

Congressional Presentation

Estimate of Appropriations for FY 2004

Federal Citizen Information Center



U.S. General Services Administration

Federal Citizen Information Center

<http://www.FirstGov.gov>

<http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov>

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STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The primary strategic objective of the Federal Citizen Information Center (FCIC) is to provide exemplary service to citizens by increasing the quality, quantity and availability of Federal information. This will be accomplished by promoting FCIC services to the public through innovative marketing activities, and by efficiently delivering superior information through its website, telephone, e-mail, and print channels. FCIC's performance in meeting this objective is measured by its total number of contacts with the public each fiscal year. This data is reviewed and evaluated regularly to identify shifting citizen needs and preferences for information and to continuously improve the amount, content, and delivery of Federal information. These performance measures ensure that FCIC is achieving its mission mandate and the goals of citizen-centric government.

The Federal Citizen Information Center program mission and goals are also interwoven with the Administration's e-Gov initiative, USA Services. The aims of USA Services are to present a single government face to citizens who need timely and consistent responses about government programs, and to enable the Federal government to become more citizen-centric. The first step of USA Services is creation of a "front door," a well publicized, easy-to-access point of contact for all citizens. Through its FirstGov.gov web portal and its toll-free National Contact Center (NCC), FCIC provides an ideal "front door" to the public. And, with the addition of e-mail capability to the National Contact Center and the continuation of FCIC's traditional publication program, FCIC supports the USA Services goal of offering citizens a variety of channels to receive information. The following chart details the volume and variety of FCIC's public contacts, which provide the foundation for USA Services and a government-wide, citizen-centric information service.

FCIC Performance Measures
Number of Contacts with the Public
Targets
(millions)

	FY 2002 Actual	FY 2003 Program	FY 2004 Request	FY 04/03 Change
1. E-Mail and Fax Inquiries	.015	.100	.600	+500.0%
2. Toll-Free Telephone Inquiries	1.700	2.500	3.000	+ 20.0%
3. Publications Distributed	6.000	5.500	5.300	- 3.6%
4. Web Page Views	54.900	135.000	157.000	+ 16.3%
FCIC Total Public Contacts	62.600	143.100	165.900	+ 15.9%

Citizen usage of FCIC services is projected to grow from 62.6 million contacts in fiscal year 2002, to 165.9 million in fiscal year 2004. This represents the addition of the FirstGov.gov web portal to FCIC's family of websites, and increases in public use of telephone and e-mail service.

In addition to its volume of contacts with the public, FCIC also uses a variety of other methods to measure the quality of its service to citizens. Among these are the American Customer Satisfaction Index survey, direct feedback from users, awards received, and the amount and nature of press coverage. For example, Yahoo Internet Life Magazine recently named FirstGov.gov one of the 50 Most Incredibly Useful Websites. The pueblo.gsa.gov website, publications, and National Contact Center continue to receive highly favorable recognition and press coverage throughout the United States, and FCIC media programs received free advertising space and airtime worth \$10 million during fiscal year

2002. FCIC earned a score of 80 in the 2002 American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) that was established in 1994 to measure the quality of public contacts. FCIC's rating of 80 was the highest rating of the seven Federal programs in the "Information Providers/Technical Assistance" category, and placed FCIC fourth out of 40 high impact Federal programs in the overall survey. ACSI stated that this is an "outstanding result for a private or public sector service provider." Taken all together, these performance measures give a clear picture of how FCIC is using new technology and innovation, combined with proven practical programs, to provide the highest quality service and the best value to increasing numbers of American citizens.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Federal Citizen Information Center (FCIC) successfully brings together an array of U.S. government information and services and makes them easily accessible to the public. Whether citizens need information on the web, via e-mail, in print, or over the telephone, FCIC is their help desk for everyday life – giving answers and assistance they trust about the things that matter.

For millions of people, FCIC embodies the best of government – practical, down-to-earth, and dedicated to meeting their needs. For more than 30 years, citizens have written to Pueblo, Colorado to get helpful, timely Federal publications that answer their questions or explain Federal programs. Increasingly, they are visiting the FCIC family of websites for instant, free access to an even greater variety of government information – from Federal, state, and local agencies. They are also calling FCIC’s toll-free National Contact Center with questions such as how to check social security benefits, find specialized tax forms, learn about the latest product recalls, or apply for a student loan. As technology provides new ways for citizens to access information and interact with their government, FCIC has responded by developing simple, user-friendly services that millions of citizens rely on each year.

On June 30, 2002, the General Services Administration established a new Office of Citizen Services and Communications (OCSC) to serve as a central Federal gateway for citizens, businesses, other governments, and the media to easily obtain information and services from the government on the web, in print, by e-mail, or over the telephone. Because of its successful track record in meeting the public’s information needs, FCIC is a key part of OCSC, and develops, manages, and delivers information services to citizens. In keeping with this key function, the program name was changed from the Federal Consumer Information Center to the Federal Citizen Information Center, and

the new FCIC now manages the FirstGov.gov website, the government's official portal to millions of Federal, state, and local government web pages.

Management of the popular FirstGov website is a logical and valuable complement to FCIC's six award-winning websites and to its other channels of information. FCIC now brings together an experienced publication development program, an innovative media and marketing program, an efficient and centralized distribution system for publications, a family of dynamic websites, and a comprehensive toll-free National Contact Center (NCC) that provides both telephone and e-mail assistance.

In fiscal year 2002, citizens placed 1.7 million calls, requested 6.0 million print publications, and completed 54.9 million web page views, for a program total of 62.6 million contacts with the public, as compared to a fiscal year 2001 total of 29.8 million contacts. This represents an increase of 32.8 million contacts or 110 percent over fiscal year 2001.

Fiscal Year 2003 Program Expansion

In fiscal year 2003, FCIC will significantly enhance the level of service provided to citizens through its National Contact Center. In addition to handling incoming calls, the NCC will respond to e-mails and faxes. The enhanced National Contact Center will answer many questions directly and redirect more complex inquiries to the appropriate government agency. Agencies without existing contact centers or with specific short-term needs for contact center services will be able to obtain these services from NCC on a reimbursable basis. Additionally, NCC will closely track and analyze the inquiries received and share the results government-wide in order to improve the information flow from Federal agencies to citizens.

The National Contact Center currently handles 1.9 million inquiries and publication orders annually and has the capacity to meet higher demand as citizen usage increases. The fiscal year 2003 budget funds an expanded call capability, addition of an e-mail system to receive, track, and respond to citizen inquiries and public service advertising.

In fiscal year 2003, FCIC will also greatly expand the electronic information provided to citizens through an improved and integrated family of websites. It will be the first full year of FCIC management of FirstGov.gov. This website was launched in September 2000 as the official web portal of the U.S. Government, providing the public with fast, easy, one-stop access to all Federal, state, and local government online information and services. It was redesigned in February 2002 to provide improved access to online services and transactions and to tailor information needed by specific audience groups, such as citizens, businesses, and other governments. During fiscal year 2003, FCIC will begin using an automated Content Management System (CMS) to enhance the content and quality of FirstGov.gov and eventually other FCIC websites. A CMS will provide numerous benefits including: greatly reduced time to publish content to the Web; streamlined workflow process; improved

navigation for users; specialized content for individual groups; and improved consistency and timeliness of content. This will enable FCIC to provide a more efficient, personalized experience for all citizens -- so they receive exactly the information they need, when they need it.

With the move of FirstGov.gov to FCIC, funding in the amount of \$1.89 million associated with management of the website will be allocated to FCIC in fiscal year 2003. This consists of the salary costs (\$.89 million) of six FTE and operational expenses (\$1.00 million) associated with the management of the FirstGov.gov website. These funds are included in GSA's Policy and Citizen Services Account in the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act. The allocation of these funds to FCIC will facilitate program management, integration, and accountability for this activity.

The \$1.0 million for operational costs will cover the following costs associated with the maintenance and the operation of the FirstGov website:

- \$.5 million for content management services,
- \$.2 million for hosting/maintenance support,
- \$.05 million for search services, and
- \$.25 million for usability improvement studies and activities.

In both industry and government, managers of a website often purchase infrastructure services from another source. FCIC will purchase the hosting, search, and content management services from GSA's newly created Office of E-Gov Solutions Support. This office has been established to provide a common citizen services infrastructure to all Federal agencies by procuring and managing a variety of government-wide technical contracts. FCIC, as well as other agencies, will pay user fees to E-Gov Solutions Support for their portion of services received via these contracts.

Plans for Fiscal Year 2004

In fiscal year 2004, FCIC's National Contact Center will be entering its first full year of operations as the provider for the infrastructure for the USA Services "front-door" to the government. During fiscal year 2003, FCIC will modify the National Contact Center contract to provide the infrastructure and staffing capabilities to receive, process, and track e-mail as well as receive and process fax inquiries.

Additional costs of \$2.36 million are projected in fiscal year 2004 as a result of a re-compete of the NCC contract, which will provide increased functionality and more comprehensive capabilities. Enhancements such as an improved and expanded core database to provide answers to citizens' questions, and expanding help to groups such as web users and those of limited English proficiency will improve NCC service to the American public. FCIC now projects receipt, processing, and tracking of 50,000 e-mails per month for a total of 600,000 in fiscal year 2004.

In addition to managing and continually improving the FirstGov.gov website, in fiscal year 2004, FCIC will continue operation of its two consumer websites: pueblo.gsa.gov and consumeraction.gov, providing publication ordering and consumer news, and helping citizens make sound marketplace decisions and resolve consumer grievances. And it will continue management of the websites related to childrens' interests: www.kids.gov, www.afterschool.gov, and www.childcare.gov. All of these sites will be managed to ensure that the needs of citizens, businesses and government employees are met. FCIC will continue to conduct periodic usability testing to evaluate users' level of success and satisfaction in locating information and completing transactions online. FCIC will also continue to add features and functionality, to maintain website security, and to guarantee the ability to handle increasing numbers of website visitors.

During fiscal year 2004, FCIC will also continue to provide its excellent publication development and distribution services to the American public. FCIC will continue to publish the quarterly **Consumer Information Catalog**, which lists 200 popular titles from across the Federal government on subjects such as saving for college or retirement, avoiding fraud, exercising and eating for good health, and learning about Federal laws and regulations that affect citizens' daily lives. FCIC distributes **Catalogs** directly to individuals, as well as through educators, nonprofit associations, large and small businesses, banks, credit unions, libraries, government offices, and Members of Congress who provide copies as a service to their constituents.

In response to the public's continuing need for proactive, self-directed consumer education and protection, FCIC will revise and publish the **Consumer Action Handbook (CAH)**, one of the most highly popular Federal documents. During fiscal year 2003, it is anticipated that citizens will request approximately 500,000 copies. State and local consumer offices refer to the **CAH** as the "gold standard" of consumer information and use it extensively, along with other FCIC resources, to bring a national perspective to their consumer protection efforts. Once again, corporate partners and Federal agencies will be asked to provide financial support for the printing and distribution of **CAH**.

During fiscal year 2004, FCIC will continue its consumer education program through the media. It will continue placing traditional and electronic feature press releases to deliver practical information from new and existing publications directly to the public, as well as developing broadcast and print public service announcements that highlight the National Contact Center and the growing family of FCIC websites. FCIC's multi-faceted media program delivers helpful, timely Federal consumer information directly to citizens, including how to use all FCIC information services.

Annual FCIC publication distribution depends largely on agency publishing budgets and initiatives, as well as on public familiarity with and access to online information. In fiscal year 2002, FCIC distributed 6.0 million publications as compared to 5.5 million in fiscal year 2001. The increase was due to several special promotions even though fewer customers are using the **Consumer Information Catalog** to order publications. This resulted in user fee revenue going from \$.200 million in fiscal year 2001 to \$.174 million in fiscal year 2002. Looking ahead, FCIC anticipates that publication distribution and the revenue generated by it will trend downwards as agencies continue to reduce printing budgets and as citizens increasingly use the easily accessible free information available on the FCIC websites. However, FCIC will continue to be a full service information provider, so that all citizens have access to the Federal resources they need in the format that is most useful to them.

COMPARISON OF FY 2004 REQUEST TO PRIOR YEAR'S REQUESTS

\$(Millions)

2002 Appropriation.....	\$ 7.276
Personnel Increase.....	+ .146
Increase for National Contact Center	
Costs for 2 additional FTE.....	+ .275
Contractor Costs.....	+ 4.725
Increase to GSA Working Capital Fund Payment for Centralized	
Administrative Support Initiatives.....	+ .042
Inflation.....	+ .077
2003 Budget Request.....	\$12.541
Transfer Management of FirstGov Website (6 FTE) from the Office	
of E-Gov Solutions (Operating Expenses, GSA) to FCIC.	+1.890
Adjusted Fiscal Year 2003 Budget.....	+14.431
Personnel Increase.....	+ .251
Inflation/Increased Contractor Costs.....	+ .599
Increase for NCC Contractor and 2 FTE.....	+2.362
2004 Budget Request.....	\$17.643

SUMMARY EXPLANATION OF CHANGES FROM 2003 TO 2004

The administrative expenses of FCIC are funded by a combination of annual appropriations from the general fund of the Treasury; fees collected from the public, gifts from the private sector, and unobligated balances in the FCIC Fund. FCIC requests a direct appropriation of \$17.643 million for fiscal year 2004, an increase of \$3.212 million as compared to fiscal year 2003. In addition, user fees and other fund balances are projected to cover \$.560 million of FCIC administrative expenses for a grand total of \$18.203 million. The fiscal year 2004 increase of \$3.212 million includes \$.261 million to cover two additional FTE to provide technical support to FCIC websites and to the NCC. And with the award of a new National Contact Center contract, FCIC expects overall contract costs to rise by \$2.101 million in fiscal year 2004 due to the array of new and enhanced services offered to the public, the more highly skilled and better-trained Information Specialists required, and the increasing volume and types of inquiries received.

FCIC works with numerous private sector entities and serves all Federal agencies in their mission to provide information to the public. In the process, FCIC provides publication order fulfillment services on a reimbursable basis through the Government Printing Office (GPO) facility in Pueblo, Colorado. The participating agencies and organizations fully fund the costs of distributing publications offered without charge to the public. Agency reimbursements from Federal agencies and the private sector are anticipated to total an estimated \$2.541 million in fiscal year 2004. In addition, an FCIC-appropriated portion of \$.419 million will cover **Consumer Action Handbook** distribution costs. In fiscal year 2004, a total of \$2.960 million will fund the distribution of an estimated 4 million publications offered without charge to the public. FCIC estimates the distribution of an additional 550,000 GPO sales documents and an additional 800,000 Spanish publications for a total of 5.35 million publications distributed in fiscal year 2004. FCIC also provides contact center services to agencies on a reimbursable basis. In fiscal year 2003, FCIC

provided \$.150 million in support to the State Department and in fiscal year 2004, it is projected that these services will total \$.105 million.

APPROPRIATION LANGUAGE

For necessary expenses of the Federal [Consumer] Citizen Information Center, including services authorized by 5 U.S.C. 3109, [\$12,541,000] \$17,643,000, to be deposited into the Federal [Consumer] Citizen Information Center Fund: Provided, That the appropriations, revenues and collections deposited into the fund shall be available for necessary expenses of Federal [Consumer] Citizen Information Center activities in the aggregate amount of [\$18,000,000] \$23,000,000. Appropriations, revenues, and collections accruing to this fund during fiscal year [2003] 2004 in excess of [\$18,000,000] \$23,000,000 shall remain in the fund and shall not be available for expenditure except as authorized in appropriations Acts. (*Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 2003.*)

THE FEDERAL CITIZEN INFORMATION CENTER FUND

In 1983, Public Law 98-63 established the Consumer Information Center (CIC) Fund to provide for a business-like operation of Consumer Information Center activities. In fiscal year 2000, the Federal Information Center (FIC) was transferred to the CIC and the resulting organization was named the Federal Consumer Information Center (FCIC). Effective fiscal year 2001, the revolving fund was renamed the Federal Consumer Information Center Fund to reflect the new organization, and to cover all the liabilities and commitments of both the CIC and the FIC. FIC activities, primarily its National Contact Center, are consistent with CIC program activities, in that both disseminate Federal Government information to the public.

With the establishment of the Office of Citizen Services and Communications on June 30, 2002, FCIC assumed responsibility for the FirstGov.gov website, and, in keeping with its expanded function, was renamed the Federal Citizen Information Center, and the Fund was renamed accordingly. For fiscal year 2004, it is proposed that the Fund cover the costs of FirstGov salaries and operations. The Fund is authorized to retain unobligated amounts at the end of the fiscal year. The activities of the FCIC are financed from the following:

1. Annual appropriations to pay salaries and expenses.
2. Reimbursements from Federal agencies to pay costs associated with the provision of information services to the public. This includes costs such as the telephone ordering system and of publications distributed through the Government Printing Office facility in Pueblo, Colorado. It also includes funds received for providing agencies with contact center services.

3. User fees from the public for publications ordered through the **Consumer Information Catalog**. These are used to offset administrative expenses.
4. Other income incidental to FCIC activities, primarily payments from private sector groups to cover the cost of distributing cooperative government-industry publications.
5. Gifts to defray costs associated with the **Consumer Action Handbook** and other information and educational materials, and of undertaking other information activities.

All income is available without regard to fiscal year limitations, but is subject to an annual aggregate limit as set forth in appropriation acts. For fiscal year 2002, public user fees totaled \$.174 million, gifts from the private sector totaled \$.043 million, and reimbursements from the Federal and private sector totaled \$3.029 million. These reimbursements are projected at \$2.884 million in fiscal year 2003 and \$2.856 million in fiscal year 2004, and will pay approximately 14% of FCIC program costs in fiscal year 2003 and 14% in fiscal year 2004. These funds will cover approximately \$2.856 million of FCIC's estimated total costs of approximately \$20.849 million in fiscal year 2004. The following pages provide additional details on the operation of the FCIC Fund, including the source and application of income for the Fund, from fiscal year 2002 through fiscal year 2004.

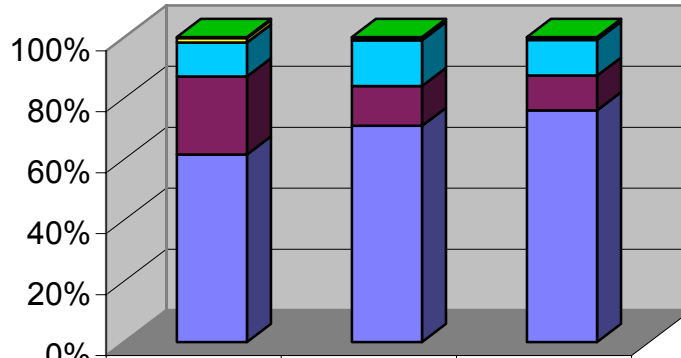
STATUS OF THE FEDERAL CITIZEN INFORMATION CENTER FUND
(\$Millions)

	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>Request</u>	<u>Change</u>
		<u>2003</u>		<u>FY</u>
	<u>2002</u>		<u>2004</u>	<u>04/03</u>
Source of Funding:				
Unobligated Balance				
Brought Forward on Oct.	\$	\$ 3.050	\$2.714	- \$.336
1.....	1.310			
Appropriation.....	7.276	* 14.431	17.643	+
....				3.212
Reimbursements for Publication				
Distribution/NCC Services:				
-From Federal	2.424	2.122	2.171	+ .049
Agencies.....				
-From the Private	.605	.542	.475	- .067
Sector.....				
User	.174	.170	.160	- .010
Fees.....				
Gifts from the Private	.043	.050	.050	---
Sector.....				
Prior Years'	-	---	---	---
Adjustments.....	<u>.001</u>			
 Total Resources	 <u>\$11.831</u>	 <u>\$20.365</u>	 <u>\$23.213</u>	 <u>+\$ 2.848</u>
Available.....				
 Application of Resources:				
Administrative Expenses				
-Salaries and	\$ 2.030	\$ 3.399	\$ 3.687	+\$.288
Benefits.....				
-Travel.....	.043	.055	.073	+ .018
-Catalog	.215	.355	.355	---
Printing/Transportation.....				
-CAH Production and	.356	.450	.450	---
Distribution.....				
-Public Service Advertising.....	.359	.875	.909	+ .034
....				
-Administrative	.284	.387	.534	+ .147
Support/Services.....				
-Rent Payments.....	.149	.171	.216	+ .045
.....				
-Direct Marketing.....	.153	.173	.178	+ .005
-FirstGov Website Operations	---	1.000	1.000	---
-National Contact Center	2.908	7.939	10.542	+ 2.603
.....				
-All	<u>.107</u>	<u>.183</u>	<u>.259</u>	<u>+ .076</u>

Other.....				
Total Administrative Expenses.....	\$6.604	\$14.987	\$18.203	+\$3.216
Publication Distribution/NCC Services.	3.010	2.664	2.646	- .018
Prior Years' Obligations.....	-.833	---	---	---
Unobligated Balance Carried Forward.....	<u>3.050</u>	<u>2.714</u>	<u>2.364</u>	- <u>.350</u>
Total Resources Applied.....	<u>\$11.831</u>	<u>\$20.365</u>	<u>\$23.213</u>	<u>+\$2.848</u>

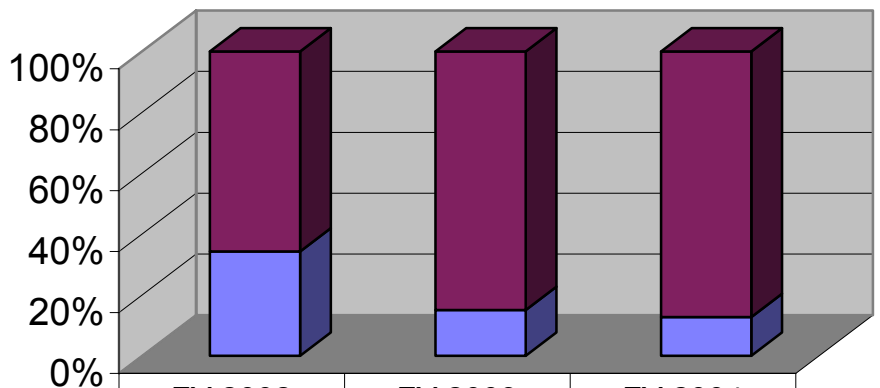
*This includes a transfer of \$1.890 million from Policy and Citizen Services, GSA: \$.890 million for salaries and benefit costs of six FTE and \$1 million for operational expenses.

FCIC Fund - Source of Income
FY 2002 - FY 2004
(In Millions)



	FY 2002 \$11.831	FY 2003 \$20.365	FY 2004 \$23.213
Other	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%
User Fees	1.5%	0.8%	0.7%
Unobligated Balance	11.1%	15.0%	11.7%
Agency/Private Reimbursements	25.6%	13.1%	11.4%
Appropriations	61.5%	70.9%	76.0%

FCIC Fund - Income Application
FY 2002 - FY 2004
(In Millions)



		FY 2002 \$8.781	FY 2003 \$17.651	FY 2004 \$20.849
Administrative/ Other Expenses		65.7%	84.9%	87.3%
Distribution and Services	NCC	34.3%	15.1%	12.7%

DETAIL OF POSITIONS

		Actual, 2002			Program, 2003			Request, 2004		
		C.O.	Field	Total	C.O.	Field	Total	C.O.	Field	Total
-	ES 00	1	---	1	1	---	1	1	---	1
	GS - 15	3	---	3	5	---	5	5	---	5
	14	4	---	4	6	---	6	6	---	6
	13	8	---	8	13	---	13	17	---	17
	12	3	---	3	6	---	6	3	---	3
	11	3	---	3	---	---	---	1	---	1
	9	1	---	1	1	---	1	1	---	1
	8	1	---	1	2	---	2	2	---	2
	7	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
	6	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
	5	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
	Permanent Positions		24	---	24	34	---	34	36	---
Other		---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
TOTAL		24	---	24	34	---	34	36	---	36

**CLASSIFICATION BY OBJECTS
(\$Millions)**

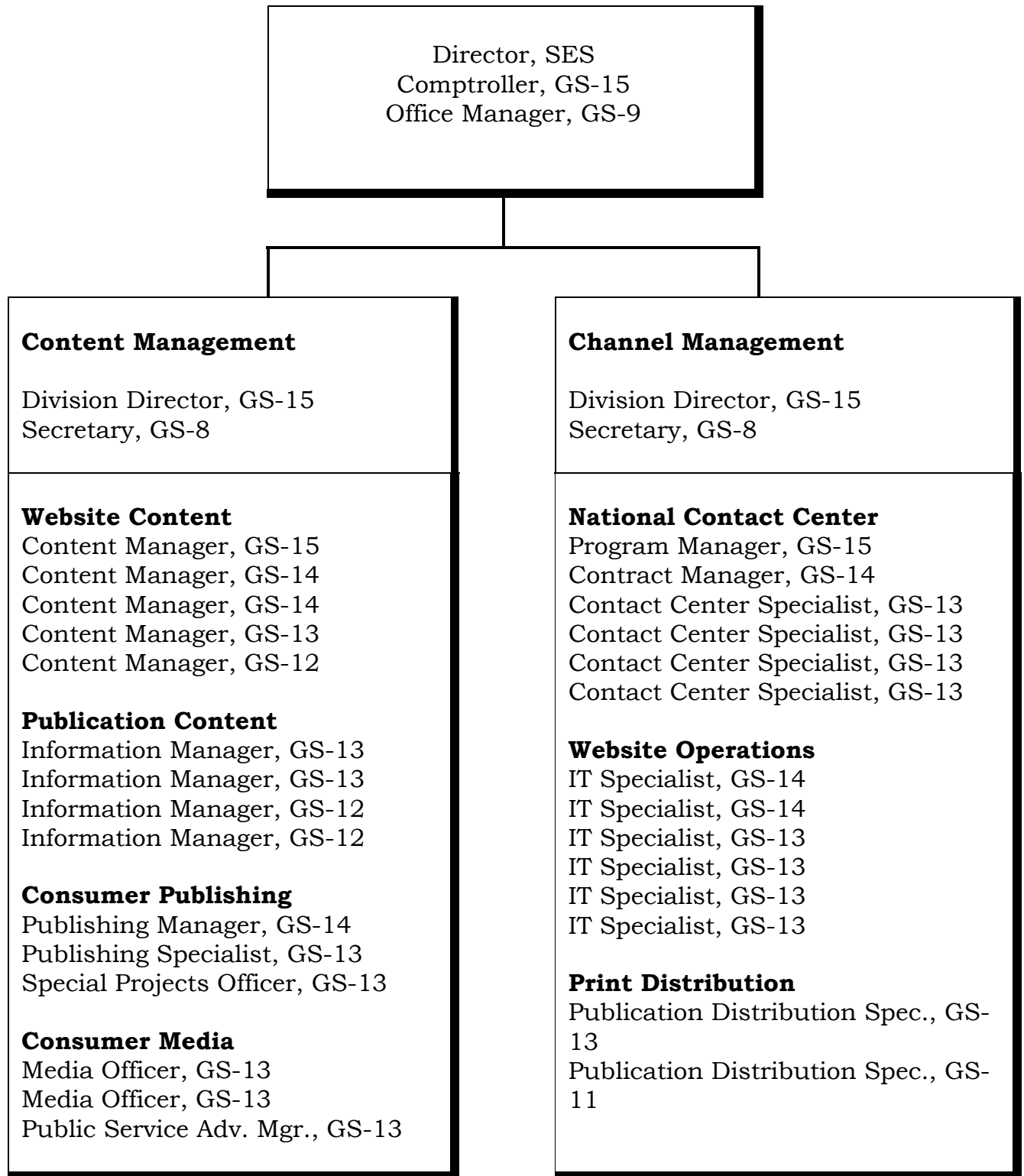
		Actual, 2002	Program, 2003	Request, 2004
Personnel Compensation:	Central Office	\$ 1.649	\$ 2.761	\$ 2.964
	Field	---	---	---
11	Total personnel compensation	\$ 1.649	\$2.761	\$ 2.964
12	Personnel benefits	.381	.638	.723
21	Travel	.043	.055	.073
22	Transportation of things	.019	.045	.045
23	Rental payments to GSA	.149	.171	.216
	Communications and misc. charges	.363	.685	.681
24	Printing and reproduction	.261	.455	.430
25	Services	6.704	12.757	15.590
26	Supplies and materials	.031	.055	.063
31	Equipment	.014	.029	.064
99	Total Obligations	*\$8.781	\$17.651	\$20.849

*Total obligations include a net -\$.833 in prior years' adjustments not reflected in amounts for individual object classes.

**EXPLANATION OF FISCAL YEAR 2004 REQUEST BY OBJECT CLASS
\$(Millions)**

- 11 Personnel Compensation - \$2.964: To support 36 FTE, all in the GSA Central Office.
- 12 Personnel Benefits - \$.723: Retirement contributions, health benefits, FICA, and group life insurance.
- 21 Travel and Transportation of Persons - \$.073: For travel by FCIC staff members for contract monitoring and to produce and promote Federal information.
- 22 Transportation of Things - \$.045: For transporting catalogs from the printing company to the Colorado distribution center and to Washington, DC.
- 23 Rental Payments to GSA - \$.216: For payments to the Federal Buildings Fund for rental of space.
- 23 Communications, Utilities and Misc. Charges - \$.681: \$.650 for toll-free lines and \$.031 for office telephone and other communications charges.
- 24 Printing and Reproduction - \$.430: \$.301 for printing **Consumer Information Catalogs**; \$.031 for printing the **Consumer Action Handbook**; and \$.098 for printing information material for direct marketing.
- 25 Other Services - \$15.590: \$2.486 for payments primarily to the Government Printing Office for the cost of distributing consumer publications (the amount is fully covered by participating organizations); \$9.997 for costs associated with contractor performance of toll-free telephone and other services; \$1.000 for costs associated with the operations of the FirstGov website; \$.534 for payment to GSA for administrative support and services; \$.909 for preparation and distribution of public service materials for television; \$.419 for producing and distributing the **Consumer Action Handbook** and related activities; \$.080 for direct marketing; and \$.165 for miscellaneous expenses.
- 26 Supplies and Materials - \$.063 For administrative supplies and materials.
- 31 Equipment - \$.064: For the purchase of general office equipment.

**FEDERAL CITIZEN INFORMATION CENTER
FISCAL YEAR 2004 PROJECTED STAFFING**



FEDERAL CITIZEN INFORMATION CENTER OUTYEAR DATA
\$(Millions)

	<u>FY 2005</u>	<u>FY 2006</u>	<u>FY 2007</u>	<u>FY 2008</u>
TOTAL BA	\$18.437	\$19.267	\$20.134	\$21.040
TOTAL OUTLAYS	\$18.437	\$19.267	\$20.134	\$21.137
TOTAL FTE	36	36	36	36

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Information distribution is what the FCIC has been famous for since it began providing free consumer publications from Pueblo, Colorado in the early 1970's. Distribution of printed materials from Pueblo remains an important component of FCIC's efforts to provide the public with information of value in their everyday lives. The Internet has become another critical component in providing FCIC information services to the public. In 1991, FCIC was among the first Federal agencies to establish an electronic bulletin board system (BBS) to allow individuals with computers to directly access Federal information. When the World Wide Web began to emerge, FCIC was among the first to use this medium to provide useful information to citizens through its www.pueblo.gsa.gov website, which launched in October 1994. FCIC saw usage of its online services grow from 20,000 electronic accesses in fiscal year 1991 to 22.5 million in fiscal year 2001. In fiscal year 2002, with the addition of the FirstGov.gov website during the final quarter, accesses to FCIC websites jumped to 54.9 million page views.

To provide the widest access to Federal information and to make sure that all citizens can get quick, reliable answers to important everyday questions, FCIC now uses a variety of delivery channels: electronic, print, and telephone. The foundation for each of these channels is the information that FCIC identifies or develops in cooperation with hundreds of Federal, state, and private sector partners. FCIC acts as an ombudsman on behalf of citizens by searching out the most important Federal information. FCIC works daily with Federal agencies, as well as trade associations, consumer organizations and private companies to find the information and make it easy to understand. For the past 30 years, and still today, FCIC makes that information available in print from the Government Printing Office facility in Pueblo, CO. FCIC also works with the media to deliver information directly through radio, television, newspapers and magazines. The public can also access this information whenever it is needed on easy-to-use FCIC websites, including FirstGov.gov.

And citizens can get answers over the telephone from FCIC's toll-free National Contact Center by calling 1 (800) FED INFO.

The following sections cover highlights from these four major programs: websites; publication development and distribution; consumer education through the media; and the National Contact Center.

Websites

Over the years, the range of options and scope of information provided to the public by FCIC has greatly expanded. This has occurred in recognition of FCIC's proven ability to successfully reach out to the public. In June 2002, FCIC was given the responsibility to operate and maintain FirstGov.gov, the official web portal to the U.S. Government. The addition of this enormously popular website dramatically increased FCIC's volume of contacts with the American public from 29.8 million in fiscal year 2001 to an estimated 165.9 million in fiscal year 2004. Fiscal year 2003 is the first full year of FCIC operation of the FirstGov.gov website. The following provides a summary of the FirstGov.gov portal and plans for the coming year for the FCIC family of websites:

- FirstGov.gov is the official Internet portal to all U.S. government information and services. It is the most comprehensive place available on the World Wide Web for U.S. government information and services. It searches all Federal and state government, some 180 million pages in more than 22,000 Federal websites and thousands of state websites. If it exists in government web space, it can be found via FirstGov.gov. This portal also allows website visitors to browse for information by audience, by topic, by online service, by location, and by organization. Recognizing the value it provides to their customers, more than 69,000 other websites link to FirstGov.gov.

FirstGov.gov provides citizens, businesses and government employees and the media an easy, one-stop place to find government services and information. It allows citizens to find the answers they are looking for without having to be knowledgeable about which level of government, which branch of government or which agency provides a service.

The most frequently requested information and services are one click away from the FirstGov.gov home page. The aim is “no more than three-clicks” for most information and services.

The most popular transactions and information requests from FirstGov.gov are similar to FCIC’s other channels such as phone and print requests and include:

- buying government surplus property
- government benefits, loans and grants, such as social security, student loans, medicare, medicaid and more
- passports and visas
- government jobs
- immigration status and information
- contact information for the President, Senators, Representatives and other government officials and employees
- drivers licenses

Visitors also come from every State of the union, and also from many foreign countries. About 85% of FirstGov.gov visitors come from the U.S., while about 15% are international.

Specific accomplishments during fiscal year 2002 included: a major website redesign, development of new content to meet public needs, and the launch of a new government-wide subscription service.

- In February 2002, following research, usability testing and focus groups, Vice President Cheney launched the redesigned FirstGov.gov at a White House ceremony. This redesign focused the site on three primary audience channels – citizens, business, and governments (Federal employees, state and local governments, and tribal governments) – and on online services and transactions.

- New content is continuously added to meet public needs. For example, the section on America Responds to Terrorism, which was created on September 12, 2001, was expanded during fiscal year 2002. It now includes ways to remember and pay tribute to the victims of the terrorist attacks, accounts of how government agencies performed since the attacks, and information on how individuals can protect themselves, travel safely, and help their country.
- In December 2001, working with many other Federal agencies, a FirstGov.gov e-Newsletter was launched along with a new, free common subscription service that allows citizens to sign up for multiple government e-mail newsletters of interest to them. They can check off boxes from a list of more than 30 subscriptions to begin receiving e-mail newsletters on anything from the FirstGov e-Newsletter to Census Updates to Military History to Travel and Tourism. And citizens only have to enter their e-mail address once rather than having to find these newsletters on multiple sites and having to sign up for each one individually. In the first year since providing this service, more than 29,000 citizens subscribed to the FirstGov.gov e-mail newsletter, and over 300,000 subscriptions were referred to the other government e-newsletters.
- FirstGov.gov has won many accolades and awards. During fiscal year 2002, Yahoo Internet Life recognized the portal as one of the year's 50 Most Incredibly Useful Sites on the Internet. FirstGov.gov was also selected as a finalist for the highly coveted 2002 Innovations in American Government Award given by the Ford Foundation and Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

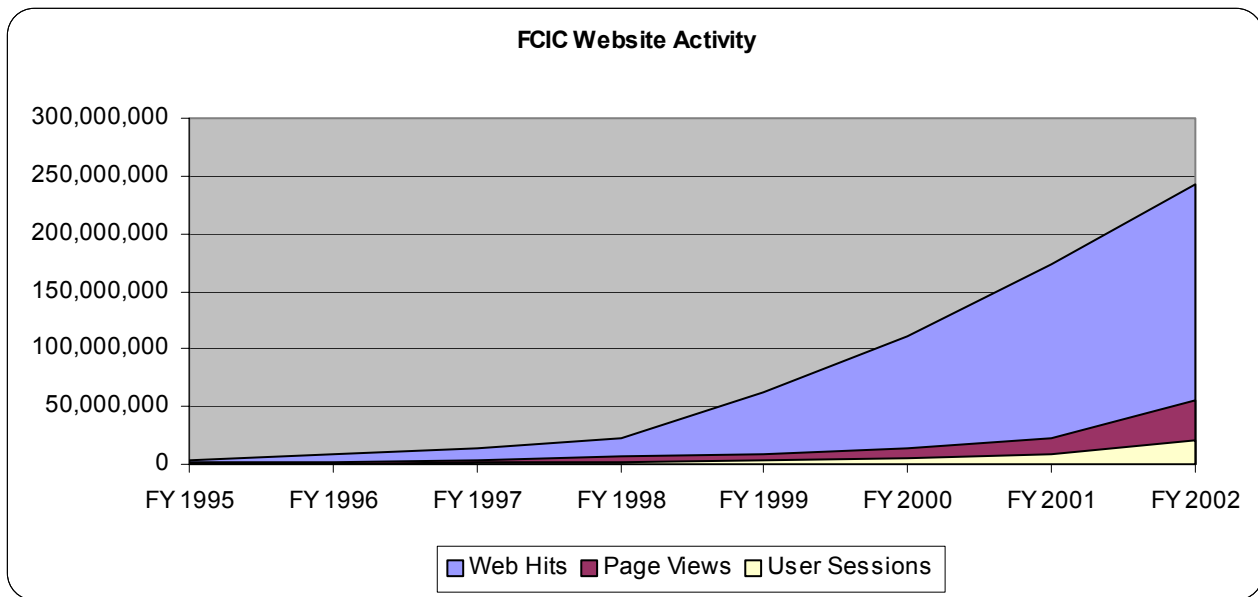
The following provides summaries of FCIC's other websites:

- www.pueblo.gsa.gov: contains the full text of hundreds of the most generally useful Federal publications in a variety of formats, along with the latest consumer news and publication shopping services. Visitors to the site can purchase printed copies of these publications to be shipped from the Pueblo distribution facility, they can search them online for specific information, or save them to their home computers for later reference.
- www.consumeraction.gov: the Consumer Action Website, provides online access to all of the valuable advice and reference information in the **Consumer Action Handbook**. By using the information and links built into this website, consumers can prevent and resolve problems and get answers directly from Federal, state, and local governments, consumer organizations and corporations. The site is updated daily, and FCIC is completing work on a new, easy-to-use navigation system that will help citizens find the specific information they need and connect them directly to the best source for further assistance.
- www.info.gov: provides information and answers to the public's most frequently asked questions about their Federal government, which are a by-product of the toll-free answer service provided by FCIC's National Contact Center. FCIC has updated the existing links to all Federal telephone directories, and Federal toll-free telephone directory listings. Also, FCIC provides a listing of Federal agency news and press release websites, and makes it possible for the public to search the same knowledge management database used by NCC telephone specialists to research and retrieve information for the public.
- www.kids.gov: this site was developed by FCIC in support of an interagency initiative that sought to establish Federal gateways for special interest topics and for audiences such as parents, seniors, and workers. Working cooperatively with the Cross-Agency Portal Working Group, FCIC built and maintains this portal site to provide children easy access to hundreds of

websites both in and outside of government for their education and entertainment.

- www.afterschool.gov: a website cooperatively sponsored by more than 15 Federal agencies. The goal is to link to all of the Federal resources appropriate for after school programs in one easy-to-access place.
- www.childcare.gov: a companion website to [afterschool.gov](http://www.afterschool.gov) that is cooperatively sponsored by more than 15 Federal agencies. The goal here also is to link to all of the Federal resources on childcare in one easy-to-access place.

Addition of these websites, along with continuing growth in usage of FCIC's previous websites has resulted in a significant increase in web activity for the program. During fiscal year 2002, FCIC page views rose 144% to 54.9 million. As shown in the following chart, this number of page views was generated by more than 20.3 million user sessions and accounted for 242.6 million hits on FCIC websites (see the following chart). A factor contributing to these rapidly increasing numbers is the use of the FirstGov.gov search engine on more than 500 Federal websites. Each search provided by [FirstGov](http://FirstGov.gov) to visitors on those websites results in higher levels of activity for the FirstGov.gov website and improved service to the public.



	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002*
Web Hits	3,324,324	7,978,378	13,297,297	22,287,508	62,929,536	111,831,174	172,712,377	242,622,280
Page Views	1,000,000	2,400,000	4,000,000	6,806,949	9,534,997	14,114,111	22,502,147	54,907,793
User Sessions	270,270	648,649	1,081,081	1,819,000	3,033,644	4,929,525	8,768,142	20,317,435

*Includes one quarter of FirstGov.gov which was added to FCIC on June 30, 2002.

Future plans for the websites include:

- a “refresh” to the FirstGov.gov design to improve its usability as identified in usability and focus group testing. The goal is to make the site even easier for citizens to use.
- further integration of FCIC’s websites through use of an automated content management system. The goal is to simplify maintenance of the sites and to allow the shared use of relevant information among FCIC websites.
- integration of info.gov with FirstGov.gov to provide a comprehensive self-help entry point for citizens looking for answers about government. This will facilitate the receiving, tracking, and answering of e-mail inquiries from the public.
- launch of a new website that will provide information for teens, called AmericasTeens.gov.

Publication Development and Distribution

The following are examples of FCIC efforts to identify, develop, and make helpful consumer publications available to citizens during fiscal year 2002:

- During fiscal year 2002, FCIC updated the **Consumer Action Handbook (CAH)**, one of the most popular Federal consumer publications. FCIC used input from citizens and from both government and private sector professionals in consumer protection to make sure the most pressing issues were covered. The President wrote an introductory message, encouraging citizens to protect themselves and improve the marketplace by being better-educated consumers. FCIC coordinated printing support from 9 Federal agencies and 27 private and corporate partners, with major funding from the Department of Defense and the Department of Justice. The Arkansas Office of the Attorney General also provided funds, reflecting the extensive use that state and local consumer offices make of the **CAH**. During fiscal year 2002, approximately 350,000 copies were requested by Federal agencies, consumer organizations, libraries, schools, and individual citizens. FCIC has printed 413,000 copies of the 2003 edition to meet the continuing high demand. FCIC continues to support military family service centers around the world by providing the **CAH** to educate enlisted personnel and their families on the basics of financial planning, and to help them avoid scams and frauds, purchase cars and homes, maintain sound credit, and much more.
- Children's health and safety is a major concern for parents and, during fiscal year 2002, FCIC worked to develop and make available a variety of helpful, new publications. For example, FCIC teamed with the Consumer Product Safety Commission and KaBoom, a non-profit organization that works with communities to provide safe play spaces, to develop the Home Playground Safety Checklist. To help parents learn about safe medicine use, FCIC developed **Got a Sick Kid?** in partnership with the Council on

Family Health and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). **Questions and Answers About Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis** from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) talks about the causes, symptoms, and treatment of juvenile arthritis. **Understanding Vaccine Safety, also from the FDA**, discusses side effects that may occur after vaccinations. **Questions and Answers About Scoliosis in Children and Adolescents** was developed by HHS and included in a special FCIC mailing to home economics teachers.

- Recent corporate bankruptcies, the unemployment rate, and stock market instability have many people seeking ways to protect themselves financially. FCIC recognized these concerns and added several new publications to help consumers deal with financial issues. Among these are: **How SIPC Protects You**, a free collaborative publication that was developed by the SEC and the Securities Investor Protection Corporation (SIPC). It outlines the financial protection that SIPC provides when a brokerage firm fails. **Building Financial Freedom** was developed by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, USDA and the MetLife Consumer Education Center with assistance from the American Association of Individual Investors. The publication features a worksheet to help consumers track spending, a format for creating a financial plan, and an investor's checklist. Other financial publications deal with health and pension benefits in the event of job loss, FDIC insurance coverage, keeping assets safe, and the differences between bank vs. investment accounts.
- Headlines about privacy issues, especially identity theft, have made consumers wary of misuse of their personal information. Consumers reported nearly 100,000 cases of identify theft during fiscal year 2001, and the volume of complaints has been increasing. To help minimize the risk to consumers and aid those who believe they may already be victims, FCIC collaborated with the FTC to promote **ID Theft: When Bad Things Happen to Your Good Name**. FCIC also promoted and

distributed **Privacy Choices for Your Personal Financial Information** from the Federal Reserve Board, which explains a consumer's right to opt out having personal financial information shared between financial services providers. **Pretexting: Your Personal Information Revealed**, from the Federal Trade Commission, describes how fraudsters get access to consumers' personal financial information under false pretenses, then sell the information. Because online access to health records can leave citizens vulnerable to the release of medical information, FCIC posted the web article "Are Your Health Records an Open Book?" to educate consumers regarding the information insurance companies can obtain, how to protect their medical information, ensure its accuracy, and more.

- Chronic diseases continue to sap the strengths and resources of millions of citizens. Seventeen million Americans have diabetes today, and at least 16 million more have pre-diabetes. Women, often the main caregivers for the family, account for 52% of all adult diabetes cases. In response to this growing health crisis, the FCIC teamed up with the FDA Office of Women's Health and their co-sponsors the American Diabetes Association and the National Association of Chain Drug Stores, in their nationwide campaign - "Take Time to Care...About Diabetes." FCIC promoted the campaign along with its companion piece **Diabetes – Recipe Cards**, (both available in English and Spanish), to **Parade Magazine's** 77.6 million readers. There are also an estimated 43 million people in the U.S. who suffer from one of the more than 100 forms of arthritis and other rheumatic diseases. FCIC has continued to work with the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS) in an ongoing effort to educate consumers on the importance of early detection, risk factors, and other preventive measures. NIAMS has published a series of booklets that includes symptoms of various forms of arthritis, pain management, and various treatment options.

- During fiscal year 2002, FCIC continued efforts to provide citizens with information that will help them prepare for disasters by adding new publications and furthering collaborative partnerships with other agencies that provide disaster preparedness information. To address concerns that terrorists could contaminate the ground water supply, FCIC promoted the free EPA publication, **Drinking Water From Household Wells**. It details how to keep privately-owned wells safe and unpolluted. FCIC also worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Citizen Corps to provide free copies of **Your Family Disaster Supplies Kit**. The publication lists the foods, first aid supplies, tools, and other items that should be stocked for emergency use. FCIC is working closely with FEMA and will be offering print distribution, contact center, and web support to the new Department of Homeland Security.

In summary, FCIC identified, promoted, and distributed 74 new consumer publications during fiscal year 2002, including six that were developed jointly by government and private sector partners under FCIC's cooperative publishing program, and 27 that are in Spanish. During fiscal year 2003 and 2004, FCIC will continue to provide the most helpful and practical Federal information, and to build partnerships that bring the best of both Federal and corporate information to citizens.

Distribution of Print Publications

The quarterly **Consumer Information Catalog** is the foundation of FCIC's print distribution program. In fiscal year 2002, FCIC made changes to the **Catalog** to make it more user-friendly. A new "Family" category was created to bring together publications especially for parents and children that were previously scattered throughout the **Catalog**. The order form was simplified, and information was added to the bottom of each page to make it easier for readers to order the publications by a toll-free call or to read them online at www.pueblo.gsa.gov.

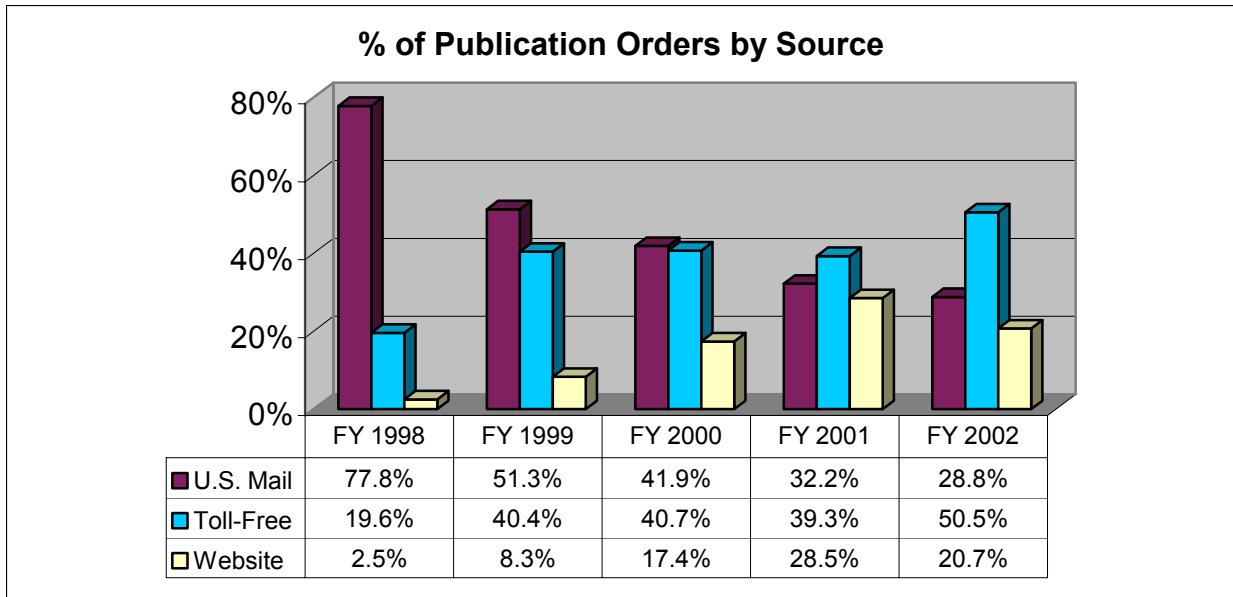
Regardless of how citizens access FCIC, if they want printed publications, their orders are fulfilled at the Pueblo, Colorado distribution facility. During fiscal year 2002, 50% of citizens placed their publication orders through the toll-free number, 1 (888) 8 PUEBLO, 29% of the orders were received in the mail, and the remaining 21% came through FCIC's websites.

The FCIC distribution facility in Pueblo is owned and operated on a reimbursable basis by the Government Printing Office to provide order receipt, processing, fulfillment, and warehousing services for the thousands of orders received weekly. Distribution is done on a reimbursable basis. FCIC coordinates the overall process and bills the organizations participating in the free distribution program to cover associated costs.

Fiscal year 2002 was significant in that publication distribution increased over the previous year. With more people using the Internet to access information and fewer printed publications being produced by agencies, the natural assumption is that distribution of printed material will decline. Fiscal year 2003 shows that with the right mix of promotion and product, citizens still want to receive books. FCIC's fiscal year 2002 distribution totaled 6.0 million publications as compared to 5.5 million in fiscal year 2001. On the revenue side, fees from the public amounted to \$173,726, which was used to offset

FCIC program expenses. Sales revenues going to the Government Printing Office totaled \$503,067 from the sales of Superintendent of Documents publications distributed through FCIC. Total revenue generated by the FCIC program in fiscal year 2002 was \$676,793, an overall decline of 16.6% from fiscal year 2001.

FCIC remains committed to providing the public access to free and low-cost printed information. The approximately 42 full-time GPO employees in Pueblo, Colorado serve FCIC and the public by responding in a timely and efficient fashion to requests for millions of publications annually. FCIC's challenge is to continue providing cost-effective distribution service while overall long-term demand for printed publications is declining and postal rates and GPO costs are increasing. These factors will inevitably lead to rising unit costs for customer agencies. Since more than 95% of the workload in Pueblo is generated by FCIC, close cooperation is required between FCIC and GPO to limit overhead costs and to identify and implement creative management practices and innovative technological advances that can reduce the overall costs of the service. FCIC looks forward to working with the new leadership at GPO to ensure that the Pueblo facility remains a vital and economically viable outlet for print information.



In addition to offering citizens the opportunity to order print publications through the **Catalog**, the FCIC websites, and from the toll-free National Contact Center, FCIC also utilizes a variety of special marketing offers to reach targeted segments of the public. For example, in fiscal year 2002, five editions of the free FEDINFO e-letter were distributed to enrolled subscribers. In addition to the latest Federal and consumer information, each e-letter included a special offer of FCIC publications. These offers generated an average response rate of almost 5% and resulted in requests for more than 31,000 publications. During 2002, the FEDINFO list serv tripled in its subscription size from 9,000 to more than 27,000 subscribers. Also, FCIC repeated an annual cooperative project with the Department of the Treasury to distribute three million promotional inserts to citizens who received tax refund checks. As a result, citizens requested more than 655,000 publications on choosing a financial planner, preparing for emergencies, eating right, buying medicines online, preventing drug interactions, and dealing with depression and anxiety.

Providing Information to Citizens with Limited English Proficiency

Today, there are over 32 million Latinos in the U.S., and this segment of the population is rapidly increasing. During fiscal year 2002, FCIC again coordinated a direct mail publication offer for Spanish-speaking individuals. FCIC acquired copies of 27 different publications in Spanish from 13 Federal agencies and cooperative partners and offered them to consumer protection and counseling organizations, childcare and health care providers, mental health clinics and social services centers in Hispanic communities across the country. Topics included health concerns, safety issues, financial information and Federal benefits. This offer generated orders for more than one million publications. During the spring of 2002, FCIC also released the new edition of the **Lista de publicaciones Federales en español para el consumidor (Catalog of Federal Consumer Publications in Spanish)**. This listing describes and provides ordering instructions for over 200 consumer publications that are available from 47 Federal agencies. Copies of the Lista are being distributed through the **Consumer Information Catalog**, FirstGov.gov and pueblo.gsa.gov, libraries nationwide, and national Hispanic organizations.

With more than 11 million Latinos online and approximately 3% of web pages available in Spanish, the need for more web-based information is clear. In February 2002, FCIC launched “Recursos en Español” (www.pueblo.gsa.gov/spanish/), a Spanish resources web page. This new section includes access to the recently released edition of the Lista, “Las Noticias del Consumidor” (a consumer news section featuring product recalls, safety information, health alerts, and information on Federal benefits), and “Los Enlaces” (a listing of over 100 links in Spanish to online resources covering a variety of consumer topics from over 60 Federal and State agencies). “Recursos en Español” provides one central location for consumer information translated into Spanish. Plans for fiscal year 2003 include launching an

improved and expanded Spanish gateway, including a Spanish language edition of the “Before You Buy” section of the **Consumer Action Handbook**.

FCIC efforts to meet the needs of citizens with limited English proficiency have extended beyond that of the Hispanic community. In fiscal year 2002, FCIC also launched a “Multi-Language Gateway”. Consumers can access information addressing a number of topics in 25 languages from 14 Federal agencies. During fiscal year 2003, FCIC is planning a publication project targeted for the Chinese-speaking community. FCIC will continue to identify new outlets to reach citizens who need Federal information in a language other than English.

Educating Consumers through the Media

The media continues to be an invaluable channel for educating the public on a wide variety of subjects. During fiscal year 2002, FCIC developed and placed promotions of FirstGov.gov, 1 (800) FED INFO, Kids.gov, resources for Spanish-speaking consumers and more. To meet changing media needs and reach the broadest possible audience, FCIC offered electronic and print feature releases, print and broadcast public service advertising messages, broadcast scripts, and assistance with story research and resources. The media used these services to share Federal information with citizens as a public service, at no cost to the government. During fiscal year 2002, FCIC received more than \$10 million in free advertising space and air time.

FCIC's primary means of providing material to the consumer media continues to be twice monthly feature releases resulting in articles in such popular consumer magazines as **Woman's Day**, and **Popular Mechanics**. Newspapers use FCIC's feature releases, known as New for Consumers, as sources for stories that have appeared in **The Washington Post**, **The New York Times**, **The Miami Herald**, **The Baltimore Sun**, **The Philadelphia Inquirer**, the **Milwaukee Journal Sentinel**, **Birmingham Post-Herald** (AL), **The News and Observer** (NC), the **Star Ledger** (NJ), the **Telegraph Herald** (IA), **The Times-News** (ID), the **Richmond Times-Dispatch** (VA), and **The Courier Journal** (KY).

Wire services such as the Associated Press, Knight Ridder and Gannett News Service, frequently quote FCIC sources and use FCIC information as the basis for longer stories. These articles appear in hundreds of papers across the country and have highlighted FCIC's publications, websites, and information on topics such as Social Security, home financing, and financial planning. During fiscal year 2002, the Associated Press ran a special promotion offering a free FCIC Senior's Financial & Medical Fitness Kit, resulting in orders for more than 100,000 publications. FCIC also worked with the AARP Bulletin, which is

distributed to AARP's 35 million-plus membership, to alert seniors to the importance of the deposit insurance program run by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. FCIC continued its successful partnership with the Sunday insert magazine **Parade**, which has a readership of 77.6 million in 330 newspapers. **Parade** featured FCIC's publications and the FirstGov.gov website in five articles in fiscal year 2002. These articles resulted in orders from citizens for more than 600,000 publications.

FCIC's Media Listserv continued its rapid growth—adding 2,000 members in fiscal year 2002. The Listserv now has more than 7,300 members. This instant information service allows subscribers to download FCIC's feature releases directly to their computer and into articles. In combination with FCIC's 3,000 member print media mailing list, the Listserv proved to be a valuable tool in promoting FCIC's new websites and services. Special feature releases were created highlighting the redesign of FirstGov.gov, FirstGov.gov's "Shopping and Auctions" web page, Kids.gov, and FCIC's resources for Spanish-speaking citizens. These releases resulted in articles in hundreds of newspapers including the **Detroit Free Press**, **The Arizona Republic**, **The Cincinnati Post**, and **The Kansas City Star**.

Magazines and newspapers also donate free ad space to FCIC's print public service announcements (PSAs). During fiscal year 2002, FCIC developed a print PSA entitled "Questions, Anyone?" which was sent nationwide to 15,000 magazines and newspapers. The ad gave examples of the many, highly varied questions callers ask when they call 1 (800) FED INFO. Magazines and newspapers have responded so positively to FCIC print ads over the years that many ads continued to be widely used throughout 2002. Ads such as [the **Consumer Information Catalog** is for] "Babies, Boomers & Everyone Else" and [Pueblo, Colorado is known for FCIC and for its famous, hot] "Salsa" appeared hundreds of times in publications throughout the country, from local newspapers vital to small communities to magazines such as **US News and World Report**, with its 2.3 million circulation.

One of the most visible ways citizens find out about FCIC and its services is through its television PSA campaigns. The fiscal year 2002-2003 campaign, “Parrot Talk” introduces FCIC’s National Contact Center at 1 (800) FED INFO to viewers nationwide. “Parrot Talk” features a savvy cockatoo answering “1(800) FED INFO” when he’s asked how to find out about a variety of government benefits and services. Focus testing revealed that a lighthearted repetition of the telephone number, along with mention in the PSA of topics such as social security benefits, passports, and buying surplus government property, helped citizens understand and use the services of the FCIC National Contact Center.

Since July, 2002, the campaign has been used in 200 out of 210 television markets and aired more than 11,000 times on more than 480 broadcast television stations. FCIC also delivered the TV PSA to more than 600 cable television stations nationwide during the winter of 2002/2003. FCIC expects to receive in excess of \$8.7 million in airtime donated as a public service by broadcast television stations, networks and cable outlets nationwide.

“Parrot Talk” received the Gold Award for outstanding achievement in professional communications from the International Mercury Awards. In March 2002, FCIC’s 2001-2002 campaign, “Up In The Air,” received both First Place and Best of Show in the National Association of Government Communicators Gold Screen competition—ranking it as the top television PSA campaign among all Federal, state and local government advertisers.

National Contact Center (NCC)

The National Contact Center (NCC) performs two main functions for FCIC: responding to telephone inquiries about Federal programs, benefits, and services, and processing telephone orders for publications. A specially selected and trained staff at the NCC, operated under contract by Aspen Systems Corporation (Aspen) in Indianapolis, Indiana, answers the calls from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. eastern time, Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. Recorded information on frequently requested subjects is available around the clock. FCIC is working to make the toll-free number 1 (800) FED INFO (1-800-333-4636) as familiar to the public as their own telephone number.

The NCC responded to a total of more than 1.93 million calls during fiscal year 2002, 1.69 million of which related to questions about Federal programs, and .24 million of which were publication orders. The most popular inquiries were: Federal loans and grants, government sales, Federal benefits, passports/travel requirements, immigration and naturalization, and savings bonds. In fiscal year 2002, the average length of an inquiry call was approximately 3.1 minutes and the average cost to the government was \$1.64. The average length of a publication order call was 3.0 minutes and the average cost to the government was \$1.05.

Calling the NCC is one of the principal ways that citizens request printed information from FCIC. More than 50% of the publication orders received during fiscal year 2002 came by phone. Citizens call 1 (888) 8 PUEBLO, and provide any needed credit card information. NCC then transmits the order electronically to the Pueblo, Colorado distribution facility for fulfillment. All FCIC Catalogs and promotions include the toll-free telephone number for consumers to order publications.

In fiscal year 2003, FCIC requested funding to increase the reach of the NCC and add new services for the public. First, it will promote the toll-free

telephone service to the rest of the United States by obtaining listings in telephone directories serving the remaining 25% of the American population (primarily small population cities, towns and rural areas). Secondly, and more significantly, FCIC will transform the current NCC to a multi-channel National Contact Center that will be able to receive, track, and respond to e-mail and fax inquiries as well as telephone inquiries.

Currently, the toll-free number, 1 (800) FED INFO, is accessible in all parts of the country. However, the number is listed only in the 500 largest telephone directories serving approximately 75% of the population. So while the remaining 25% of the population can use the toll-free service, they may not be aware of it. In an effort to assure universal awareness, FCIC will now expand the range of directory listings to capture the smaller population centers. This will add listings to more than 3,000 additional directories.

Adding e-mail capability to the National Contact Center is the natural outcome of the explosive growth of the use of the Internet as the public's preferred means of communication, which has led most major service companies to install systems to handle the increasing volumes of e-mail they receive.

During the third quarter of fiscal year 2003, FCIC will begin to receive, track, and process e-mail and faxes from the public. Initially, all e-mail will be received via an e-mail web form on the FirstGov.gov website. This web form will also be available on the pueblo.gsa.gov and info.gov websites. In the future, the e-mail web form could be made available on a wide variety of government websites. Additionally, FCIC is working with other public-facing agencies to ascertain their readiness to receive e-mail and to identify other types of systems used to interact with the public. This information will help set business rules for processing public inquiries.

The volume of e-mail that will be received from the public is difficult to anticipate. For the most part, agencies do not use e-mail to communicate with

the public. One agency that does accept e-mail, the Social Security Administration (SSA) reports receiving just under 300,000 e-mails a year. Like the SSA, FCIC will be actively promoting the use of e-mail as a way to get questions answered. However, a significant difference between SSA and FCIC is that it will be receiving questions about any government program or agency. In terms of service to citizens, FCIC wants to ensure that the system implemented will be more than adequate to handle current and increasing levels of inquiries from the public. When the e-mail system is implemented this year, it will initially be able to receive, process, and track 12,500 e-mails a month with the ability to add additional capacity as demand dictates. In fiscal year 2004, the system will be capable of handling 50,000 e-mails a month, for a total of 600,000 per year.

Also, during fiscal year 2003, FCIC will begin the process to re-compete the NCC contract to add a variety of enhanced services to citizens. In October 2002, FCIC entered the third of four option years on the current NCC contract. This contract was originally written and awarded in 1999-2000 and did not envision the organization that FCIC has become today. FCIC has modified this existing contract to allow for a quicker start on handling e-mails and faxes from the public but also needs to obtain more comprehensive professional and technical support to serve as the information "front door" to the U.S. Government. Consequently, FCIC plans to have a new comprehensive and flexible contract in place by December 2003. The new contract will be available for use by Federal agencies that wish to improve their information services to the public. Agencies will be able to use the FCIC contract to acquire special contact center services. Alternatively, agencies could choose to use FCIC services on a reimbursable basis. This type of support will promote a consistent government-wide approach to providing citizen services by adding new response capabilities to agencies' existing citizen service infrastructures.

FCIC anticipates that overall contract costs for the NCC will rise by \$2.1 million in fiscal year 2004 due to an array of new and enhanced services offered to the

public, more highly skilled and better-trained Information Specialists, and the increasing volume and types of inquiries received. In addition to standard contact center services, FCIC will be implementing a contract that will deliver the following new and enhanced services:

- **Improve the NCC Database.** As FCIC has worked to prepare for an increased volume of inquiries received through multiple channels, it has become apparent that the current database used by the NCC Information Specialists to answer calls is inadequate to meet future needs. The database was originally developed over a decade ago and was organized in ways that worked for the specific contractor operation at that time. It has been revamped several times to improve its utility and the current contractor has provided a web-accessible interface for public use. However, it is still incomplete and does not meet current database design standards. A complete redesign would also include the capability to access or receive information from a variety of other agency databases and provide the core of a government-wide self-help knowledge management system. Providing the public with wide access to this self-help tool would provide fast, accurate, and consistent help.
- **Speech Recognition and Text-to-Speech Features.** Currently, the NCC has an interactive voice response system that merely provides recordings of the most frequently asked questions. Addition of speech recognition and text-to-speech features will enable the FCIC to create a more customer-friendly voice portal that gives callers easier access to frequently requested information. This service will tie in with the redesigned database and would provide the public access to fast, accurate, and consistent help from the database directly via the telephone. Citizens will be able to use voice-activated prompts to verbally request and receive spoken answers directly from the database.

- Provide Real-Time Assistance Over the Web. Current contact center technology includes providing real-time assistance to the growing number of citizens seeking information via the web. The addition of web chat, co-browsing, and information-pushing technologies and services will enable the FCIC to offer assisted services through all communications channels, including telephone, e-mail, fax, and the web. For example, visitors to FCIC websites would be able to click on a window and enter into an instant messaging conversation with an Information Specialist who would be able to show them how to find the information or push the information directly to their computers.
- Multi-lingual Support. A recent informal survey completed at the NCC found that more than 15% of all callers prefer to be served in Spanish. FCIC currently offers agent assistance in Spanish and plans to increase the number of Spanish-speaking agents, revise the In-bound Voice Recording (IVR) to include a Spanish-agent option at the outset of the call, and add Spanish recorded messages to the IVR. FCIC will also acquire the use of a separate interpreter service to enable NCC to offer agent assistance in over 50 other languages.
- Digitize FCIC Publications. Over the years, FCIC has gathered a large repository of Federal consumer information in print and has created or obtained it in a variety of electronic formats to make the information available on our websites. These are formatted in a mix of .txt, HTML, and PDF formats, which are useful in specific channels, but are not as useful in multiple channel delivery environments. Entire publications are useful when one wants to find out more about a general subject area, but many public inquiries can be satisfied by a paragraph or page. FCIC sees significant advantages to be gained in providing useful information to the public if documents were uniformly digitized in a form (for example XML) that would enable delivery of this information to citizens through a variety of channels. The digitized versions will be incorporated into the

database to provide fast, searchable availability to NCC Information Specialists, who could attach information pulled from these searches to e-mail and fax responses. Additionally, citizens would be able to access this information by voice commands over the phone through an intelligent voice-activated IVR system.

With these enhancements, FCIC will provide citizens with the state-of-the-art information services they require from their government. It will be equipped to handle public inquiries and requests from any channel the public desires to use and to provide superior support to e-Gov initiatives and other government agencies in their efforts to improve their information services to citizens. This builds upon and will enable continuation of FCIC's excellent performance in informing the public.

Conclusion

In fiscal year 2004, the Federal Citizen Information Center will continue to refine its programs and services to meet the changing needs of America's citizens. It will be the eyes and ears of consumers who want to know what's new from the Federal Government that will be helpful in their daily lives. Whether they want printed information to bring with them when meeting a mortgage lender, or to apply online for Federal student financial aid, or to call regarding government benefit programs, or to email a question about their citizenship application, FCIC will be ready with information that is clear, complete, fast, and accurate. The requested appropriation for fiscal year 2004 totals \$17.643 million, an increase of \$3.212 million from fiscal year 2003. This amount covers program enhancements that will enable citizens to be increasingly self-sufficient and give them the tools to quickly find the specific help and information they need.

With its long history of citizen service, the new Federal Citizen Information Center will build public trust and confidence in government, whether citizens order publications from the **Consumer Information Catalog**, log on to FirstGov.gov, or call the National Contact Center. In times of change, FCIC is proud to continue the programs that consumers have come to depend on, and to build new ways to bring government and its citizens closer together.