TTS IMPACT
Standing up a New Citizen-Facing Website

The Office of Shared Solutions and Performance Improvement (OSSPI) partnered with the GSA's Federal Acquisition Service (FAS) Technology Transformation Services (TTS) to stand up Performance.gov, a new citizen-facing website.

PERFORMANCE.GOV'S STORY

Performance.gov is a government-wide dashboard that provides insight on federal agencies' efforts that are responsive to the needs of the people it serves, agile in delivering on their mission, and responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. The site, mandated by law in 2010, displays the overarching cross-government goals of the current administration and the specific goals set by agencies to meet their own missions. More than that, the site and its associated social media channels allows for public transparency, stakeholder engagement, and accountability. Additionally, the underlying platform needs flexibility and adaptability because the site is refreshed every four to eight years.

THE CHALLENGE

In 2017, when the Presidential transition began, the Performance.gov team in the Office of Shared Solutions and Performance Improvement (OSSPI) needed to quickly and simultaneously archive its old site and build a new site to meet its underlying legislative mandate of providing information to the public on the new administration's federal priorities and performance towards those priorities.

The timing of the site launch and regular refreshes are critical because priorities on the site need to reflect those of the current administration. As such, the technical team works closely with political appointees, policy makers, other federal agencies, and a communications team to present content in a user-friendly way so that the public can understand the direction of the administration.

THE SOLUTION

The Performance.gov team used Technology Transformation Services (TTS) products to launch a new, more user-friendly site and put Performance.gov on a sustainable long-term path with regard to planned refreshes every four to eight years. The team launched a refreshed, modern site to meet the needs of the new administration and set itself up for future site refreshes. Performance.gov uses key components of the TTS technology stack including (1) U.S. Web Design System (USWDS), which provides common user interface and visual styles, (2) Federalist, which provides agencies with an easy way to publish government websites, (3) Search.gov, which provides a robust search function for federal websites, and (4) Digital Analytics Program, which offers advanced, easy web analytics to track user interactions with a federal site and to gain insights on how to improve the user experience.

TTS provided the necessary products, technical and programmatic expertise that enabled a website to be built in a relatively short amount of time. Site speed, visits to key pages, ability to search, bounce rate, cost and mobile responsiveness were the key metrics at the forefront of the new build.

THE IMPACT

Within four months, the two-person Performance.gov team was able to launch a completely rebuilt site using components of the TTS technology stack, which saved money and allowed them to avoid creating a website from scratch. The team found four key benefits associated with using the TTS technology stack:

COST AND TIME SAVINGS. By using TTS technologies, the Performance.gov team saved time and money that would have been spent on research, procurement, and custom design and build.

SHARED CREATIONS. These products and services are available so that federal agencies don't need to build from scratch. The Performance.gov team was able to use the same shared services as other federal offices, which now allows TTS to recommend other agencies and programs take a similar approach.

INVESTED PARTNERSHIP. GSA not only provides support to other agencies but also uses the products for its own projects. When using TTS products, the Performance.gov Team was able to turn to a larger community of users to get quick answers to complex questions.

MORE RESILIENT PROJECTS AND TEAMS. Performance.gov's open source code helps the site benefit from and contribute to a broader ecosystem of talent and information without using proprietary information. Other development teams, including state and local agencies, can comment on or replicate our code, and others could improve Performance.gov by adding code or functionality.

The Performance.gov team had a clean slate to design and build off of, and the director of the site had experience using the products and services of the TTS stack. Nevertheless, an incremental approach was taken into consideration and plenty of conversation, discussion and debate took place with the key leads of the products listed above. The team examined integration of each product, budgeted costs, and developed a timeline for each in a transparent manner so that all stakeholders would be on board and able to monitor the development as it progressed.

Since the relaunch of the Performance.gov site in 2017, the site has seen an over 400% increase in monthly visits. Before the shift to a more modern stack, visitors to the website were faced with a challenging interface that led to a high bounce rate. With the modernized look and feel and simplified navigation, users not only stayed on pages longer, but also discovered other topic areas that might have interested them as more and more pages were being viewed. The upward trend in web metrics and positive reactions from our external stakeholders have validated our approach.

The more organized, logical, and easy-to-navigate website is also thanks to the consistent functionality of the USWDS's design. Page layout, navigation, and accessibility improved the delivery of information around progress updates, and the new mobile layout resulted in an increase in web traffic because the public could now access content on the go from their mobile devices

The number of builds, commits on open source branches, and users on the Federalist product skyrocketed after Performance.gov started using it as the tool of choice. Since it was possible to have multiple developers work on the product and ship, the speed in which the site was developed is evidence of the support that was provided. Another key statistic with regards to support is the timeliness of service support ticket responses from the Federalist team. Tickets were answered in less than 24 hours and support was available both through email and through phone calls.

From a financial standpoint, open source templates developed by the USWDS program made it easy to measure the cost savings in the development of the website. Additionally, the transparent annual cost of using Federalist gave the team a dollar amount that could be compared to prior cloud hosting costs.

The Performance.gov team continues to employ the latest versions and features of the USWDS in order to improve the front end of the website. The site has added blog posts, embedded its Twitter feed, and, in 2019, began embedding interactive data visualizations. The Performance.gov team is now preparing for a potential change in administration and associated site refresh.

> " TTS products allow us to maintain a site that's flexible enough to meet the changing priorities of the administration and to continue to make the site more engaging and informative for the public."
> —*Lauren Stocker, Program Director*

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