes nationwide pay for child care. Overburdened state, territorial, and tribal public servants are responsible for creating the application, and the process can be complicated for families, which can discourage and delay families receiving the help they need.

To simplify it, USDS partnered with OCC and used human-centered design to create the [Guide to Creating a Family Friendly Child Care Assistance Application](#). The guide and accompanying sample application reduce the burden on state, territorial, and tribal public servants creating the application and reaching eligible families.

IMPACT

- In 2023, seven states and territories adopted practices from this guide to streamline and reduce burden on families applying for child care assistance
- In July 2023, Health and Human Services and Vice President Harris announced a [notice of proposed rulemaking](#) (NPRM) that directly referenced this guide to encourage states to streamline eligibility and enrollment processes for child care assistance



USDS by the numbers

STAFF



- **700+** digital service experts hired into the federal government to develop, modernize, and enhance the tools and systems the American public relies on
- **230** people currently serving at USDS
- **50+** USDS alums have taken new roles in federal service focused on delivering better government services
- USDS hires skilled technologists for less than half of the recruiting costs of the private sector.
- Partnered with **11** agencies to increase digital capacity in the FY 2025 budget
- **32%** of our staff identify as minorities
- **75%** of our leadership identify as women

WORK



- **31** agencies have partnered with USDS since we launched in 2014
- **100+** requests to partner with USDS on agency projects in FY 2023
- **49** engagements in FY 2023 including rapid response, program implementation, and agency transformation
- **900+** acquisition professionals from across 50+ agencies and subcomponents trained on effectively procuring and implementing modern IT/Digital Services from the DITAP since 2016

USDS by the numbers

IMPACT AND ROI



- **53%** increase in customer satisfaction since the relaunch of SSA.gov, the second-most visited federal website, with 180 million people visiting annually.
- Providing **18.25 million** Veterans access for health and benefit services and increased Veterans' trust in the VA by 9% to 79.3%
- **749 million** free COVID-19 tests delivered to the American public
- **Over 400,000** eligible children across 29 states regained Medicaid coverage after USDS identified and resolved a technical error that had caused them to lose it.
- **130%** increase in Affordable Connectivity Program enrollment to reach 23 million households after USDS engagement
- USDS projects have touched a majority of the United States population
- USDS is able to invest baseline resources to partner with agencies and vendors to yield better scaled outcomes
- USDS programs have an incredible return on investment:
 - **400,000** hours of COVID-19 testers time was saved because of a tool that USDS built with 12 people over 3 years
 - **60%** increase of in-stock rates of infant formula from the historic low of 19% in 2022 due to a USDS team of 11 people providing data analyses of the supply chain and public needs over 5 months

SAVINGS



- **\$285 million** in projected estimated savings over five years in infrastructure expenses for the SSA
- **400,000** working hours saved for frontline COVID-19 testers from 2020-2022 across 45+ local, state, tribal and territorial public health departments using Simple Report and/or Report Stream
- **2+ million** hours of worker processing time saved due to the actions taken by USDS and CMCS

usds.gov

