

TACKLING THE TIME TAX

How The Federal Government Is Reducing Burdens To Accessing Critical Benefits And Services



Appendix B: Update to FY 2022 Burden Reduction Initiatives

Information Collection Budget of FY 2023

OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
OFFICE OF INFORMATION AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS

Appendix B: Update to FY 2022 Burden Reduction Initiatives

Last year the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published the FY 2022 Information Collection Budget (ICB). This included *Appendix A: Agency Burden Reduction Initiatives*, a list of dozens of nascent, ongoing, and recently-completed burden reduction initiatives. This year, as a part of the FY 2023 ICB data call, OIRA asked agencies to provide limited updates on these initiatives. Below, we summarize many of these updates.

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
User Testing SB 1071 form
Description
The Bureau user tested forms to make them more psychologically user friendly (i.e. easier, less burdensome to use).
Update
This burden reduction initiative was completed in FY2022. There is no ongoing progress. This same manner of testing/improvement will be employed in similar applications in the future.

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
Terms of Credit Card Plans Survey Revision
Description
The Bureau revised the Terms of Credit Card Plans survey to enhance clarity and transparency to the college/university credit card market.
Update
This BRI was completed in FY2022. There is no ongoing progress.

United States Department of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency Loan Applications
Description
Cutting the time for farm loan applications in half through form simplification and online assistance tools.
Update
FY 23 OLA has transitioned from development only to development and beta deployment. OLA beta version was launched on 6/30/2023 in 4 states. On 9/01/2023, FSA expanded the beta version to 15 total states.

United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development Grants Initiative
Description
<p>USDA Rural Development (RD) will streamline and standardize grant processing activities. Our goals are to simplify tasks to reduce applicant frustration, reduce FTE hours needed to provide grant services and refocus energies on other mission-critical work, and streamline programs to provide a better customer experience. The team will consist of both national office and field staff.</p>
Update
<p>The team is meeting on a regular basis and is currently working to narrow the scope of the project to tackle the grant programs with the highest need, largest impact, or those that have could be streamlined with the same application or processing change(s). Our team will be leading program staff through application process mapping exercises to better understand the requirements and tasks within each application process. We will hold internal listening sessions with staff that works on these programs and external listening sessions with past or potential applicants to ensure we are taking a human-centered approach in our design. We have also changed the title/name to Better Grants Better Service (BGBS).</p>

Department of Commerce
Re-use already collected data
Description
By capturing the client information collected and storing it in export.gov, the sponsor will be able to access pre-populate information without having the clients to re-enter it. This will reduce both the client's and the sponsor's burden and allow for more customized and efficient services.
Update
Implementation in process.

Department of Commerce
Investigate the possibility of removing unnecessary collections of information
Description
<p>NOAA will review the information collections of the Alaska Region Fishing Industry to remove unnecessary data fields on all forms.</p> <p>The Alaska seafood industry creates over 100,000 FTE jobs with \$6.4 billion in direct output associated with fishing, processing, distribution, and retail. Alaska produces more seafood than all other U.S. states combined and is sold in 100 countries around the world, and is the state's top export by far.</p>
Update
<p>We have engaged stakeholders in the design of an electronic application intake system and continue to work toward fully electronic submission of all our application forms. In doing this, we have eliminated some unused data fields (including notary certification requirements) and implemented auto-fill options for data fields that are repeatedly submitted. We completed review of 13 of our 31 approved collections and we are scheduled to complete review of 17 of our collections in FY24.</p>

Department of Commerce
Facilitating Grant Forms
Description
The National Telecommunications and Information Administration’s (NTIA's) initiative to facilitate grant forms came in the wake of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 [and Investment and Jobs Act] broadband grant programs. As a result of not having used structured application forms for these programs, heavy burden costs were incurred by both applicants and reviewers in attempting to gather all of the necessary programmatic and project data required to adequately assess an application. Many of these applicants included Tribal governments and other entities associated with underprivileged communities. Consequently, NTIA developed structured application and reporting forms for future grant programs and implemented whole-scale strategies to provide technical assistance and outreach to guide applicants through these forms.
Update
Application and reporting forms continue to become streamlined.

Department of Commerce
Trademark Application System
Description
The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is working to upgrade and modernize the application system for submitting Trademark registrations.
Update
The USPTO continues to work on the next generation of Trademark application systems. Trademark Center will open to the public, for new applications, in 2024. Trademark Center will initially operate alongside existing/previous trademark application programs.

Department of Education
Public Service Loan Forgiveness 1845-0110
Description
The Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program provides forgiveness of the outstanding balance of a borrower's William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan (Direct Loan) Program loan(s) after the borrower has made 120 on-time, monthly payments under a qualifying repayment plan.
Update
In spring 2023 we implemented an e-signature solution to the PSLF Help Tool Experience. This work resulted in an improved user experience and a reduction of burden hours. The work with DocuSign will be leveraged in additional specialty servicing products.

Department of Education
Income Driven Repayment 1845-0102
Description
The Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) plan request form is for borrowers who obtained Federal student loans through the DL and FFEL Programs. The IDR plan request form incorporates the Revised Pay As You Earn (PAYE), Income-Based Repayment (IBR), and Income-Contingent Repayment (ICR) plans.
Update
As a part of the SABER initiative, the IDR/LC applications were redesigned in Summer 2023. This work resulted in an improved user experience and a reduction of burden hours. This work will continue through next summer's launch that will align with the updated regulatory requirements.

United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Simplification
Description
The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Simplification initiative seeks to reduce burden on those applying for HHS awards. NOFOs guide the information applicants submit in applying for funding. Making NOFOs easier to read and understand and decreasing the complexity of what applicants must complete in preparing and submitting applications will improve outcomes and reduce burden for organizations seeking awards under HHS discretionary programs, including those serving underserved communities. As of June 27, 2023, HHS completed and published three prototype NOFOs. In FY24 a minimum of 100 NOFOs will be in the simplified format and further implementation and adoption in FY25.
Update
In FY23 HHS completed, published and evaluated four prototype NOFOs. In FY24 HHS is piloting this approach of a simplified format for ~80 NOFOs and continuing to plan for further implementation and adoption in FY25.

United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Members of the public requested the ability to submit claims electronically.
Description
Healthcare providers submitting medical records for individuals who filed claims
Update
HRSA's online portal is operational: https://injurycompensation.hrsa.gov/DICPSubmit/ .

United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Contract Year 2024 Policy and Technical Changes to the Medicare Advantage and Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit Programs Proposed Rule (CMS-4201-P)
Description
<p>Would provide patients with more timely access to medically necessary care by improving the Prior Authorization process, as well as increase access to care, including behavioral health services, and promote equity in coverage and care by expanding the list of populations that MA organizations must provide services to in a culturally competent manner.</p>
Update
<p>On April 5, 2023, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a final rule that did not include all proposed provisions. The final rule revises the Medicare Advantage (MA or Part C), Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit (Part D), Medicare Cost Plan, and Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) regulations to implement changes related to Star Ratings, marketing and communications, health equity, provider directories, coverage criteria, prior authorization, network adequacy, and other programmatic areas. This final rule also codifies regulations implementing section 118 of Division CC of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, and section 11404 of the Inflation Reduction Act, and includes provisions to codify existing sub-regulatory guidance in the Part C, Part D, and PACE programs.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The final rule can be downloaded here: https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/current.</p>

Department of Homeland Security
Rulemaking:
Minimum Standards for Driver's Licenses and Identification Cards Acceptable by Federal Agencies for Official Purposes; Temporary Waiver for Mobile Driver's Licenses
Description
<p>The proposed rule would, among other things, allow Federal agencies to continue to accept mobile Driver's Licenses (mDLs) for official purposes when REAL ID enforcement begins. If mDL acceptance halted when REAL ID enforcement begins, it would reverse TSA's current ability to use mDL to provide a more customer-friendly screening experience.</p> <p>TSA estimates there will be approximately 2.3 million mDL holders in the first year, with an increasing mDL adoption rate over time</p>
Update
The NPRM was published August 2023 and the Final Rule is expected to be published in 2024.

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Department of Homeland Security
DHS Burden Reduction Initiative - Reducing Public Burden by 20M Hours: Conduct usability testing during the creation and revision process for all forms
Description
National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) Version 5.0
The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) conducted usability testing and improved its electronic submission methods to reduce 2,805,900 burden hours
Update
FEMA continues to conduct usability testing for all information collection request and improving its electronic submission methods through the NFIRS.

Department of Homeland Security
DHS Burden Reduction Initiative - Reducing Public Burden by 20M Hours: Eliminate redundant or unnecessary collections
Rulemaking: National Flood Insurance Program: Standard Flood Insurance Policy, Homeowner Flood Form
Description
Revisions to Collection: FEMA recently updated its current collection of National Flood Insurance Program Policy Forms (1660-0006) to remove unnecessary questions, eliminate unnecessary collections and enable online submissions, saving flood victims 10,568 burden hours.
Update
FEMA conducted usability on this collection, correcting errors in the burden estimates, elimination duplicate information, removing unnecessary collections, and enable online submissions through the NFIP Direct website. This resulted in a burden reduction of 10,568 hours. OIRA approved the Revision ICR on 2/23/2024.

Department of Homeland Security
DHS Burden Reduction Initiative - Reducing Public Burden by 20M Hours: Simplification/Auto renewal/Short Form
Description
Arrival and Departure Record and Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA)
The Arrival and Departure Record and Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) allows travelers to submit forms electronically, save partially completed forms for later completion. Total time to completion was reduced by 10 minutes per traveler using form simplification methods during modernization. This resulted in a savings of 2,500,000 burden hours.
Update
CBP continues to use ESTA to decrease burden on travelers, saving 2,500,000-million-hour burden reduction. OIRA approved the collection on 5/26/2023.

Department of Homeland Security
Rulemaking: Optional Alternative to the Physical Examination Associated with Employment Eligibility Verification (Form I-9)
Description
On August 18, 2022, DHS published a proposed rule that would allow the Secretary to authorize alternative procedures under certain circumstances, or as part of a pilot, for some or all employers to examine identity and employment authorization documents for completion of the Form I-9. DHS is finalizing the rule and accompanying Federal Register notices.
Update
Final Rule published 88 FR 47990 (July 25, 2023), creating a "framework under which the Secretary may, as an optional alternative to the in-person physical document examination method that employers have followed as part of the Form I-9 process set forth in current regulations, authorize alternative document examination procedures. The Secretary may authorize such alternative procedures with respect to some or all employers as part of a pilot program, upon the Secretary's determination." ICE began an ICR to implement the pilot and published the 60-day notice. See 88 FR 51338 (August 3, 2023). ICE is addressing the 4 public comments to determine the need for any program changes.

Department of Labor
HISP (High-Impact Service Provider) Project
Description
To improve the overall customer experience the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) is updating its website to meet current needs of the Employee Benefits Security Administration’s (EBSA) diverse audience. Materials for EBSA’s website, publications, and assistance will be produced in a variety of formats and languages. Accessibility in both form and delivery is a priority. The goal is to ensure inclusion of all communities while incorporating new features for an improved user experience.
Update
What we delivered in 2023. 1) Redesigned priority EBSA webpages: EBSA redesigned high-volume and high-importance webpages, including the home page, Mental Health Parity & Addiction Equity Act, Surprise Billing, About Us, Ask EBSA, and Resources page, to improve UX and access to information. EBSA also created standardized page templates to improve the management and content strategy for improved CX. 2) Reorganized PDF file library to improve ease of access: EBSA streamlined searching and topical navigation for PDFs hosted on the website. Access to these PDFs bring the customers one step closer to critical guidance and benefits information. 3) Translated important information into multiple languages: EBSA translated priority website resources to make them more accessible to non-English speaking workers. 4) Conducted outreach to underserved, multicultural, and limited English speaking customers: EBSA launched a social media campaign with a focus on the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act. The campaign drove visitors to newly designed webpages and highlighted the availability of speaking live with an EBSA Benefits Advisor in over 200 languages.

Department of Labor
Contractor Portal
Description
DOL's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) developed the Contractor Portal to optimize the compliance review process by creating a tool for scheduled contractors to upload their Affirmative Action Program certification (AAP) electronically for OFCCP's review.
Update
OFCCP is still in the process of developing this feature in its Contractor Portal. However, in its recent Supply & Service information collection request (OMB # 1250-0003), OFCCP highlighted other electronic means stakeholders can use to submit their AAPs while this feature is still in development.

Department of Labor
Complaint Intake Process
Description
<p>DOL’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) has one form that applicants and employees of contractors, authorized representatives, or third parties ("submitters") can use to file a complaint (Form CC4). In fiscal year 2022, OFCCP received 2,075 complaints, and assigned only 4.9% of these complaints for investigation. FY 2022 Submission Description: OFCCP is proposing a new two-step intake process where OFCCP could assess the allegations at the pre-complaint inquiry stage (prior to the filing of a complaint) to help determine whether OFCCP is the right Federal agency to handle the matter and to notify employers only when a complaint is filed. As a first step, a submitter would submit a pre-complaint inquiry providing basic information on their allegation(s) and contact information. If OFCCP determines it would likely investigate the matter, OFCCP would provide the submitter with information on filing a complaint (Form CC-4), including information on the anti-retaliation protections under the authorities the agency enforces. The two-step intake process would benefit workers because it allows individuals to contact OFCCP about their concerns prior to filing a complaint. This provides an opportunity for OFCCP to explain to the potential complainant whether the allegations are timely and covered by the authorities the agency enforces, make clear that the employer will only be notified of the complaint once it is filed, and reassure complainants that they have protections from retaliation. In addition, the two-step process would result in a decrease in total reporting burden because completing the pre-complaint inquiry (15 mins) is less burdensome than completing the formal complaint (1 hour).</p>
Update
<p>OFCCP submitted the information collection request to OMB, including a revised Form CC-4 and a new pre-complaint form (Form CC-390). OMB approved the request in June 2023. As OFCCP required time to upgrade its electronic systems for complaint intake and to translate the form into additional languages, it continued to use the prior form through October 2023, as noted in the Terms of Clearance. On November 1, 2023, OFCCP successfully launched the two-step complaint intake process, including the Form CC-4 and CC-390. OFCCP updated its public webpages to provide information on the new process and the new forms. See https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ofccp/contact/file-complaint.</p>

Department of Labor
Unemployment Insurance Equity Grants
Description
DOL has approved equity grants to 41 states and jurisdictions, which have used the funds to launch more than 124 projects to promote equitable access to unemployment compensation (or unemployment insurance, UI) programs. The grant program gave the states significant flexibility, resulting in efforts to address operational, programmatic, or technological issues.
Update
In FY 2023, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) finalized the award of grants to improve Equitable Access to the UI program to 46 states totaling \$219 million. States are in various stages of implementation of their grant projects. ETA is engaged in oversight and monitoring of states activities under these grants.

Department of Labor
Unemployment Insurance Navigator Grants
Description
DOL has awarded \$18 million in UI Navigator Grants to help states work with community and worker organizations to improve their UI systems, ensuring all workers have access to unemployment benefits, building on the important role that many worker organizations, especially unions, have played both before and during the pandemic in helping unemployed workers access benefits.
Update
The Department's Chief Evaluation Officer is currently engaged in an evaluation of these pilot states' use of the grants and the experience of UI claimants and their interaction with the UI Navigators.

Department of Labor
Identify and Address Barriers to Unemployment Insurance Access
Description
Examples include the need for plain language in UI forms and notices, publishing a lexicon of plain language terms for common UI terms (https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/uimodernization/language-portfolio), and measuring customer experience in the UI program and using those assessment to drive change (https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/uimodernization/blogs/survey-design).
Update
On November 1, 2023, the Department issued a report titled "Insights and Successes: American Rescue Plan Act Investments in Unemployment Insurance Modernization," which includes highlights on the Department's plain language efforts to help claimants more easily understand benefits programs by providing direct assistance to states and by making available a suite of resources for states to draw on to craft clearer UI communications. The report is at https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/ui-modernization/arpa-success-stories

Department of Labor
Federal options for identity verification
Description
Evidence-based identity verification is the best way for states to ensure that the person filing for UI benefits is who they say they are. We are working to provide states with Federal options for identity verification that reduce the burden of this needed step in the process.
Update
On November 1, 2023, the Department issued a report titled "Insights and Successes: American Rescue Plan Act Investments in Unemployment Insurance Modernization", which includes highlights on the Department's public options to states to verify the identities of applicants either online through Login.gov or in person at U.S. Postal Service locations, addressing a major pandemic-era vulnerability of fraudulent claims filed with stolen identities. The report is at https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/ui-modernization/arpa-success-stories . As of June 21, 2024, 13 state UI agencies are using one or both of these government operated identity verification services.

Department of Labor
Language Access Initiative
Description
The Department established a Centralized Office of Language Assistance (COLA), that is managed by the Civil Rights Center (CRC). Their initial analysis indicates that DOL agencies encounter 80 unique languages and interact with 11 languages on average. Also, multiple agencies encounter Limited English Proficiency (LEP) stakeholders daily. The Department has launched a comprehensive language access plan, including contract vehicles to support greater language access as one component.
Update
The Department's Language Access Plan, published on October 26, 2023, has a number of important components. For example, CRC has identified funding to support agencies as they launch broad new language access activities. In addition, CRC helped the Department establish two enterprise-wide vehicles for Professional Language Assistance Services and for Translation, Interpretation and Transcription Services. CRC has also built quality control measures into these vehicles. Together, these vehicles will directly support the Department's efforts to improve access to DOL conducted programs and activities for LEP individuals. These will allow agencies to tap into high-quality supports for more individuals to access the Department's services. The Language Access Plan can be found here: https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/cola/FY2023-language-access-plan

Department of Justice
Improving Language Access
Description
<p>The Department of Justice continues to prioritize efforts to reduce burdens for individuals with limited English Proficiency (LEP) in accessing Federal government services and resources in their language. Last year, the Office for Access to Justice reconvened the DOJ-wide Language Access Working Group which has advanced the following efforts among others: (1) expanding access to telephonic interpreting services; (2) increasing awareness about language assistance services available to DOJ components; (3) translating DOJ public-facing content that is most relevant to communities with LEP; and (4) providing training and technical assistance to components on best practices including when conducting outreach and engaging with communities with LEP in non-English languages.</p>
Update
<p>(1) In August 2023, DOJ issued an updated Language Access Plan which expands access to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HOH) and integrates requirements under the Rehabilitation Act. The Plan requires DOJ components to update their plans. It was translated into the top 5 languages at a national level.</p> <p>(2) ATJ has assisted 15 DOJ components and offices with language services, including managing the translation of 91 original documents which produced 1128 translated documents in 27 languages.</p> <p>(3) ATJ developed and launched a DOJ-wide Language Access One-Stop-Shop with information about language assistance available (including telephonic, in-person, remote interpreting, translation, transcription, and auxiliary aids).</p> <p>(4) ATJ continues to provide training and technical assistance to components on best practices including when conducting outreach and engaging with communities with LEP in non-English languages.</p>

Department of Justice
Simplifying Pardon and Clemency Application Processes
Description
DOJ’s Office of the Pardon Attorney is simplifying application forms and processes for those seeking to avail themselves of the executive clemency process, including requests for pardon after completion of sentence, commutation (reduction) of sentence, and remission of criminal financial penalties. This effort commenced in March 2023, following the development of a streamlined process to issue certificates showing a person has been pardoned under the October 6, 2022 Presidential Proclamation that pardons Federal and D.C. Code convictions for simple marijuana possession offenses.
Update
In 2023, PARDON partnered with the Office for Access to Justice (ATJ) to get feedback from applicants and advocates that would inform their efforts to simplify the form used to apply for a Presidential pardon. Some key changes include eliminating the requirement for notarized signature pages for applicants and their character reference, asking for fewer years of residence and work histories, as well as eliminating questions and re-ordering the content.

Department of State
Digital Visa Authorization
Description
Developments to allow visa applicants to upload their passport scan with the submission of the online digital DS 160 and DS 260 applications.
Update
Digital Visa Authorization proof-of-concept comprising approximately 25 K-1 visa applicants completed in October 2023.

Department of the Interior
Technology and Development Transfer
Description
The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) has capability to provide a wide range of technical assistance and technological support. Many states and tribe cannot maintain the full complement of technologies required to regulate active mining operations while reclaiming Abandoned Mine Land (AML) legacy sites.
Update
OSMRE's National Mine Map Repository (NMMR) expanded its geographically coverage to 40 states adding 1,625 new map documents; https://www.osmre.gov/programs/national-mine-map-repository

Department of the Interior
Migratory Bird Surveys, 50 CFR 20.20
Description
The Service proposes a revision to OMB Control No. 1018-0023 to transition from paper harvest surveys to the new online survey system which reduces burden on respondents. This proposed new subpart includes revised provisions for processing specific permits (sometimes called individual permits) and adds a general-permit alternative for qualifying activities. The current permit framework places an administrative burden on the public and the Service that is not commensurate with what is required to effectively preserve bald eagles.
Update
We are implementing additional time/burden savings this year and next in the online harvest survey by replacing the login/password with an invitation code; this should reduce the time it takes for some hunters who log in multiple times to add hunting information. We have not yet conducted the second pilot year for the photo PCS survey due to budget constraints but plan to do that in the 2024-25 hunting season.

Department of the Interior
Permits for Incidental Take of Eagles and Eagle Nests (RIN 1018-BE70; OMB Cont. No. 1018-0167)
Description
The Service proposes a new subpart E within 50 CFR part 22 for eagle permit regulations authorizing take that is necessary for the protection of other interests in any particular locality (eagle take for other interests). This proposed new subpart includes revised provisions for processing specific permits (sometimes called individual permits) and adds a general-permit alternative for qualifying activities. The current permit framework places an administrative burden on the public and the Service that is not commensurate with what is required to effectively preserve bald eagles.
Update
We published the eagle final rule (RIN 1018-BE70) on 02/12/2024. The final rule increases the efficiency and effectiveness of permitting, improves clarity for the regulated community, and increases the conservation benefit for eagles.

Department of the Treasury
FixERS
Description
<p>FixERS is an automated tool that assists with processing returns that are otherwise expected to fall out of processing due to incorrect information input by the taxpayer. Under FixERS, the system automatically corrects the return so that it can continue to be processed, rather than kick it out of processing for further review and error correction. In January 2022, Integrated Automation Technologies (IAT) developed FixERS to address 5 regularly-seen errors (using error codes) relating to taxpayer claims for the earned income credit, the refundable child tax credit, the recovery rebate credit, and the refundable child and dependent care credit.</p>
Update
<p>For filing season 2024, IRS added 2 new error codes to FixERS to identify errors with Residential Clean Energy and Energy Efficient Home Improvement Credits (Error Code 291), and Clean Vehicle and Previously Owned Clean Vehicles Credits (Error Code 298). This brings the total error codes to 23.</p>

Department of the Treasury
Document Upload Tool (DUT)
Description
The DUT enables taxpayers and their representatives to upload documents requested during a correspondence exam audit to irs.gov instead of mailing or faxing the documents. Uploaded documents are retrieved from the DUT and assigned to a tax examiner to review.
Update
<p>Taxpayers are now able to respond to notices online. Until Filing Season 2023, when taxpayers received notices for things like document verification, they had to respond through the mail. During Filing Season 2023, taxpayers were able to respond to 10 of the most common notices for credits like the Earned Income and Health Insurance Tax Credits online, saving them time and money. By July 2023, taxpayers had the option to respond to 61 IRS notices and letters, and by October 2023, taxpayers could respond to all notices and letters that do not have a filing or payment action.</p> <p>Of special note, to protect taxpayers who are victims of identity theft, Form 14039, Identity Theft Affidavit, Digital Upload Tool was launched on September 29, 2023.</p>

Department of the Treasury
Information Returns Intake System (IRIS)
Description
<p>IRIS is a modernized taxpayer portal platform that provides a no cost online method for customers to electronically complete and file forms in the Form 1099 series. Through IRIS, customers enter data to create a form in the Form 1099 series by either keying in the information or uploading a comma-separated value file. Currently, taxpayers using IRIS can (1) easily complete and file Forms 1099, (2) submit up to 100 records per upload with CSV templates, (3) file corrected Forms 1099, (4) manage issuer information, and (5) request automatic extensions to file Forms 1099.</p>
Update
<p>For filing season 2024, IRIS expanded to allow for bulk application to application (A2A) submissions.</p>

Department of the Treasury
Improved Customer Service
Description
<p>The IRS continues to strive to improve customer service through easier and more convenient interactions for taxpayers and tax professionals by providing them with the data and tools they need to interact quickly via their preferred communications channels and enabling them to more easily, accurately and securely file their taxes and receive the incentives for which they are eligible. Numerous initiatives are contributing to the goal. To highlight three of them:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(1) Increased hiring to increase customer service.</p> <p>(2) The use of chat and voice bots. The IRS has launched artificial intelligence-powered bots to assist taxpayers with a number of issues, including but not limited to setting up or modifying existing payment agreements, requesting account transcripts, and receiving current balance due and general information.</p> <p>(3) Online self-service payment plans. This initiative allows certain taxpayers to create or modify existing agreements to pay their liabilities over time without the need to communicate with an IRS employee by phone, by mail, or in person.</p>
Update
<p>(1) The IRS has increased the hiring for customer service and accounts management. For FY23 filing season, IRS hired 5,100 customer service representatives (CSR). Accounts management (AM) also was able to onboard 5,700 CSRs for the FY 2024 filing season early. By onboarding them earlier, AM was able to get all the CSRs through training to be productive starting in January 2024.</p> <p>In January 2023, the IRS transitioned to a long-term Customer Callback Enterprise Solution, configuring the possibility for a callback offering to 75% of eligible callers seeking live assistance. In July 2023, the IRS expanded the availability of its customer callback option to cover up to 95% of eligible callers seeking live assistance and in December 2023, expanded the availability for a callback option to 97% of eligible callers. The main goal of the customer callback feature is to enhance the taxpayer's experience by giving them more options when the call volumes are high and wait times are longer.</p> <p>(2) IRS has also improved the taxpayer experience by using voice and chatbots to help taxpayers with a wide range of issues. These tools have helped taxpayers with securing account transcripts, getting answers to questions about balances, and requesting help from the Taxpayer Advocate Service. Whether taxpayers call the IRS or visit online, there are new self-service options available around-the-clock. During business hours, the voice and chatbots provide an option to connect with a live CSR if needed. In FY23, IRS has 9 taxpayer-facing voicebots and 10 chatbots in operation.</p> <p>(3) IRS self-service options include: information on filing returns, ordering a tax transcript, check on refund status, payment options, letters from the IRS, correcting a return, identity theft and fraud, requesting language translation, and getting tax help. IRS lists resource information for these self-service options on: https://www.irs.gov/help/let-us-help-you. Also, e-File has added 10 forms starting Filing Season 2024. Additional forms will be available, three in March 2024 and seven in Summer 2024. The IRS initiatives titled "Build/Enhance status-tracking tools for taxpayers" and "Expand Online Accounts" also relate to this initiative.</p>

Department of the Treasury
Emergency Rental Assistance
Description
<p>Treasury’s Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program has provided communities over \$46 billion to support housing stability primarily through financial support with rent and utilities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funds are provided directly to states, U.S. territories, local governments, and Indian tribes. These grantees across the United States have some flexibility to develop their rental assistance programs to suit the needs of their local communities, while complying with requirements outlined in the ERA financial assistance agreement, the ERA statute, and Treasury’s guidance. Treasury’s policy guidance establishes certain flexibilities that support streamlined eligibility documentation strategies, including the use of income documentation proxies and the strategic use of self-attestation. Allowing programs various eligibility documentation strategies provided programs with critical flexibility to accelerate efforts to prevent harmful evictions for vulnerable low-income families.</p>
Update
<p>The Emergency Rental Assistance 1 (ERA1) program has wound down and all reporting has been completed. Reporting for Emergency Rental Assistance 2 (ERA2) continues with no major changes. In March 2024, Treasury issued updated FAQs which clarified how ERA2 funds could be used for affordable rental housing, eviction prevention, and housing stability purposes. This update was made in response to feedback from ERA2 grantees and is intended to support grantees’ efforts to increase the availability of affordable rental housing by using their ERA2 award funds.</p>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Pollution Prevention (P2) Grantee Data Collection in Standard Electronic Format
Description
<p>This ICR presents EPA’s estimates for the burden and costs associated with the information collection activities related to pollution prevention grant programs and the collection of activity and results data from the grantees via a standard electronic format.</p> <p>Pollution prevention (P2) means reducing or eliminating pollutants from entering any waste stream or otherwise being released into the environment prior to recycling, treatment, or disposal. EPA’s P2 program operates three grant programs and is developing two new grant programs. The two new grant programs under development will be supported by the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), funding and do not require grantee matching funds as the existing grants do.</p>
Update
2nd FRN published and ICR submitted to OMB on 2/6/2024 (89 FR 8196). Additional 30-day comment period.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Workshops for Tribal TAS Applicants
Description
<p>Conduct pre-application workshops to assist tribal governments seeking TAS* authority to administer water quality standards programs</p> <p>[*Section 518 of the Clean Water Act authorizes EPA to treat eligible Indian tribes with reservations in a similar manner similar as states (TAS) for a variety of programs, including administering water quality standards.]</p>
Update
<p>Since the first workshop (March 21-23, 2023), no tribes have submitted TAS applications to EPA for approval. However, 12 registrants from this workshop attended the May 2023 WQS Academy and 12 attended the December 2023 WQS Academy, which represents progression toward strengthening understanding of WQS and obtaining TAS to administer the WQS program by the tribes these registrants represent.</p>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Air Emissions Reporting Requirements (AERR) Rule & Combined Air Emissions Reporting System (CAERS)
Description
<p>The AERR collection results in the National Emissions Inventory (NEI), which is a resource for the public, industry, states, and EPA to understand air emissions in the United States. Other inventory collection efforts by states and EPA cause some aspects of duplicative burden for emissions reporting. For example, some states require reporting of hazardous air pollutants (HAP) and the EPA's Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) program also collects that data. As a result, the regulated community may need to report HAP emissions to both the state (which gets voluntarily passed to EPA for the NEI) and to the TRI. The Combined Air Emissions Reporting System (CAERS) project seeks to find ways to reduce or eliminate such duplicative burden through voluntary use (by states and industry) of CAERS and its features.</p>
Update
<p>During the past year, the AERR proposed revisions were published, comments received, and progress has been made towards a final rule targeting the summer of 2024 for final. The final rule package expected to go to OMB in March 2024.</p> <p>Over the past year for CAERS, we have new states/locals that have onboarded: Idaho & Maine, and Arizona (for 12 test facilities) in addition to the existing usage by Washington DC, Georgia, Rhode Island, and Pima, AZ. We are working currently to onboard Mississippi, EPA R8 for tribal submissions, tribes in R10, and complete Arizona's onboarding. Montana plans to onboard at a future date. We are further supporting test accounts for Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Washington state, and Allegheny Co, Pennsylvania.</p>

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
Planning for Message Center for EEO-4 Data Collection
Description
In FY 2023, the EEOC is planning to deploy the filer support Message Center application (Initiative #1), currently in use for EEO-1 Component 1, EEO-3, and EEO-5 filers, for the 2023 EEO-4 data collection (i.e., state and local government employers).
Update
The message center was deployed through the Online Filing System (OFS) for the 2023 EEO-4 data collection.

Federal Communications Commission
Submarine Cable Outages
Description
<p>In 2019, the Commission adopted modified reporting requirements for licensees/operators of submarine cables. Whereas submarine cable operators previously reported outage of a certain duration/magnitude to the Commission on a case-by-case basis via a PDF filing, the new rules provide for (mandatory) streamlined web-based form filings in an existing outage system, utilizing pre-filled or drop down fields (the Network Outage Reporting System), allowed single filings on behalf of coalitions operating cables, and exempted outage reports for planned maintenance events. The rules became effective on October 28, 2021.</p>
Update
<p>Examining recorded data in the FCC's Network Outage Reporting System (NORS) for the two years since the new submarine cable outage reporting rule took effect, we noticed there are fewer reports than we had predicted. The reports contain standardized information on outage causation and restoration across all submarine cable operators. We have not received complaints about the mandatory electronic filing, and in the absence of conflicting evidence, believe that this standardized filing system has reduced the time it takes for submarine cable operators to report an outage.</p>

Federal Communications Commission
Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act (CALEA)
Description
<p>The FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB) has announced the availability of the new Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act (CALEA) Electronic Filing System (CEFS). Entities subject to CALEA may now voluntarily submit their System Security and Integrity (SSI) Plans electronically. All providers subject to CALEA must file their SSI Plans prior to commencing service, and re-file updated SSI Plans within 90 days of any changes to the information filed. The FCC currently requires entities to file SSI Plans by paper and announced in June of 2022 the upcoming launch of the CEFS for voluntary filings. The CEFS platform links to the Commission Registration System (CORES) to reduce the need for filers to re-enter basic information. The system also allows users to log back in to view or retrieve the filing. The FCC expects to announce mandatory filing of SSI plans in CEFS, thus eliminating the time burden associated with paper filings.</p>
Update
<p>In May 2023, PSHSB released an Order amending 47 CFR 1.20005 of the Commission's rules to require electronic filing of new and updated System Security and Integrity (SSI) plans by entities subject to the Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act (CALEA). On May 30, 2023, the Office of the Federal Register published a summary of that Order. On June 28, 2023, PSHSB released a Public Notice announcing mandatory electronic filing for CALEA SSI Plans was effective as of June 29, 2023.</p>

Small Business Administration
Unified Lending Platform
Description
<p>The SBA analyzed its operations to identify improvements to its operations, and successfully completed a reorganization to merge all lending programs under the Office of Capital Access (OCA). These changes will help SBA expand available services and better support America’s small business community. Consolidating lending programs ensures better Agency coordination so that financial relief reaches borrowers as efficiently as possible.</p> <p>This single technology will serve as the foundation for all SBA customer-facing programs and will improve customer experience while creating operational and cost efficiencies for the agency. There are three core objectives of the Unified Platform approach: 1) Streamlining access to SBA programs for small business owners. An SBA customer will access SBA programs through a single portal, unique to the small business owner, that contains their business information and documents.</p> <p>2) Empowering SBA personnel to better serve small business owners. SBA personnel will see all of a business owner’s interactions with the agency and its programs. The platform will include tools to improve customer service and outreach, including standard customer relationship management (CRM) functionality.</p> <p>3) Leveraging shared services to improve operational efficiency SBA programs. With program data unified, SBA will create and leverage shared services models for customer service and application processing.</p>
Update
Completed the implementation of the ULP and migrated all direct lending to a new modernized platform.

Small Business Administration
8(a) business development service delivery evaluation
Description
<p>The SBA is conducting a process evaluation of service delivery within the 8(a) Business Development Program. This evaluation emphasizes the SBA's goal to ensure equitable and customer-centric design and delivery of programs to support small businesses. In addition to documenting the processes used to tailor business development services to deliver high-quality business development services to 8(a) firms, the evaluation seeks opportunities to eliminate waste, streamline delivery, and reduce burden, which affords the increased time and attention to value-added business development activities.</p>
Update
Using findings to ensure that UCMS is created appropriately and based on evidence

Small Business Administration
Government Contracting Programs Customer Feedback
Description
<p>In Spring 2022, the SBA launched new customer satisfaction surveys for HUBZone, WOSB, and the 8(a) Business Development programs. In addition to collecting data to inform customer experience, the surveys collect data on the online certification platform technology experience, the ease of filling out applications, including the application systems, and the application and recertification processes. Data collected is being used to strengthen and improve SBA’s online certification platforms, certification and recertification processes, and overall customer service. Burden reduction, ease of understanding, and document preparation simplification are the primary goals of this continuous improvement initiative.</p>
Update
<p>Using findings to ensure that UCMS has appropriate surveys imbedded to accurately assess CX</p>

Social Security Administration
Continuing Disability Review Report (i454)
Description
<p>Disability recipients use the Continuing Disability Review (CDR) Report to submit the information SSA needs to determine if disability recipients continue to qualify for disability payments. Specifically, SSA uses the Continuing Disability Review Report to obtain information on disability recipients' medical conditions; sources of medical treatment; participation in vocational rehabilitation programs (if any); attempts to work (if any); and recipients' assessments if or when they believe their conditions improved. The i454 represents a new modality that allows disability recipients to submit CDR information through a mobile-accessible, electronic application for the first time, offering a platform that is more accessible than a paper form or field office interaction. The i454 automatically submits the information to SSA, which reduces the burden of mailing a paper form or visiting a local Social Security office.</p>
Update
<p>We rolled out the i454 screens throughout the nation and are currently using them to obtain CDR information from the public. As we have implemented the screens and the streamlined paper application as planned, we have completed this burden reduction initiative.</p>

Social Security Administration
Upload Documents (eSubmit)
Description
<p>SSA created Upload Documents (eSubmit), a mobile-accessible, electronic document upload and submission platform that individuals can use to send evidence and forms to SSA online. Specifically, any individual applying for or receiving services from SSA can upload forms, documentation, evidence, or correspondence associated with their transaction without the need for service-specific tools or travel to a field office. This makes the document submission process faster, easier, and more automated for claimants, beneficiaries, and others by providing a single, easy-to-use platform for submitting diverse types of information. We are rolling out the new application in several phases. The first phase allowed first-party respondents to provide select documents (evidence that does not need to be certified or which the agency does not require to be an original, also known collectively as “non original documentation,” and first-party forms that do not require a signature) to SSA electronically. The second phase expanded Upload Documents (eSubmit) to allow respondents to electronically sign and submit certain SSA forms that require a signature. We started this phase with a limited number of electronically signed forms and will gradually expand it to include more forms in future phases.</p>
Update
<p>As expected, we implemented both phase 1 and phase 2 of the Upload Documents (eSubmit) portal, which also expanded the number of forms respondents could submit, and allowed us to include some forms which require eSignature prior to submission (which the respondent can do via the Upload Documents (eSubmit) portal).</p>

Department of Veteran Affairs
Form Digitization
Description
<p>Pension and Fiduciary Service (P & F) is actively pursuing prioritization of form digitization in support of electronic claims submission. Electronic claims submission will improve the quality of data being extracted from forms in support of increased automation throughput and high-quality claim decisions. It will also improve the claimant experience by allowing an additional means to submit a claim efficiently and electronically.</p>
Update
<p>As of February 2024, the VA Form 21P-527EZ, Application for Veterans Pension (OMB # 2900-0002), is now available digitally on va.gov.</p> <p>In addition, as of May 2023, VA Form 21P-530EZ, Application for Burial Benefits (OMB # 2900-0003), is now available digitally on va.gov.</p>

Department of Veteran Affairs
Form Modernization
Description
Pension and Fiduciary Service (P & F) is actively adapting VBA forms and convert radio buttons to check-boxes to avoid data extraction of erroneous values. This will better streamline the claims process and prevent unnecessary delays.
Update
As of January 2024, the VA Form 21P-534EZ, Application for DIC, Death Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits (OMB # 2900-0004), was converted from radio buttons to check-boxes. In addition, as of February 2024, VA Form 21P-527EZ, Application for Pension (OMB # 2900-0002), was converted from radio buttons to check-boxes.

Veterans Affairs

Creating a Fully Digital Experience for Veterans

Description

VA is building a customer-centered culture to focus on the experience of their customers: Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. As part of this commitment, VA is identifying every PDF or paper form that cannot be submitted digitally, in order to convert these forms into more user-friendly digital services. Creating digital submission platforms for these forms will allow VA to reduce the number of questions asked and the steps to be followed, as well as to add features, such as inputting known data to reduce the burden on the filer. Each year, Veterans and their families spend 64 million hours completing their PDF forms. VA identified 263 forms that Veterans or their family members use that are currently only available in PDF or paper copies. VA is now prioritizing the most used forms to modernize, and VA intends to significantly lower form burden throughout the next year.

VA has also taken steps to provide Veterans the opportunity to submit a supplemental claim for disability compensation benefits online. Over 32K supplemental claims are submitted monthly, which showcased an opportunity to streamline and enhance an online capability to meet this need. Additionally, to improve the online application process for Veterans filing a claim for health care benefits, VA implemented a short form process flow online. This short form process flow allows Veterans who have a service-connected disability rating of 50% or higher to bypass the military service and finance/household sections of the health care application. VA began providing Veterans access to their disability benefits decision award letters online and through the VA: Health and Benefits mobile app. Prior to this capability, Veterans had to wait for their decision award letter to arrive through physical mail to have tangible evidence of VA's decision. This digital solution provides Veterans the ability to view and download their decision letters online, allowing them to take follow-up actions faster and reducing the need for them to contact VA call centers regarding the status of their mailed decision letter. Additionally, voice over capabilities for visually impaired Veterans were made compatible with the mobile application so that this accessibility feature is available to all.

Update

By the end of FY23, VA converted four PDF VA forms to accessible digital versions. These forms include VA Forms 21-4142 and 21-4142a, which provide authorization to disclose and general release for medical provider information to VA; VA Form 21-01210 to submit a formal statement to support a VA claim, and VA Form 21P-0847 to request substitution of a claimant upon death of a claimant. At the end of FY23, over 3.8k digital submissions occurred that would have otherwise been submitted through mail.

With the launch of the short form health care application process flow, VA received over 37K 10-10EZ applications in FY23.

Veterans viewed their disability award letters online through VA.gov over 4.3M times in VA.gov in FY23. Additionally, the voice over capability enhancements on the mobile app is anticipated to benefit approximately 1M Veterans with vision disabilities.