THE U.S. DIGITAL SERVICE

Report to Congress

Fall 2017 | usds.gov

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Letter from the Acting Administrator

I'm happy to share our latest Report to Congress. In this update, you'll see that the **United States Digital Service (USDS)** continues to produce significant value across the Federal Government, using design and technology to deliver quality services to the American public. From recovering failed systems to consolidating services and designing intuitive interfaces, we are building more secure, efficient, and modern government services with and for the American people.

We made a measurable impact. With the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services, we changed the way Medicare pays doctors and clinicians, rewarding them for the quality—and not the quantity—of care they provide. With the Small Business Administration, we eliminated paper applications, improving the user experience and reducing the burden on small businesses. With the Department of Homeland Security, we dramatically increased efficiency by modernizing the process to become a naturalized citizen. Over a 5-year period, we project our current projects will save $617 million and redirect 1,475 labor years toward higher-value work.

We hired top industry talent. At USDS, our people are our greatest resource. To fulfill our mission, we must continue to attract a steady flow of great tech talent. This quarter, we're proud to report we have successfully recruited new cohorts of high-caliber talent who will continue the tradition of civic tech within government.

Still, opportunities to modernize government services abound. Three criteria continue to guide us when selecting new projects: what will do the greatest good for the greatest number of people in greatest need, how effective and cost-efficient our work will be, and the potential to scale technical solutions across government. In 2018, we will continue to seek out such opportunities to serve the American public.

It is an honor to build products that directly improve the lives of millions of people. I highly recommend that talented technologists looking to serve their country consider joining us. You'll never be the same again.

Matt Cutts
Acting Administrator of the U.S. Digital Service

Our Mission

The mission of the U.S. Digital Service is to deliver better government services to the American people through technology and design.

Our Values

1/ Hire and empower great people.

2/ Find the truth. Tell the truth.

3/ Optimize for results, not optics.

4/ Go where the work is.

5/ Design with users, not for them.

6/ Create momentum.

Our Objectives

Transform critical, public–facing services

We're dedicated to measurably improving our nation's most important public-facing services. We manage technology projects using (1) a user-centered design framework to prioritize user needs; and (2) modern software development practices to enable iterative development and the ability to rapidly respond to change and feedback.

Bring top technical talent into public service

In support of our goals, we recruit top technologists for term-limited tours of duty with the Federal Government. We hope to encourage a tradition of public service in the technology industry that will support the ongoing improvement of government digital services. In fact, several USDS employees have already cycled back for a second tour of duty.

Expand the use of common platforms, services, and tools

We partner with agencies to identify and implement shared tools and services to address common technical issues and usability challenges across government.

Rethink how the Government buys digital services

We work to modernize procurement processes and practices for the digital era. Just as they do today, skilled contractors will continue to deliver the majority of the Government's digital services.

Simplifying Veteran-facing Services through Vets.gov

THE CHALLENGE

Digital services offered by VA—from obtaining prescription refills to applying for healthcare benefits—are scattered across hundreds of public-facing websites. This forces Veterans to navigate disparate online systems, remember multiple usernames and passwords, and contend with long pages of legalese. To complicate matters, the majority of the 532 online VA forms are fillable PDFs that are not accessible with modern browsers.

THE SOLUTION

The Digital Service team at VA (DSVA) launched Vets.gov in November 2015 to streamline a Veteran's experience to discover, apply for, track, and manage the benefits they have earned in one place using any device. Vets.gov allows Veterans to use one login that meets current NIST security standards and optimizes Veteran self-service and automation through improved design, mobile responsiveness, ease of use, and plain language. Since the initial launch, DSVA has continuously iterated on the site through 50 product launches and reduced product release cycles from 90 days to one week. More than 600,000 applications for healthcare and education benefits have been submitted online through Vets.gov.

UPDATE

DSVA continues to support VA's goals of improving the digital delivery of Veterans' benefits and services by releasing new functionality each month, including updating popular features like Claims Status.

New launches include:

- **Appeal Status:** if a Veteran disagrees with VA's decision on their claim, they can file an appeal and track its status through the new Appeal Status tool on Vets.gov.

- **Save-in-Progress:** this functionality allows a Veteran to save a form that they are working on while it is in progress, and return to Vets.gov later to complete it.

- **Post-9/11 GI Bill Statement of Benefits:** this tool enables Veterans to find out how much money they have left to pay for school or training.

A recently released DSVA improvement to the site's login demonstrates how simplifying digital processes can have a positive impact on Veterans. By launching an improved sign up and sign in flow and adding the Department of Defense's DS Logon Premium credential, we have increased access to

Department of Veterans Affairs

the modern tools emerging to help Veterans access their benefits and services. DS Logon is a popular credential used by many current and former servicemembers and Veterans to log into various accounts. By adding the DS Logon credential, even more Veterans can now securely log into Vets.gov. These improvements to the login process now enable premium DS Logon users to authenticate their information only once, allowing them to move seamlessly through multiple platforms.

Since the login improvements, the number of users accessing features on Vets.gov has increased threefold, and the number of users signing in overall has doubled since August 2017. We are working on incorporating the second most utilized VA premium credential, My HealtheVet Premium, to this service in 2018. With these easy-to-use features available to more Veterans, we expect traffic in 2018 to organically double to two million monthly unique users.

Retiring Old, Legacy Systems

The VONAPP website was successfully retired in November 2017, saving VA $256,872 per year (per the FY18 service

agreement). It was originally launched in 2001 with nine forms for education, pension, burial, and vocational rehabilitation benefits. System issues included:

- Outdated interface design that was difficult to use
- Critical security issues
- Inability to work on a mobile phone

VONAPP features and content have been modernized, redesigned, tested by Veterans, and launched on Vets.gov.

IMPACT

302k
Vets applying for health benefits via Vets.gov

323k
Vets applying for education benefits via Vets.gov

Streamlining VA Appeals Processing

THE CHALLENGE

When Veterans experience a disease or injury related to active military service, they may file a claim for disability compensation with the Department of Veterans Affairs. If a Veteran is unsatisfied with the outcome of the initial claim, the decision can be appealed. As of 2017, there were 470,000 pending appeals in VA's legacy system, which take on average five years to complete. The Veterans Appeals Control and Location System (VACOLS)—which was created in the late 1980s on now-outdated infrastructure—tracks these appeals. With the passage of the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 in August 2017, VA has an opportunity to dramatically improve the timeliness and Veteran experience of the appeals process. In order to do so, it must modernize outdated systems in order to meet the requirements of the new law.

THE SOLUTION

Since before the passage of the Act, the Digital Service team at VA (DSVA) has worked to build a replacement for VACOLS, one component at a time. Rather than simply replicating VACOLS with modern technology, the DSVA team partnered with VA to rethink each aspect of the appeals process, including identifying inefficiencies and opportunities for automation, with the goal of improving timeliness and the Veteran experience. This agile approach to IT delivery, instead of a waterfall approach, allowed DSVA to quickly adapt to the passage of the Act and better prepare VA for the Act's February 2019 implementation.

UPDATE

Caseflow Hearing Prep

In October 2017, DSVA began a pilot of Caseflow Hearing Prep with twelve Veterans Law Judges. Hearing Prep is a tool designed to streamline the work involved for Veterans Law Judges as they prepare for the hundreds of hearings they hold per year. The tool also impacts the hearings themselves as it enables judges to more accurately capture Veterans' testimony during the hearing and efficiently share that evidence with the attorneys responsible for drafting Board decisions.

Caseflow Intake

DSVA launched Caseflow Intake in October 2017. While the Act does not go into full effect until February 2019, VA began to implement parts of the law through the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP) in November 2017. In order to successfully implement RAMP and adhere to the new case tracking and data reporting requirements created by the Act, VA needed to capture data in a way that it had never before.

Department of Veterans Affairs

After obtaining stakeholder approval, DSVA went from idea to product in one month and launched a minimum viable product to users at the end of October 2017, in time to ensure that the appeals of every Veteran who participates in the program are tracked accurately as VA transitions to a new process.

Caseflow Reader

In November 2017, DSVA completed its rollout of Caseflow Reader, an evidence review tool, to every attorney and judge at the Board of Veterans' Appeals. Review and annotation of hundreds or thousands of pages of documents constitutes a majority of the time spent issuing an appeals decision, so improvement to the efficiency of this task is a significant point of technological leverage for increasing the output of the Board.

Caseflow Dispatch

Launched in March 2017, Caseflow Dispatch facilitates the transfer of appeals decisions from the Board of Veterans' Appeals back to the Veterans Benefits Administration to ensure that benefits are processed and remand orders

are completed. Previously, dispatched decisions were inconsistently tracked and processed which resulted in a subset of cases experiencing long delays. Following the tool's launch in April 2017, the time to claim establishment for the 75th percentile went from 25 days to eight days.

IMPACT

40%
Decrease in claims with mismatched documents

17
Labor years redirected annually

Improving Government Consumer Identity with Login.gov

THE CHALLENGE

Many public-facing Federal websites require users to create login accounts for access. Maintaining multiple user accounts exposes users to greater risk, increases government spending, and creates a negative user experience. Moreover, many agencies are constrained in the services they can offer online due to a lack of secure identity proofing.

THE SOLUTION

In partnership with GSA's 18F, USDS successfully deployed login.gov as a common identity platform in April 2017 to improve and secure the experience of interacting with government online. Login.gov safeguards user data through encryption and mandatory two-factor authentication. In addition, 18F and USDS developers work with private sector companies on an ongoing basis to adhere to emerging standards in privacy-protecting authentication. Because login.gov was built using the most up-to-date technology, government developers can adopt login.gov within hours, not months, while simultaneously providing a modern experience to its users.

UPDATE

The first login.gov integration launched in April 2017 with the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) public-facing recruitment website. Following this successful engagement, login.gov integrated with the redesigned CBP's Trusted Traveler Program website in October. This integration resulted in exponential account growth, with over 1.5 million accounts created to date. Together, 18F and USDS have created a model for working with agency CIOs and developers to seamlessly adopt login.gov, allowing agencies to save money and time that would have otherwise been spent on building and maintaining customized systems. Currently, 18F and USDS are working to integrate with the Office of Personnel and Management's USAJobs.gov site in early 2018, an engagement that will impact more than 12 million users.

Looking forward, GSA has signed MOUs with the Social Security Administration, Department of Education, and Railroad Retirement Board to integrate login.gov services for their users throughout 2018. USDS estimates that the Federal Government has the potential to save hundreds of millions of dollars by consolidating consumer identity under login.gov, while improving access and usability for all Americans.

General Services Administration
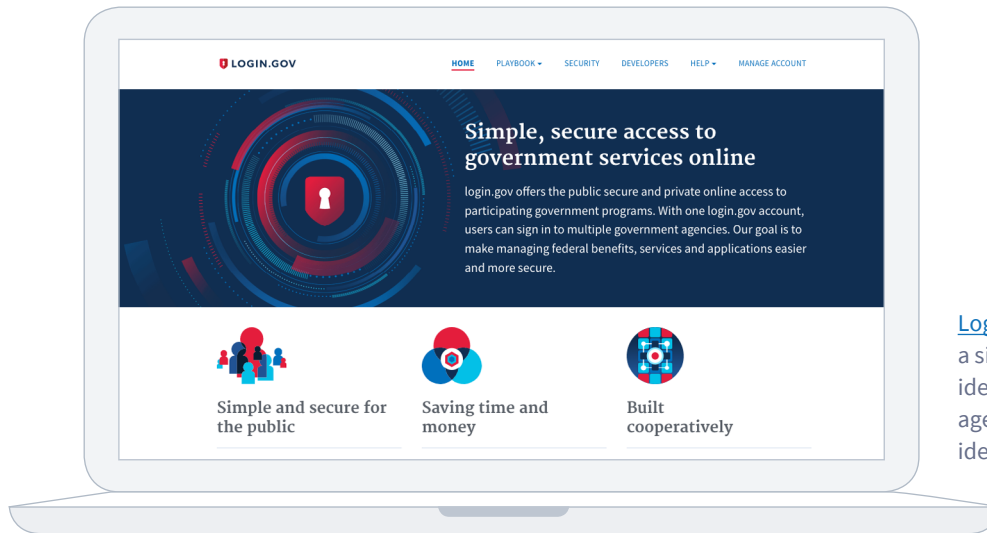
Login.gov gives Americans a single, secure government identity and provides agencies with a central identity platform.

IMPACT

1.5M+
Registered users
since May 2017 launch

100%
Users with multi-factor
authentication

Modernizing Small Business Certification Programs

THE CHALLENGE

The Small Business Administration (SBA) aids, counsels, assists, and protects the interests of small businesses. SBA's contracting programs support more than 537,000 jobs and provide a gateway for small businesses to compete for up to $100 billion in government set-aside contracts annually. The process of certifying a small business owner, however, was in need of technological modernization. In fact, the process created an unnecessary burden on small businesses and limited the Government's ability to review applications in a timely and efficient manner. In short, a paper- and mail-driven process needed to be replaced by an online platform, and SBA analysts needed a modern solution to support the review of a large volume of application paperwork.

THE SOLUTION

USDS began working with SBA in February 2015 to develop online solutions that would streamline and simplify certifying small businesses. The modernization effort, known as Certify.SBA.gov, replaces current legacy systems, eliminates paper- and mail-based applications, and creates a more efficient process to determine small business eligibility. The new system will enhance search and reporting capabilities and allow other Federal agencies to find small businesses for government contracts. Additionally, USDS has worked with SBA to modernize the Historically Underutilized Business Zones Map (HUBZone), which helps small businesses in rural and urban communities determine if they are eligible for participation in the HUBZone program.

UPDATE

The 8(a) Business and Development Program assists firms with at least 51% ownership and control by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. USDS, in partnership with SBA, is working toward the launch of the online application process for 8(a) businesses through Certify.SBA.gov in early 2018. This new online application will join the Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) and All Small Mentor Protégé programs already available on Certify.SBA.gov. With this new 8(a) launch, small businesses will now be able to:

- Determine eligibility for SBA's multiple contracting programs

- Complete SBA forms directly online

- Upload and manage documents across multiple programs

- Receive email notifications, such as expiration and renewal notices

- Check case status online rather than calling or visiting an SBA field office

Small Business Administration

USDS and SBA are working to enhance this application, replacing paper questionnaires with online forms and integrating a secure messaging platform to protect personally identifiable information from the risks of transferring data via email. USDS is adding functionality for small businesses to upload documents and reuse them across multiple certifications rather than submitting the same document multiple times. Finally, an internal notes section will allow analysts to append notes and information inside the online case file, providing continuity during staff turnover and empowering SBA analysts to refer a case to a colleague without having to physically transfer paperwork. These tools increase efficiency and security.

SBA HUBZONE

The new version of the Historically Underutilized Business Zones (HUBZone) map was launched in June 2017. The HUBZone map features the latest regulatory changes, provides an enhanced address search, an accessible user experience, and uses modern open source and geospatial technologies. Map updates now take weeks rather than months. A new advanced street view in the HUBZone map provides additional detailed information to SBA analysts in advance of site visits, allowing them to check whether a site

visit is necessary and if so, when and how best to conduct them. With the recent addition of Qualified Disaster Areas to the map, businesses in newly designated areas can now better understand the length of time an area might remain as a HUBZone.

The Certify.SBA.gov platform will soon incorporate the HUBZone application and 8(a) annual review. These projects will support advanced data analysis to inform meaningful outreach and program evaluation.

IMPACT

4→1
Systems consolidated

3x
Increase in WOSB participation since launch

230k+
Documents submitted electronically

180
Labor years redirected annually

Modernizing Our Immigration System

THE CHALLENGE

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) processes millions of immigration requests a year through a paper-based process that results in long waiting periods for applicants who have little visibility into the status of their application or petition. When the agency's Electronic Immigration System (ELIS) modernization program faced a host of challenges, USDS partnered with the USCIS team to help address those challenges and accelerate implementation.

THE SOLUTION

Since 2014, the DHS Digital Service has been supporting the release of USCIS's most critical digital capabilities and services such as ELIS—the case management system that supports processing and adjudication of digitized immigration workloads —and myUSCIS, the authenticated user experience which allows applicants to apply and track their cases online. Both of these initiatives are partnerships between USDS and USCIS's Office of the Chief Information Officer.

USDS has continued its strong partnership with USCIS to support the creation of a digitized system for immigration applicants and petitioners. The tools and features being created include the digitized interactive version of the most critical USCIS workloads and a case status page for applicants. Many of these tools soft-launched in 2017 and have been adopted as the primary entry point for applicants seeking naturalization.

UPDATE

In late October 2017, USCIS successfully transitioned N-400 digital processing from the legacy CLAIMS4 system to ELIS. Previously, an individual had to complete a physical 20-page N-400 form to become a naturalized citizen. The completed form was often shipped across the country to multiple immigration officers, adjudicators, and clerks to review immigration records, perform interviews, and process background checks. All applicants are now able to apply online and USCIS is able to process the application more efficiently. With more than 975,000 naturalization applicants every year, incremental improvements quickly result in a tremendous impact. Because all newly filed N-400 applications are electronically processed by ELIS, the agency is also cutting down on agency processing costs.

Department of Homeland Security
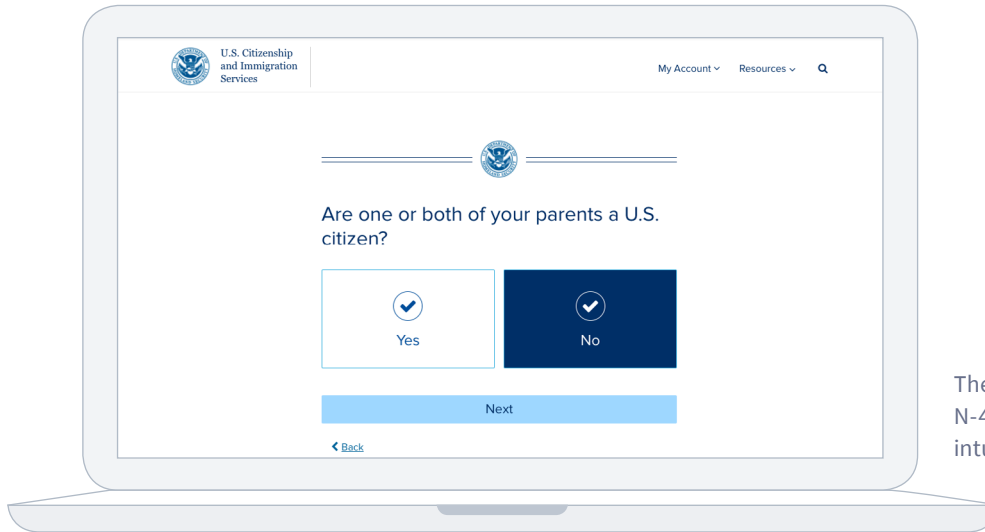
The new online Form N-400 is simple and intuitive for users.

IMPACT

5%→50%

Increase in immigration workload completed digitally

100%

of new N-400 applications electronically processed since late Oct. 2017

Relaunching Trusted Traveler Programs

THE CHALLENGE

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) administers multiple Trusted Traveler Programs (TTP)—Global Entry, NEXUS, SENTRI, and FAST—that make it easier for previously vetted travelers to enter the United States. To become a Trusted Traveler, users must complete an online application, schedule an appointment, and then visit an enrollment center for an interview, photograph, and biometrics check. The previous Global Online Enrollment System (GOES) web application was antiquated, limiting, and provided a poor user experience for the 6 million people it was serving.

THE SOLUTION / FIRST UPDATE

On October 1, 2017, the DHS Digital Service team in partnership with CBP launched the redesigned online Trusted Traveler Programs application. The TTP site needed to be redesigned because poor and outdated design made it difficult to find information and resulted in users paying third-party sites to complete the TTP process. When originally tackling the project, the redesign of just the frontend of the application was proposed to take 18 months. By using agile development processes to speed up the development and minimize risk, CBP and USDS worked together to completely redesign the frontend, deliver a scalable, modernized backend, and move the application to the cloud in nine months—half the time of the original estimate.

This new application was CBP's first system to move to the cloud, and has resulted in lower costs while increasing scalability and reliability. CBP has already reaped the benefits of the system that was built to take advantage of the redundancy, auto-scaling, and flexibility of the cloud. In the month after its release over 50 changes were made to enhance the system without any downtime to the service. The new application is also one of the first systems at DHS to utilize login.gov to provide a seamless and secure authentication system for the application. The new site is also streamlined and more user friendly, enabling users to better understand TTP application requirements and process. In the first month, citizens created more than 500,000 accounts and submitted more than 100,000 applications for trusted traveler benefits.

The DHS Digital Service also worked with CBP and the Transportation Security Administration to build out a Trusted Traveler Programs comparison tool. Users were struggling to determine the best program for their needs across the various

Department of Homeland Security
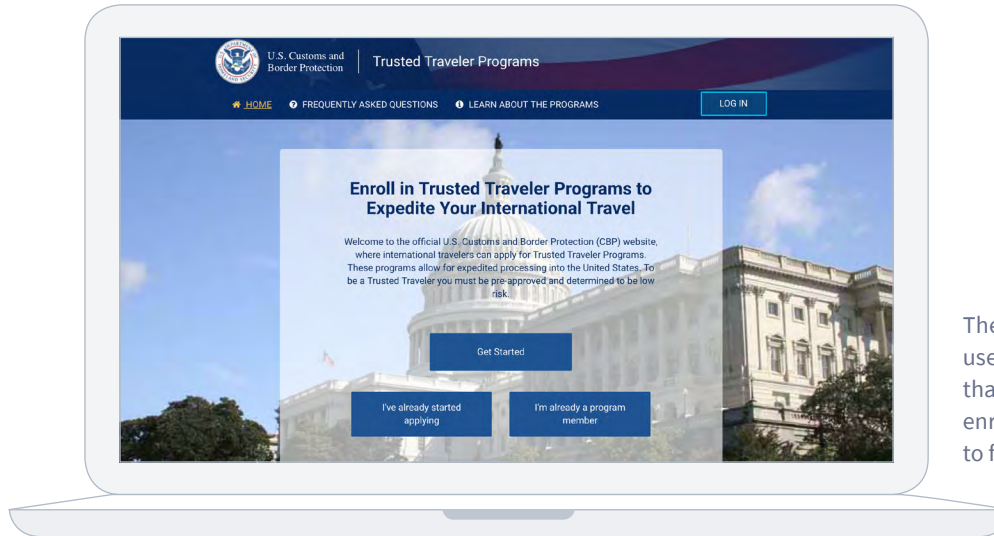
The new TTP website helps users choose the program that suits them and makes enrollment easy from start to finish.

DHS offerings. Based on travel information provided by the end user, the tool suggests the best program based on cost and estimated approval times and provides a link to access the program's application.

IMPACT

670K+
User accounts since Oct. 1 launch

100K
Online applications submitted since launch

Hacking the Pentagon

THE CHALLENGE

The DoD spends billions of dollars every year on information security but had never addressed security vulnerabilities through bug bounties, a widely understood best practice in the private sector. Bug bounties are a crowd-sourced security model used to identify vulnerabilities in both public-facing and internal assets. Bug bounties also allow private citizens to offer their diverse range of talent to contribute and strengthen our nation's security in exchange for a monetary reward for finding security issues.

THE SOLUTION

The Defense Digital Service (DDS) partnered with the DoD to launch the first Federal bug bounty, Hack the Pentagon, in spring 2016. The success of Hack the Pentagon resulted in two follow-on activities. First, the DoD established its first Vulnerability Disclosure Policy, which created a safe, secure and legal avenue for private citizens worldwide to report vulnerabilities found on public-facing DoD websites and applications. It also serves as a bridge between the DoD and security researcher community to work openly and in good faith together to identify and disclose vulnerabilities.

Second, the DoD awarded two Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contracts to Silicon Valley security firms that enable all DoD components and military services to launch their own bug bounty challenges against their respective assets. The first contract with HackerOne focuses on public-facing DoD websites such as military recruiting services. The second contract with Synack is reserved for more sensitive internal DoD assets and registration for these challenges is limited to highly vetted researchers within the Synack hacker community.

Establishing these contract vehicles is part of a broader effort to normalize and spread the adoption of this crowd sourced approach to security across DoD. These contract vehicles also serve as a roadmap for others to follow and implement as well. The General Services Administration launched their first bug bounty in May 2017.

Department of Defense

UPDATE

The Department of Defense continues to run both public and private bug bounties against assets critical to internal and global operations. To date, more than 2,000 security researchers have submitted more than 400 unique vulnerabilities to DoD public-facing websites and internal systems. Hack the Air Force (which ran from May to June 2017) yielded one of the highest-earning contributors to date: a 17-year-old U.S.-based hacker who submitted 30 vulnerabilities in Air Force assets.

DoD's landmark Vulnerability Disclosure Policy has also been successful at identifying critical vulnerabilities. The policy is a 24/7 legal pathway for security researchers around the globe to submit vulnerabilities on all DoD public-facing websites and applications. Since its inception in November 2016, the platform has received nearly 3,000 vulnerability reports from more than 600 security researchers around the world. Of these 3,000 reports, more than 100 were deemed high or critical vulnerabilities that included remote code executions and ways to bypass authentication on DoD sites. The Department of Justice has released official guidance for other Federal agencies who want to implement this policy as the technique of crowdsourced security continues to gain traction across the U.S. Government.

IMPACT

9
Bug bounties
held to date

3,600+
Vulnerabilities reported
to DoD

600+
Global security researchers
who have contributed

Helping Military Families Move
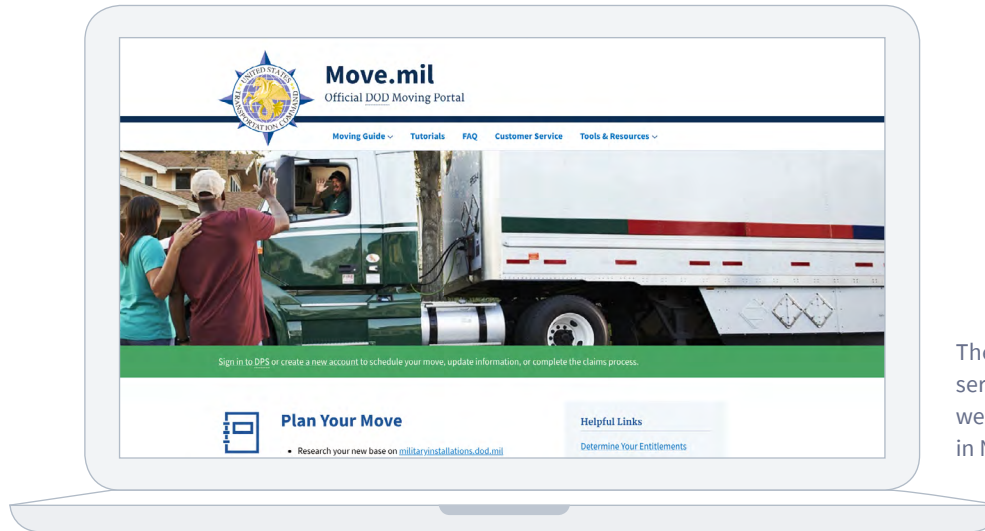
THE CHALLENGE

The Defense Personal Property System (DPS) is the logistics system for shipments of personal goods of more than 1.3 million servicemembers, 700,000 civilians, and their families. However, after a production update on March 10, 2017, DPS crashed. Pages took over five minutes to respond, which is comparable to a non-functioning site. The poor usability and functionality of DPS is a major stress factor for military and civilian families who are in the midst of frequent relocations across the globe, and contributes to numerous failures and delays of family household goods being shipped inappropriately and arriving late to their intended destination.

THE SOLUTION

DDS deployed a rapid response team to provide immediate remediation, and in just four days made major headway on rescuing the site. After the DDS response, DPS users reported significantly reduced latency rates, allowing more than 4,500 concurrent users—the most DPS has ever supported. Most importantly, successful shipment requests and scheduling increased from 16 percent to more than 99 percent. DDS continues to work with the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) to modernize and evolve the DPS system into a system on par with private-sector sites in terms of user experience and performance.

UPDATE

USTRANSCOM has approved funding for initial development of a prototype system to more efficiently process relocations by military members and their families. DDS recently selected a highly vetted software company to execute development efforts under the close product guidance of DDS. DDS spent six months actively developing the related informational site move.mil, which is the primary resource for military families and their spouses during their frequent relocations around the globe. Move.mil relaunched in November 2017, and was developed through constant user feedback from servicemembers, their spouses, and DoD transportation support staff. The website includes updated content, new features, and a suite of tools to greatly reduce the burden on military families during the stress of relocation.

Department of Defense

The redesigned servicemember-centered website move.mil launched in November, 2017.

┌─────────────── IMPACT ───────────────┐

16% → **99.8**%

Successful move applications

└───────────────────────────────────────┘

Transforming Federal IT with Digital IT Acquisition Training

THE CHALLENGE

Government IT acquisition fails to keep pace with fast-changing technology largely due to a reliance on waterfall development methods where requirements are defined and documented in full before any usability testing takes place. When agencies use inflexible, multi-year contracts, it is very difficult to build user-friendly, effective digital services. The Government can become a smarter buyer of technology once it trains procurement specialists to understand the digital and IT marketplace, agile software development methodology, cloud hosting, user-centered design, and the DevOps practice of integrating system operations with application development teams. In 2016, a digital service training and development survey was administered to the 24 civilian CFO Act agencies and the results indicated that potentially 6,500 acquisition workforce members needed digital service training.

THE SOLUTION

OMB's USDS acquisition team and Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) hosted a competition on Challenge.gov for a vendor to develop a digital IT acquisition professional training (DITAP) for Federal contracting professionals. Since the first six-month class launched in October 2015, 54 contracting professionals have successfully completed the training and development program. These professionals are now working in their agencies as advisors and contracting officers on various digital service initiatives, including Vets.gov and SAM.gov. Insights from this pilot program helped to determine the competencies for the Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) Core-Plus Digital Service Specialization.

UPDATE

USDS and OFPP are working to expand and scale the DITAP development program and finalize the FAC-C Core Plus Digital Service Specialization, which is expected to be released in Spring 2018. The program will then be officially handed off to Government and industry training partners, who will be able to provide the development program on a more regular basis to the Federal Government at large. The goal is to get an initial commitment from at least one agency's training institution and two industry partners to launch their own version of the development program in 2018, with at least one new cohort enrolled by the first quarter of FY2019.

Alumni of the first two classes have formed a Digital Acquisition community of practice, which helps them support one another's groundbreaking efforts, and gives them access to technology subject-matter experts. These alumni actively
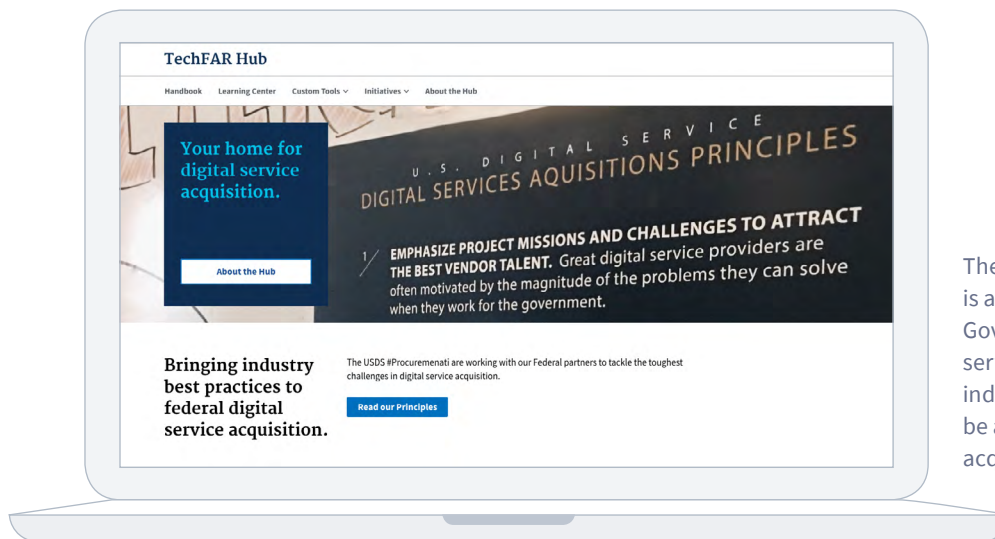
The [TechFAR Hub website](#) is a resource for Federal Government buyers of digital services to understand how industry best practices can be achieved through federal acquisition regulations.

participate in conference panels and conduct training events within their home agencies. As a result of the DITAP course, 71 percent of the graduates have been approached by others in their agencies to apply their knowledge and 81 percent indicated increased visibility as a digital service professional.

IMPACT

54

Procurement specialists graduated from two cohorts

Implementing Medicare Payment Changes

THE CHALLENGE

In April 2015, Congress passed the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA) to change the way Medicare pays doctors and other clinicians in order to reward value of care over quantity of care. Until MACRA is implemented, providers and their staff have to navigate a network of Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) systems that are disjointed, complicated, and rarely synchronized. Doctors already have incentives for better performance, but have trouble understanding scoring rules across multiple programs or feedback on their specific performance, which is given to them in lengthy PDFs.

THE SOLUTION

Implementing the MACRA legislation required significant changes to how Medicare measures the value of care doctors provide. CMS engaged USDS to bring best practices and modern approaches to ensure the implementation of the transition was clear and effective. Since launching a plain language website in October 2016, USDS has continued to work with CMS to improve the Quality Payment Program (QPP) by supporting technical decision-making and encouraging customer-driven development processes.

UPDATE

In April 2017, USDS supported the launch of an online tool on qpp.cms.gov that reconciles data from many disparate data systems and leverages user-centered design principles. The tool helps doctors enter a well-known identifying number (their National Provider Identifier) and immediately see and easily understand their reporting requirements for the program. This will be an important starting point in helping doctors understand how to interact with the program in 2018.

Working with CMS, USDS has also implemented an Application Programming Interface (API) strategy to reduce the cost and burden of participating in CMS programs by enabling the market to build software that interacts directly with Medicare systems and data. The first API released for QPP made quality measures data open source and led the private sector to develop new tools—including an iPhone app to look up QPP measures—within a week of going live.

USDS is collaborating with the market to develop APIs for QPP to replace manual submission processes, provide real-time feedback and scoring, and create a platform for building QPP-related solutions. A public beta version is in use by more than 20 tech firms. The QPP team made a production version

Department of Health and Human Services
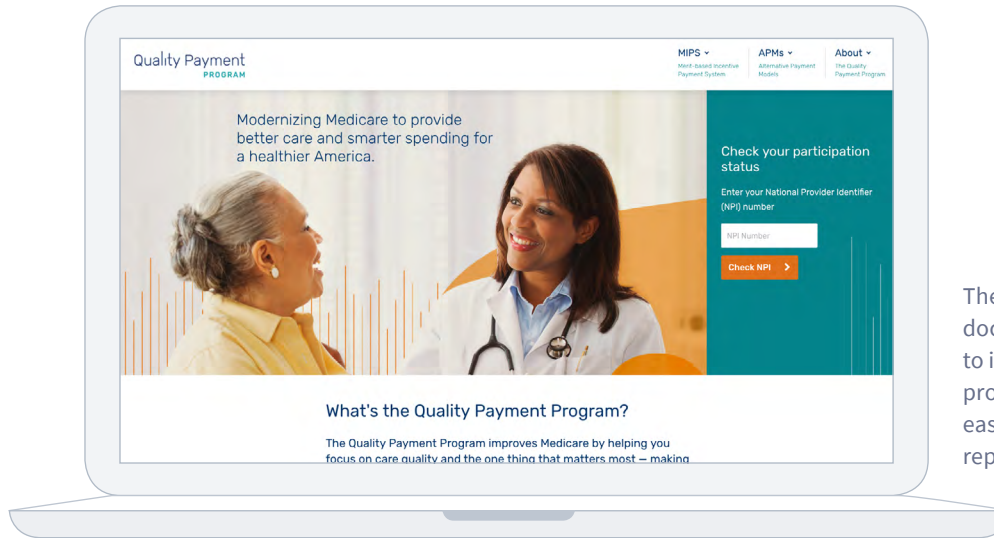
The [QPP website](#) allows doctors and clinicians to instantly check their program eligibility, then easily identify their reporting requirements.

available at the end of 2017 that will reduce the reporting burden for health IT partners, clinicians, and groups in 2018.

Finally, USDS worked with CMS to award an agile Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) for small agile companies to support QPP development efforts. Unlike traditional procurements, many task orders in this BPA require working software prototypes as part of the competitive process.

IMPACT

129	**22**	**3→1**
Organizations requested API access	Organizations actively building API integrations	Programs consolidated

# Modernizing Health Data Access with APIs *(HHS)*

THE CHALLENGE

The Blue Button Initiative began in 2010 to "Put Patients First" by enabling simple access to health records. Currently, patients can download or print their health records from MyMedicare.gov. As part of the update to the initiative, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is planning to launch an Application Programming Interface (API) for Medicare claims, which will allow companies and researchers to empower patients to make better decisions with their health information. With the new API, patients will be able to grant consent to mobile apps, patient portals, clinical trials, and more to leverage their data for medical research and more personalized, cost-effective care.

THE SOLUTION / FIRST UPDATE

USDS is currently providing technical and product management support for the deployment of the Medicare Claims API. The API will launch at the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) conference in March 2018.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Medicare Claims API includes three years of Medicare (Part A, B, D) claims data

- Data sets include information for 53 million Medicare beneficiaries

- Third-party developers are actively building integrations with the Medicare Claims API
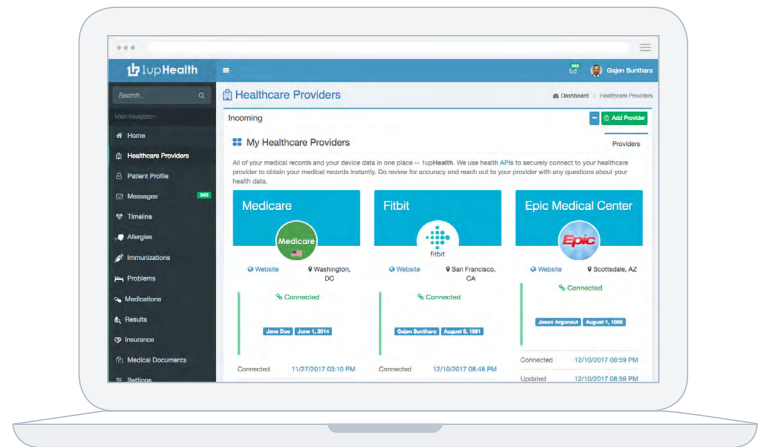
1upHealth is one of many third-party companies integrating with Medicare claims data to provide crucial services to patients.

Completed Projects

One indicator of success for a USDS engagement is our ability to deliver a solution that can be handed off and maintained by our agency partners. This model of work not only promotes accountability and buy-in from the agency teams we work with but also enables our staff to address a greater number of challenges facing government. The following are two projects recently completed by USDS.

Replacing the Advisor Network (ANET)
Department of Defense

USDS successfully completed its work on ANET, a system used by hundreds of NATO military and civilian advisors who are deployed to Afghanistan for the Train, Advise, Assist mission of Operation Resolute Support. The Defense Digital Service (DDS) began development efforts of ANET in November 2016 to replace the legacy system that was used to track and understand advisor engagements with their Afghan Government counterparts with a new product built using modern software development standards. ANET 2.0 was fully deployed on a classified network to roughly 800 advisors across Afghanistan in March 2017 and long-term maintenance was handed over to NATO developers based in Europe. The unclassified ANET 2.0 source code was also released on code.mil, the DoD's open source platform launched by DDS in February 2017.

Improving the Visa Processing System
Department of State

Since July 2016, USDS worked with the State Department on design and technical improvements for an existing tool called the Visa Status Check. The tool allows users to check their case status, but much of the information provided to the users was not actionable. The team conducted user research to determine how to adjust the tool so applicants could proactively advance their cases, rather than calling the National Visa Center, which was receiving thousands of calls daily with basic status questions. In February 2017, the team completed a series of changes to the existing tool. Information is now presented more robustly to help users understand what work must be completed on their cases. The team also fixed underlying technical issues, such as removing outdated business logic and replacing it with well-documented source code, which improved overall performance.

2017 Milestones

JAN **Procurement**: Federal Marketplace memo publishes

Procurement: Second class of DITAP graduates

FEB **DoD**: Code.mil launches

State: Improved Visa Status Check launches

MAR **DoD**: Personal Property System returns to service

VA: Caseflow Dispatch for appeals launches

DHS: Scanning/saving solution for USCIS naturalization paperwork launches

DoD: Afghanistan Advisor Network (ANET) launches

APR **DHS**: Trusted Traveler Comparison Tool launches

GSA: Login.gov launches

HHS: Merit-based Incentive Payments System eligibility tool launches

MAY **DoD**: Hack the Air Force begins

JUN **Procurement**: DITAP training program course material made publicly available

JUN **SBA**: HUBZone Map launches

AUG **VA**: Vets can check their Appeal Status on Vets.gov

Education: Loan claim review tool launches

SEP **DoD**: Army Cyber Command training begins

VA: 250,000th Veteran applied for health benefits on Vets.gov

OCT **DHS**: Trusted Traveler Programs application launches, with Login.gov integration

DHS: Digital case processing for Form N-400 launches

NOV **VA**: Caseflow Reader for appeals launches

SBA: 8(a) certification system launches

Procurement: TechFAR Hub relaunches

DoD: Improved move.mil launches

DEC **DHS**: Online filing for Form N-400 launches

VA: Discharge upgrade tool launches

*USDS projects are iterative, so each launch of a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) is followed by multiple launches not shown on this timeline