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Re-Designed USDA Web Site Goes Live

On January 12th, Secretary Veneman announced the launch of the re-designed USDA Web site, www.usda.gov. In her address to the American Farm Bureau Federation's annual meeting, Veneman stated that the new look and feel will make the Department's Web site more powerful and improve public access to USDA information.

Additionally, the Secretary promised, "The new look will be followed by improved functionality. We will continue adding features for users, culminating in August with the launch of 'MyUSDA.gov' to provide a customized version of the USDA homepage for individual users based on their unique needs."

The re-designed Web site represents the latest accomplishment in USDA's continuing effort to meet the ambitious mandates included in the President's Management Agenda. As USDA identifies additional opportunities to operate more efficiently and be more responsive to the needs of customers, business partners and employees, the Department is making several other changes to upgrade its information systems:

- High-speed networks nationwide to increase data capacity to meet the Department's increasing needs;
- An enterprise-wide eAuthentication service to allow customers to securely access private information online and **conduct transactions**;
- Improved email service for employees;
- Content management system to improve the ability to update Web sites and other information; and
- Cutting-edge tracking system to better manage civil rights cases and data.

Thus far, the new usda.gov Web site has received overwhelming positive response from Department stakeholders. The successful deployment of the re-designed usda.gov marks the latest milestone as USDA continues to provide enhanced online information and services to its customers, business partners and employees. The new usda.gov, along with the other eGovernment initiatives outlined in USDA's eGovernment Strategic Plan, continue to enjoy strong support from the Secretary as eGovernment moves from concept to reality at USDA.

For more information on the re-designed usda.gov, please contact the eGovernment Team.

Grants.gov Web Site Launched

On December 9th, a partnership of Federal Agencies, led by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), formally launched www.grants.gov, the new comprehensive site for the Presidential Initiative that seeks to replace paper grant applications by allowing organizations and individuals to search and apply for Federal grants electronically. As a leader among other Grants.gov partner Agencies, USDA was the first Federal agency to begin testing the system-to-system "storefront" required for Grants.gov to electronically transfer application data to an agency system.

The new Grants.gov Web site directs grant seekers to over 900 programs offered across 26 Federal grant-making Agencies. It also streamlines the process of awarding over \$350 billion annually to state and local governments, academic institutions, non-profit organizations and individuals. The site contains an "Apply for Grants" feature that simplifies the application process by allowing applicants to download and fill out forms offline and then resubmit them online with proper authentication to protect their privacy.

The Grants.gov initiative is not merely intended to save time and resources for organizations combing through various grant Web sites and catalogues. "Grants.gov is doing a lot more," according to Karen Evans, eGovernment Information Technology Administrator, Office of Management and Budget (OMB). "It's making transactions easier, cheaper, quicker, and more comprehensible. It's also outlining the principles laid out in the Government Paperwork Elimination Act".

The Grants.gov team, composed of representatives from ten Federal Agencies, deployed a pilot of the Web-based application on October 31st, 2003. This version included 90% of the full version's functionalities and provided developers with critical user feedback and suggestions that were incorporated into the December 9th release.

As an active participant of the pilot, USDA developed a Grants Interface Module (GIM) to interact with electronic applications from Grants.gov. GIM is the first component of USDA's eGrants Strategic Initiative that seeks to define common enterprise-wide technologies and business processes to support all 12 grant-making agencies within USDA.

The development of the GIM demonstrated traits that are at the core of the eGovernment spirit:

- **Collaboration across agencies:** 12 USDA agencies pooled human capital and existing technology assets to deliver the GIM.
- **Leverage eGovernment enterprise solutions:** The GIM team is working closely with USDA's eAuthentication team to leverage the enterprise eAuthentication service. Additionally, the GIM team will use the enterprise-wide document/records management product to manage the grant materials which will be official records;
- **Leadership at the Presidential Initiative level:** USDA was selected as the pilot agency for demonstrating a "real time" system-to-system connection with the Grants.gov site. This will occur in the near future; and
- **Records Management:** The GIM team met with USDA's records' officer and will continue conversations with department and agency records managers to ensure the GIM will adhere to NARA spell out and USDA records management policies.

By the end of December, USDA posted 22 grant opportunities on Grants.gov. "The GIM stakeholder group and development team has done an extraordinary job developing this system. Reaching this monumental milestone would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work from the members of these teams," said William Kenney, USDA Grants.gov Lead.

The successful launch of Grants.gov and USDA's development of an enterprise-wide GIM serves as an example of USDA's efforts to fulfill the promise of the President's Management Agenda by organizing and delivering information and services in a citizen-centric service fashion while effectively leveraging technology investments.

For more information on Grants.gov, please visit www.Grants.gov.

USAJobs Attracts Federal Job Hunters and Recruiters

According to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the managing partner for the Presidential Initiative Recruitment-One-Stop (ROS), Federal job seekers are using the new USAJobs Web site at a rate of more than ten times its previous release. As of January 20th, over 31 million users have visited the www.usajobs.opm.gov portal and have posted more than 308,000 resumes since its August 2003 release. The re-designed and modernized USAJobs Federal Employment Information System is providing a genuine one-stop service to Federal job seekers and advanced recruiting tools to Federal human resources (HR) professionals.

Using the industry's best practices, project leads incorporated enhancements to include improved graphics, search pages and site maps. This comprehensive portal allows job seekers to conduct online spell-check and save up to five resumes, personalize their search options and create and save cover letters. In addition, the Federal HR community will be able to leverage the standardized recruiting technology and process requirements such as vacancy announcements, applicant to job matching, data mining and job status tracking.

The August unveiling was only the first milestone in this multi-phased project that will ultimately provide both Federal job seekers and HR professionals with the tools on par with the best practices found in the public and private sector.

For more information on USAJobs, please visit

www.usajobs.opm.gov.

OMB's Evans Looks Ahead

In the year ahead, OMB expects to complete work on the initial 25 Presidential eGovernment Initiatives and seek out new government-wide projects that will continue to demonstrate the benefits of the President's Management Agenda. According to Karen Evans, the next phase of OMB's eGovernment Program will involve focusing on the Federal Enterprise Architecture to identify projects that will yield a "common government solution" for cost savings and improved efficiency. In the coming year, OMB officials will target projects that fall into four lines of business that weren't originally identified as a part of the original 25 Presidential eGovernment Initiatives:

- Public health information systems;
- Criminal investigation;
- Human resources administration; and
- Financial management applications.

This next step will prove to be a more detailed and challenging process since officials have yet to determine what specific projects will emerge. According to Evans, "What we are really looking at is taking the efforts in the enterprise architecture...and logical projects [that] will come out of that. The next set of projects will be harder, and if we overcome barriers, we will see huge efficiencies gained for the government". The new initiatives are expected to take the former initiatives' place in the eGovernment spotlight.

As a participant of 21 out of 25 Presidential Initiatives, USDA is taking a similar approach as it develops an enterprise architecture that will improve planning and clarify the impact of technology investments on overall agency operations. OMB currently is requiring Federal Agencies to define their enterprise architectures within the scope defined by OMB's Federal Enterprise Architecture Program.

For more information on OMB's plans for the eGovernment Program, please contact the eGovernment Team.

For more information on any of these topics, or for general comments or questions, contact the eGovernment Team at:

- **Phone:** (202) 720-6144
- **eMail:** egov@usda.gov
- **Web:** www.egov.usda.gov