

ARP

(American Rescue Plan)

End of Year Review

Fiscal Year 2022

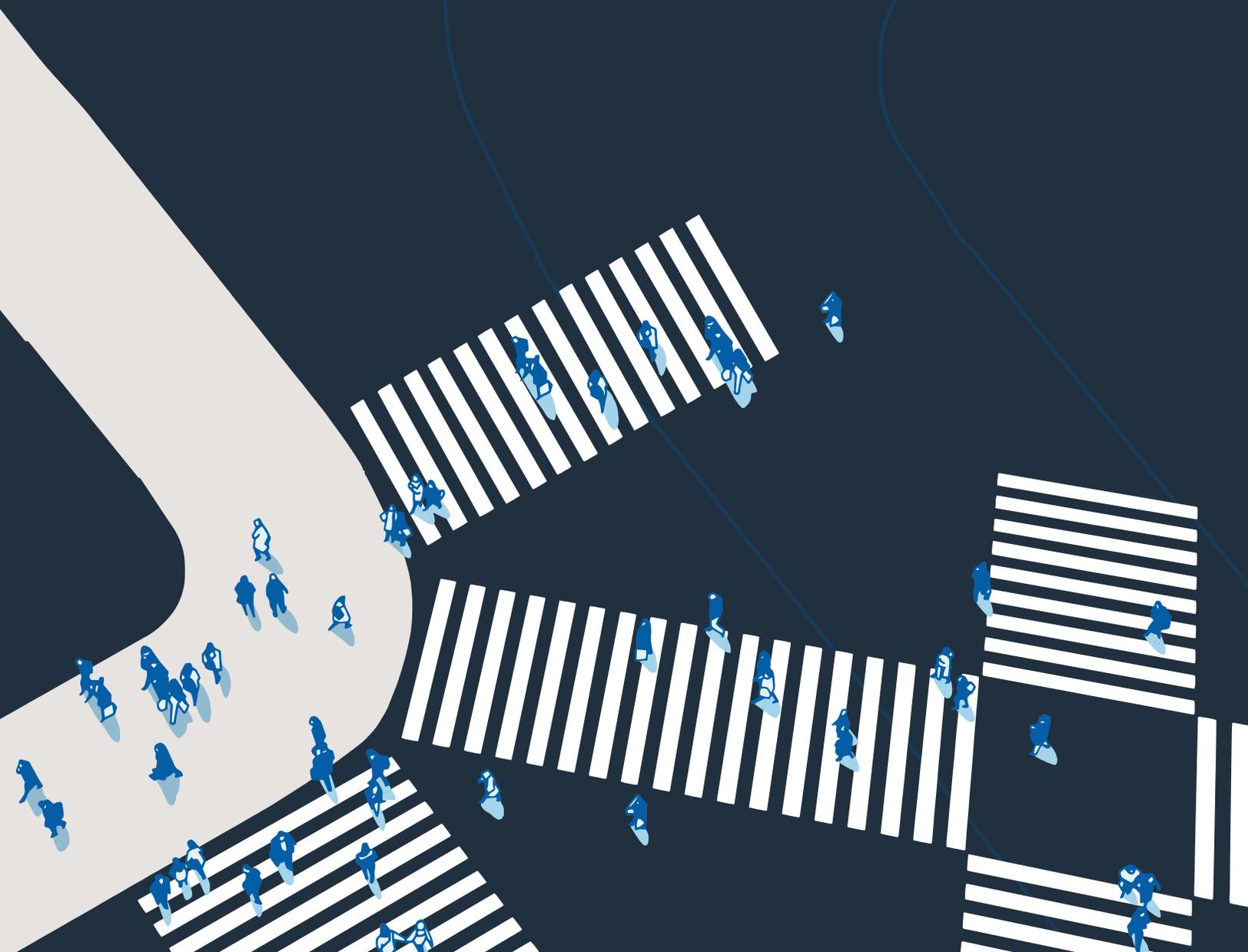


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Letter from the TTS Director

When the President signed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, we were still in the thick of a global pandemic. We were living through frustrations and uncertainties, both as members of the public and as public servants. As a community, Technology Transformation Services (TTS) understood the key challenge our partner agencies were facing was trying to deliver digital services to meet the growing demands of their customers.

TTS' mission is to design and deliver a digital government with and for the American public. The pandemic exacerbated the challenges families faced when trying to access information and services through outdated and hard-to-use government technology. The Administration has made it a priority to make government services work better for more people. Housed within the U.S. General Services Administration's Federal Acquisition Service, TTS is uniquely situated to provide digital services that cut across government. In putting people at the center of policy, TTS is committed to supporting the Customer Experience Executive Order (the Executive Order on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government, or CX EO), which establishes mandates for agencies around improving service delivery, and the President's Management Agenda (PMA) Priority 2, the Administration's guide for managing the execution of these goals. TTS is committed to using American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding to build a better and more inclusive digital experience for the public.

Putting people at the center of the design process is built into our TTS DNA. ARP funding is an opportunity to use data to understand how public-facing products and services are being used. It also presents an opportunity to work across agencies to enhance, or rebuild technology products and services to work better for the people they are intended to serve.

ARP funding is enabling TTS and other agencies to help more people seamlessly access their benefits, accelerate public-facing service delivery, expand cross-agency services, and deploy TTS technical experts throughout agencies to improve federal digital capacity and literacy. As we work hard to continue delivering on the ARP Program, we are looking at what is working as well as the investments needed to address the immediate needs of the public and evolve digital government services for customers beyond Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. These ARP investments show what is possible for the public. I am grateful for the leaders who have nurtured this Program along with those throughout GSA and TTS who contributed their time and talent to get us to where we are today. We at TTS are excited about working across the government to put people first.

Putting people at the center of the design process is built into our TTS DNA.

—Ann Lewis, *Technology Transformation Services Director and Federal Acquisition Services Deputy Commissioner, U.S. General Services Administration*

Background

The American Rescue Plan Act signed by President Biden on March 11, 2021, delivered essential relief to families and communities hit hardest by the pandemic. It focused critical resources to strengthen the technology infrastructure federal agencies use, including \$150M for the TTS Federal Citizen Services Fund (FCSF). FCSF investments enable public access and digital engagement with the government through an array of public and agency-facing products, services, and programs. The demand for digitized services surged during the pandemic forcing organizations to reimagine their online service offerings.¹ TTS has invested ARP funds to directly deliver better digital experiences to the public, and to equip agencies throughout government with new and improved resources for delivering efficient and effective online services. FCSF initiatives make government services more accessible, efficient, and effective with modern applications, personnel, and software solutions.

In FY 2022, the TTS ARP portfolio grew to include over 40 initiatives. While ARP investments initially focused on immediate needs related to recovery and rebuilding from the COVID-19 pandemic, additional opportunities continually emerge to strengthen how the government designs and delivers the digital services the public increasingly relies on and expects. As such, TTS is also investing in reimagining how the government can improve long-term digital service delivery for the public.

To support ARP and have the greatest impact, TTS aligned the FCSF investments to four (4) main categories:



RECOVER:

Providing immediate recovery support to the public in the wake of the pandemic



REBUILD:

Rebuilding existing government-wide citizen facing services to improve the public's digital experience



REIMAGINE:

Reimagining the delivery of digital services to improve transparency, security, and efficiency to bolster public confidence in government



RESOURCE:

Resourcing GSA to implement the ARP program and enable delivery teams

¹ Source: How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point – and transformed business forever (McKinsey Survey, October 5, 2020)

Transforming the digital government experience

By putting people at the center of the design process, TTS is able to build solutions that empower the public to access government services. People use technology in almost all aspects of their lives. According to a Pew Research Center study, 85% of Americans go online on a daily basis.²

To meet the public's growing demand for online services, TTS and its portfolio of activities are working towards a common goal of transforming the digital government experience by doing the following:

Helping more people seamlessly access their benefits

The pandemic highlighted gaps in the public's ability to securely access vital services. Many agencies experienced demand surges that made it difficult for the government to be responsive to the needs of those who were most heavily impacted by the pandemic. The tech divide grew wider and its impact was felt most heavily by those who could not access or navigate online government services. Technology needs to enable the government to create a more accessible digital experience for the public.

ARP Success Story: Using data to help small business owners recover from the pandemic



ARP PROGRAM INVESTMENT CATEGORY:

Rebuild existing government-wide citizen-facing services to improve the public's digital experience

To help entrepreneurs and business owners recover quickly from the pandemic, the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of Entrepreneurial Development sought to get information and grants in the hands of those who needed it most. To accomplish this, the SBA needed to drive awareness of available aid, especially in traditionally underserved communities.

Working with a data scientist from TTS' [Presidential Innovation Fellows \(PIF\) Program](#), SBA was able to identify the number of underserved entrepreneurial people participating in the Community Navigator Program. The Community Navigator Program provides services including financial assistance, access to capital, training and other resources to help stabilize or expand small businesses owned by veterans, women, and socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. Using data mining and visual analytics techniques across several sources of cross-agency data, the PIF developed a framework to analyze geographic and demographic data at a more granular level by incorporating additional datasets from other SBA programs and agency sources. This framework enabled SBA to set goals around equity, strategically partner with local organizations to conduct outreach in underserved communities, and improve access to the Community Navigator Program.

Using data to identify the “underserved of the underserved”

Bringing in a PIF data scientist, the SBA was able to identify entrepreneurs in underserved communities and partner with local organizations to get people the resources they need. For example, thanks to targeted outreach of the program, a business owner in Salt Lake City, UT, received language assistance to help complete his Paycheck Protection Loan application.



Accelerating public-facing service delivery

Federal agency budgets are not typically designed to accommodate the sudden and rapid changes that arise due to pandemics, national security events, and other high-consequence occurrences. However, the public often turns to the government during times of crisis and disaster. TTS products and programs can help agencies scale to meet demand surges.

ARP Success Story: Speeding access to housing counseling services



ARP PROGRAM INVESTMENT CATEGORY:

Recover to provide immediate support to the public in the wake of the pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many homeowners sought support to make mortgage payments. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) saw an urgent need during the pandemic to help homeowners access housing counseling services. This required HUD to update their existing housing counseling locator tool.

HUD worked with TTS’ digital service experts to improve accuracy, speed, and access to various housing services and mortgage relief programs. The work included modernizing the Housing Counseling Locator website as well as the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to help users access information using the channel of their choice. In addition, the team integrated the National Servicing Center (NSC) SMART system and Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Resource Contact Center’s modern customer relationship management (CRM) tool which eliminated the manual activities that are required to complete the service requests.

As a result, people are using the new self-help tools to access information faster which will allow constituents to receive counseling services quicker. The NSC SMART to CRM direct integration allowed HUD to deploy staff to other high-priority activities. The total estimated savings in the first year of the integration of the two systems was \$587,000 – a 112% return on investment based on the cost of the ARP project. All additional future years will have an estimated savings of \$737,000.³

Based on the initial success and response to the tool, HUD is working with TTS to modernize its Self-Service Customer Portal – building more web-based self-service tools to reduce assisted service contacts at the FHA Resource Contact Center, provide faster access to information, improve the customer experience, and strengthen public and lending industry confidence in government.

<p>1.7M</p> <p>searches on the Housing Counseling Locator website and IVR system</p>	<p>93% self service rate</p> <p>since launching the modernized IVR system</p>	<p>Cut the average speed to answer calls by over half</p> <p>from 42 / 10 seconds</p>	<p></p> <p>\$700K+ in estimated annual savings</p>
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3 Source: Cost / Benefit Analysis on the NSC SMART to FHA Resource Center Salesforce CRM API Integration Project

Expanding cross-agency services

ARP investments are assisting TTS in accelerating and integrating tools and services so that federal agencies can deliver better and faster services to the public. This “build once, use by many” approach saves time and money while improving coordination across government.

ARP Success Story: Accelerating agency cloud adoption to make services more secure



ARP PROGRAM INVESTMENT CATEGORY:

Reimagine the delivery of digital services to improve transparency, security, and efficiency to bolster public confidence in government

The Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP®) provides a cost-effective, risk-based approach for the adoption and use of cloud services by the federal government. FedRAMP empowers agencies to use modern cloud technologies, with an emphasis on security and protection of federal information. The pandemic served as a catalyst for agencies to migrate from legacy, on-premise technology to the cloud at a rapid pace to accommodate a remote workforce. To address this surge in agency demand, the FedRAMP program used ARP funds to reduce the backlog of requests for new services and the reuse of FedRAMP Authorized cloud offerings. As a result it decreased the number of software packages in the pipeline and significantly reduced agency wait time to approve packages.

While the initial ARP funding provided temporary relief, increasing demand for cloud services will require FedRAMP to modernize its system to scale. Based on FedRAMP’s initial success and potential long-term impact, additional ARP funding is being used as seed money to automate the system. Automation is the cornerstone of making the FedRAMP process faster, cheaper, simpler, and more secure. It standardizes critical reviews at a high level of quality – and removes individual manual reviews increasing the government’s overall security posture. It enables growth in the cloud and cloud security marketplaces – a key enabler for legislative, Administration, federal, and industry priorities.

ARP FUNDING CONTRIBUTED TO:

reducing FedRAMP
authorization
timelines by nearly  **1** month
since
FY20

increasing annual
FedRAMP
authorizations by  **27%**

Building government-wide services for the people by the people

TTS ARP funding is making government services more user friendly – offering the public a simpler, more secure experience and integrating backend tools and services across agencies to create solutions that work. By prioritizing an equity-focused, people-centered approach to its design practices, TTS is building solutions for people and populations regardless of their socio-economic status and abilities.

TTS is well-positioned to look across government to identify common challenges and provide digital services and best practices that federal agencies can use to improve the public’s digital government experience. TTS’ technical assistance, guidance, and coordination help create a consistent and integrated experience for the public to navigate services more seamlessly.

ARP Success Story: Building government websites for a more seamless and inclusive digital experience for the public



ARP PROGRAM INVESTMENT CATEGORY:

Rebuild existing government-wide citizen-facing services to improve the public’s digital experience

While digital government teams are serious about improving the experience of their websites and services, no single team can do it all. Particularly, no team can talk with every individual or test with every audience. As digital teams actively seek to understand and address usability, accessibility, diversity, and inclusion in their digital services, they should not have to go it alone.

Created in collaboration with digital teams and communities across government, the U.S. Web Design System (USWDS) developed guidance to help agencies put diversity, equity, and inclusion at the forefront of digital service design. Based on talking with more than 20 government agencies and programs, including 16 high impact service providers, USWDS identified 17 common user interactions (or “patterns”) and accompanying guidance. The patterns cover common interactions like progressing through a complex form, selecting a preferred language, or entering personal information like name, address, telephone number, gender identity, sex, or race and ethnicity. As more federal agencies use this guidance, it will evolve as a resource, address the needs of a broader range of individuals, and support a more inclusive digital government experience. A copy of the report and featured patterns is available on the USWDS webpage.

USWDS develops guidance to help agencies build accessible, mobile-friendly government websites. Currently, 94 agencies and 458 websites use USWDS guidance resulting in 1.2 billion page views a month.⁴

94 agencies

458 websites

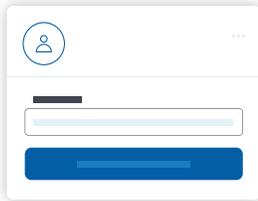
use USWDS guidance



1.2B page views/month

4 Based on Digital Analytics Program data for March 2023

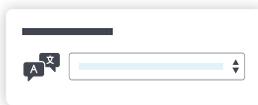
Examples from USWDS' guidance for making digital services inclusive:



Name: When asking someone for their name, clearly state if it needs to match a specific document (such as a passport), allow names of all lengths, including upper- and lowercase letters and diacritics, while supporting cultural format differences such as two or more last names.



Addresses: When collecting addresses, clarify if you need a mailing or physical address, support alternative communication for people who are unhoused, and provide options for all types of addresses such as including the Urbanization field for residents of Puerto Rico.



Language Preferences: When asking people to identify language preferences, distinguish between written and spoken language preferences, list languages in their native spellings, and include American Sign Language in spoken preferences if you can support video or in-person communications.

Partnering early-career technologists and TTS technical experts with agencies to improve federal digital capacity and literacy

Building solutions for the people and with the people requires a diverse workforce that has the technical expertise and background to understand the public's needs. Those designing and delivering government technological solutions do not yet reflect the full spectrum of experiences and backgrounds that exist in America (for example, only 26% of the federal technology workforce self-identify as women).⁵ ARP investments are helping TTS attract early-career technologists to build a cadre of technical experts that are being deployed to address challenges across government. They bring the diverse set of skills needed to look at a problem holistically and determine the right solution, whether the problem is related to technology, policy, process, culture, practices, or (more likely) a combination.

ARP SUCCESS STORY: Launching the U.S. Digital Corps



ARP PROGRAM INVESTMENT CATEGORY:

Reimagine the delivery of digital services to improve transparency, security, and efficiency to bolster public confidence in government

ARP investment helped launch the U.S. Digital Corps program. In June 2022, TTS welcomed 38 U.S. Digital Corps Fellows who are serving at 12 agencies across the federal government. The U.S. Digital Corps brings skilled, diverse, and mission-driven early-career technologists to the federal government in the fields of software engineering, cybersecurity, product management, UX design, and data science. Funded by their host agency, these technologists are deployed across federal agencies and focused on critical, high-impact priorities including economic recovery, equity, customer experience, and public health.

Fellows were selected from a pool of over 1,000 applicants from 47 states and territories and over 330 unique academic institutions. The first cohort includes veterans, technologists who have reskilled from other fields, as well as recent graduates from certificate, undergraduate, and graduate degree programs. Eighty-three percent (83%) of fellows are first-time federal employees. During their two years, fellows will help shape a more equitable, effective, and secure digital government for the public and become eligible to transition into full-time, career positions.

Based on the overwhelming response from host agencies and the number of quality candidates who applied to the U.S. Digital Corps, TTS is planning to expand the next cohort to be able to support more agencies across government.



Within a year of its inaugural launch, the U.S. Digital Corps program has been an integral effort to recruit and retain the next generation of public servants. The program advances the President's Management Agenda to create a more effective, equitable government and ensures our federal workforce is our government's most valuable asset."

– Kiran Ahuja, *OPM Director*



Looking Ahead to FY 2023

In FY2023, TTS will continue to obligate funding to ARP activities to make a long-term impact on behalf of its partners and the public. ARP funding aligns with TTS' mission to serve the public's interest and is a catalyst for TTS to design and enhance its tools and service offerings to build a reliable and trusted customer experience for the public. This will require continued review and refinement of the ARP Program to ensure funds are focused on initiatives that are delivering impact in service of the public. In cases where ARP investments provided "seed investments" to transform digital services, funding recipients will work with TTS to identify a path to sustainability wherever it makes sense.

As ARP activities uncover new findings and approaches to reimagining government services, TTS will help ARP funding recipients connect with one another and their stakeholder communities. This will enable the sharing of best practices and insights and build a stronger network committed to making digital services better for the public. The TTS ARP Program performs better when everyone is working together and TTS will explore new ways to foster community to help recipients push beyond what they thought was possible.

To learn more about the TTS ARP Program, contact arpquestions@gsa.gov.

