



Fact Sheet

Sept. 22, 2009

USCIS.gov Key Features

Then and Now

Background

On June 25, President Obama announced that in the next 90 days USCIS would launch a vastly improved USCIS.gov public website to help customers navigate the immigration system and remain up-to-date regarding their case status. USCIS has committed to delivering on this promise by incorporating both internal and external stakeholder feedback.

Features and Improvements

Based on feedback we heard in focus groups, usability tests and public surveys, the improved design of USCIS.gov follows four core principles:

- A customer-centric homepage that provides applicants with a “one-stop shop” of immigration services information.
- Simplified navigation and improved search capability.
- Enhanced customer service tools including expanded case status information.
- Information that is written clearly and meets the needs of our customers.

The chart below outlines how we have applied these four core principles to key features of USCIS.gov.

Feature/ Improvement	That was THEN...	This is NOW...
Redesigned Homepage	The homepage was often viewed as cluttered and confusing. Navigation of the site was difficult.	The homepage has been redesigned to highlight the most critical and often used immigration information. The navigation of the site has been improved with a streamlined design, the use of plain language, and the addition of several new key features. As a result of these improvements, the time spent navigating and searching for information is reduced.
<i>Where to Start</i>	Visitors were often overwhelmed by the volume of information on the site and didn't know how or where to begin to look for their information.	The <i>Where To Start</i> tool provides a simple way to navigate the site. Users can identify their role and reason for visiting the site from more than 50 of the most common immigration scenarios and view information specific to their situation.
<i>Customer Tools</i>	Helpful customer tools were scattered through the site.	Now, <i>Customer Tools</i> , such as <i>Find a USCIS Office</i> and <i>Change my Address</i> are available directly from the homepage and organized by the phases of the immigration process.

Feature/ Improvement	That was THEN...	This is NOW...
<i>My Case Status</i>	Users received basic information about the status of their case.	Improved context about how the user’s case is progressing, including: what step their case is in, position of that step in the entire process, description of that step, average national processing times, and processing times for the office where their case is pending.
<i>National Dashboard</i>	Basic processing time data was available through reports, but lacked context.	The new <i>National Dashboard</i> has an easy to read graph, giving customers the option of viewing volumes as a bar or line graph, that provides customers the ability to compare overall processing volumes and trends at the national and local level as well as downloading the data in raw form.
Email and Text Message Alerts	Users could create an account and receive email alerts about the status of their immigration case.	Individuals can now sign up for alerts via email, text message, or both. Customer representatives have the option to choose different settings for each of the cases in their portfolio.
Reorganized Forms Page	The immigration forms page did not appear organized. Users had to read through a long list to find the correct form for their application.	Forms are now organized by several topic areas, to make finding the correct form easier. A <i>Most Searched Forms</i> feature quickly presents users with the most commonly requested forms.
USCIS.gov in Spanish	Users had little Spanish-language content available to them.	This is the initial launch of USCIS.gov/español. The most requested information topics have been translated into Spanish. New information will be added on a continual basis. USCIS will continue to improve the content and features for Spanish speaking users, and engage the community to identify the need for further improvements.
Plain Language	Much of the content was written from a legal point of view and was therefore difficult for the average user to understand.	Over 250 pages of content have been written in plain language. In addition, we followed guidelines for “writing for the web” and used headings and bullets to make the site easier to read and easier to understand.
Search	The search feature did not always return desired results, frustrating users and increasing the time they spent looking for information.	The search engine has been upgraded and content reorganized to improve both the performance of the search engine and the relevance of the results.

Feature/ Improvement	That was THEN...	This is NOW...
Feedback	Opportunities for user feedback were few.	USCIS is implementing a new approach to the management of the site. We will continue to focus on being a customer-centric site by delivering the information and features users need. USCIS will continue to actively solicit feedback through focus groups, email, and other methods. This redesign is the first of many changes we expect to deliver to meet the evolving needs of our users.