

## Customer Insight Program for eGov

eGovernment is revolutionizing the way we interact with the government. U.S. citizens can now complete transactions such as filing taxes, renewing a driver's license, and applying for Social Security benefits. In fact, a recent look at the [www.firstgov.gov](http://www.firstgov.gov) list of on-line services revealed more than one hundred different government services. And, citizens are embracing this medium. The Pew Internet & American Life Project reports "fully 77 percent of Internet users—or 97 million Americans—have at some time gone online to search for information from government agencies or to communicate with them."<sup>1</sup>



As more citizens conduct transactions with the government on-line and as they become accustomed to conducting more complex transactions, expectations will continue to rise. However, citizen demand is not the only driver of eGovernment. Other drivers include the potential for cost savings, improved customer service, and workload reduction. Yet, creating electronic applications that will achieve these potential benefits requires knowledge of citizen needs and preferences.

Successful organizations have realized the need to incorporate customer preferences throughout the development life cycle. Most have begun to develop user-centered capabilities, but few agencies have connected them in a way that capitalizes on the cyclical nature of electronic services development.

In working with a large federal agency, ICF Consulting has developed a Customer Insight Program that systematically links user-centered design techniques to achieve the primary goal—more effective electronic services. The program includes three distinct, but interconnected program areas:

Customer Research, Customer Product/Service Development, and Customer Post-Launch Feedback.

### Customer Research

Many organizations begin to develop solutions without first assessing user needs and preferences. The Customer Research stage utilizes three main activities: customer segmentation, internal research, and external research.

Customer segmentation serves to divide customers into groups who have similar demographic characteristics, who use the same services, or who use services in similar ways. A customer segmentation model will help an agency more effectively identify users when researching and surveying. Internal research uses existing sources of customer insight gathered within the organization, such as ongoing focus groups and satisfaction survey results. Many external research institutes, such as the Pew Internet & American Life Project, can provide greater customer insight through their reports and surveys. Many of these organizations also can customize their research to meet specific customer insight needs.

### Customer Product/Service Development

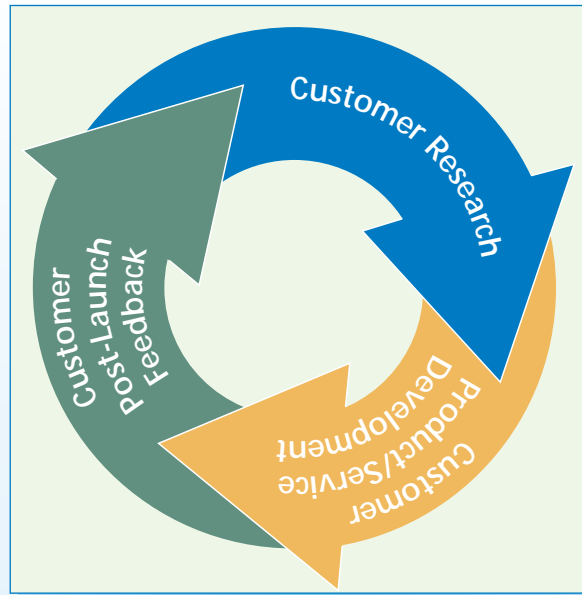
Effective electronic services development dictates early and ongoing customer involvement throughout the entire development lifecycle. Specifically, these practices encourage iterative product concept testing against those measures that involve the customer, practicing more rigorous business case development, establishing performance measures, and building upon the internal and external research performed in the Customer Research program area. Furthermore, customer involvement and feedback through qualitative, quantitative,

# Perspectives

and usability research help inform the development of a service from a product concept to a prototype to a fully functioning, ready-to-launch application.

## Customer Post-Launch Feedback

Effectively integrating the voice of the customer does not end with the deployment of a service. The Customer Insight Program establishes mechanisms to measure the satisfaction and effectiveness of all electronic services after they are launched. Several methods exist for gaining this type of post-launch feedback including focus groups, satisfaction surveys, and clickstream data. The customer insight information provides actionable data for the organization to create new services or enhance existing ones.



Ultimately, the strongest user-centered design projects are iterative in nature. Customer research drives project initiation, informs development, and follows the launch of the service. The information obtained during post-launch research allows the organization to lay the groundwork for future projects. Linking user-centered design techniques through a cohesive Customer Insight Program allows organizations to build upon their current capabilities and maximize the value of individual program components.

For more information on ICF Consulting's eGovernment and enterprise IT capabilities, please visit [www.icfconsulting.com/it](http://www.icfconsulting.com/it).