

CIRCULAR NO. A-11

PREPARATION, SUBMISSION, AND EXECUTION OF THE BUDGET



**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET**

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TO THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND ESTABLISHMENTS

SUBJECT: Preparing, Submitting, and Executing the Budget

OMB Circular No. A-11 provides guidance on preparing the FY 2021 Budget and instructions on budget execution.

Your budget submission to OMB should build on the President's commitment to advance the vision of a Federal Government that spends taxpayer dollars more efficiently and effectively and to provide necessary services in support of key National priorities while reducing deficits. OMB looks forward to working closely with you in the coming months to develop a budget request that supports the President's vision.

Most of the changes in this update are technical revisions and clarifications, and the policy requirements are largely unchanged. The summary of changes to the Circular highlights the changes made since last year. This Circular supersedes all previous versions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "RVV A".

Russell T. Vought
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Enclosure

SECTION 280 – MANAGING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY

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Summary of Changes

This section provides continued guidance to agencies on implementing the Federal Government’s customer experience framework, and information for agencies on how to effectively manage customer experience improvement efforts. Updates include additional information for agencies on best practices for measuring and managing customer experience.

280.1 To which agencies does this section apply?

The general guidance in sections [280.2](#) through [280.8](#) are government-wide guiding principles that all Executive Branch agencies can use to improve customer experience. High-Impact Service Providers (HISPs), which are those Federal entities designated by OMB to have the most high-impact customer-facing services (as defined in section [280.9](#)), are required to implement the guidance in sections [280.10](#) through [280.13](#).

280.2 Who is a Federal Government customer?

For the purposes of this guidance, “customers” are individuals, businesses, and organizations that interact with a Federal Government agency or program, either directly or via a Federal contractor.

280.3 What is Federal Government customer experience?

Customer experience (CX) refers to a combination of factors that result from touchpoints between an individual, business, or organization and the Federal Government over the duration of an interaction and relationship. These factors include ease/simplicity, efficiency/speed, and equity/transparency of the process, effectiveness/quality of the service itself, and the helpfulness of service delivery employees.

Similar to their application in the private sector, these factors can drive the overall satisfaction and confidence/trust with the program, agency, and the government at large.

280.4 What is Federal Government service delivery?

“Service delivery” or “services” refers to the multitude of diverse interactions between a customer and Federal agency such as applying for a benefit or loan, receiving a service such as healthcare or small business counseling, requesting a document such as a passport or social security card, complying with a rule or regulation such as filing taxes or declaring goods, utilizing resources such as a park or historical site, or seeking information such as public health or consumer protection notices.

For example, Federal Government service types can be categorized as:

- Administrative Basics: Requesting or renewing items that do not require an extensive eligibility determination or multi-stage review processes such as getting a license, passport, or social security card;
- Programs and Benefits: Applying for or progressing through more complex government processes and benefits such as immigration, Medicare, Veterans’ health services, or a small business loan;
- Compliance: Completing required actions such as filing taxes, submitting information for or engaging with an auditor, environmental reporting, or completing a survey mandated by law;
- Leisure: Utilizing a public space such as national parks, historical sites, or museums; and
- Informational: Providing knowledge-based resources to the public such as data sets, designing labels, releasing warnings, or providing health recommendations.

280.5 What is the purpose of implementing this guidance?

Implementing the guidance specified in this section will establish a more consistent, comprehensive, robust, and deliberate approach to CX across government. The purpose of this guidance is to:

- Establish a CX-mindful culture across Federal Government services;
- Improve customer satisfaction with Federal Government services;
- Provide structure and consistency around how agencies/programs approach CX;
- Identify program accountability and governance mechanisms;
- Ensure high-impact programs are making progress in growing CX program maturity and applying best practices;
- Ensure high-impact programs are receiving and acting upon customer feedback to drive performance improvement and service recovery;
- Allow for government-wide comparative assessment of customer satisfaction; and

- Ensure transparency through public reporting.

280.6 How should agencies manage customer experience?

The core CX functions are included in the CX program maturity model available at the [CX MAX Community page](#) and are summarized in the categories of:

- **Measurement:** Defining and instituting CX outcome measures to ensure accountability for improving service delivery and communicate performance across the organization and to the public;
- **Governance and Strategy:** Institutionalizing CX by identifying executives and leaders responsible and organizing supporting resources, the processes by which strategic decisions incorporate customer perspective, and aligning CX strategy and activities with business decisions, initiatives and investments within the agency's broader mission and strategic priorities;
- **Culture and Organization:** Acquiring and developing the talent required to incorporate and improve CX within agency activities, and empowering all employees to adopt a CX mindset through training, performance measurement, and rewards;
- **Customer Understanding:** Implementing activities and conducting qualitative and quantitative research across organizational silos to map intra-agency customer journeys, as well as inter-agency journeys where applicable, to build and continually refine a knowledge base of the agency's customer segments and needs; and
- **Service Design:** Adopting a customer-focused approach to the implementation of services, involving and engaging customers in iterative development, leveraging digital technologies and leading practices to deliver more efficient and effective touchpoints, and sharing lessons learned across government.

Each fiscal year, agencies and programs that provide services to customers should complete a self-assessment across these maturity model categories and develop an action plan identifying focus areas for increasing capacity and conducting specific CX activities based on the result. A self-assessment tool and plan development template are provided on [CX MAX Community page](#).

280.7 How should customer experience be measured?

At a minimum, Federal Government customer experience should be measured in seven domains:

- Overall: (1) Satisfaction, (2) Confidence/Trust
- Service: (3) Effectiveness/Quality
- Process: (4) Ease/Simplicity, (5) Efficiency/Speed, (6) Equity/Transparency
- People: (7) Employee Helpfulness

These domains have been developed in alignment with leading practices from both the private and public sectors, including Fortune 500 companies, market research institutions, and international organizations.

Agencies should identify their highest-impact customer journeys (using customer volume, annual program cost, and/or knowledge of customer priority as weighting factors) and select touchpoints/transactions within those journeys to collect feedback. Initially, Federal customer experience will be focused on real-time transaction-level measures, but agencies are encouraged to also solicit annual customer feedback reflecting

on customers’ overall series of interactions, completion of journeys, and relationship with the agency. Agencies are welcome to ask additional questions beyond these seven.

Example Measurement Levels:

- **Transaction:** Measuring the customer perspective after a single, stand-alone interaction such as after viewing a website to find a piece of information, purchasing a park pass, or speaking with a contact center employee;
- **Journey:** Measuring the customer perspective after a series of interactions, completion of a multi-stage process such as applying for and receiving/managing Federal student aid, filing taxes, or a specific period of someone’s life such as transitioning from military active duty; and
- **Relationship:** Measuring the customer perspective reflecting on the lifetime of their engagement and series of transactions and journeys with a service providing agency.

In an effort to develop comparable, government-wide scores that will enable cross-agency benchmarking (when relevant) and a general indication of an agency’s overall customer satisfaction, all programs providing significant services directly to customers should measure their touchpoint/transactional performance in as a real-time manner as possible, with respect to satisfaction and confidence/trust using the following questions. Any requested modification to the wording of these statements must first be discussed with OMB prior to implementation in order to maintain reporting comparability government-wide. Responses should be assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)).

Overall Customer Experience Measure	
Satisfaction	
I am satisfied with the service I received from [Program/Service name].	
Confidence/Trust	
This interaction increased my confidence in [Program/Service name].	
<u>OR (choose one)</u>	
I trust [Agency/Program/Service name] to fulfill our country’s commitment to [relevant population].	

In addition, services should also be measured in more detail across the following five categories, making only minimal adjustments to the wording of the specific questions as necessary for mission and circumstance-specific customization based on the type of service (see [280.4](#)) or transaction type (for example, it may not involve an interaction with an employee).

Service-Related Customer Experience Measures	
Service	Effectiveness / Quality
	My need was addressed / My issue was resolved.
Process	Ease / Simplicity
	It was easy to complete what I needed to do.
	Efficiency / Speed
	It took a reasonable amount of time to do what I needed to do.

	Equity / Transparency
	I was treated fairly / I understand what was being asked of me throughout the process.
People <i>(If applicable for a transaction)</i>	Employee Interaction
	Employees I interacted with were helpful.

In general, agencies should follow these best practices:

- For applicable services, customer feedback should be obtained as close to the time of the transaction as possible, and made available to program managers as frequently as possible;
- To the extent possible, feedback collection mechanisms should be brief, thereby imposing minimal burden on customers and sampling techniques may be used on high-volume transactions to reduce burden, when appropriate;
- Administer surveys applying best practices for optimizing response rate, for example, presenting only the two overall measures and the opportunity to provide free text comments on the reasoning for provided scores first, then presented the opportunity to respond to the remaining CX measures;
- Agencies should have an overarching measurement and collection plan that captures timing for journey and relationship customer feedback, taking stock of all data collection efforts and minimizing survey fatigue;
- Data should be coded so that it can be sorted for action by organizational units, such as office location;
- Relevant service level indicators (e.g., wait times) and usage statistics (e.g., leveraging the Digital Analytics Program (DAP)) appropriate to each service should also be collected and measured; and
- CX data collected, including customer feedback data and service level metrics, should be made publicly available; for example, through the program website and the performance.gov CX dashboards, and included in the Annual Performance Report (see [280.8](#)).

As overall CX program maturity and capacity increases across the Federal Government, OMB may provide guidance for additional types and levels of measurement.

Obtaining direct feedback from customers is critical to CX performance improvement. OMB is continuing to work to streamline the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) approval for these measures and has provided tools and templates to navigate the PRA clearance process on the [CX MAX Community page](#).

280.8 How should customer experience be reflected in the agency’s Annual Performance Plan?

Agency Annual Performance Plans should include indicators for outcomes related to customer experience and relevant service levels. This should include customer feedback data collected as described above in [280.7](#), as well as service level indicators (e.g., wait times, website utilization data) appropriate to their program. More information on integrating this information into the Annual Performance Plan is included in section [210](#).

280.9 What programs have been identified as High-Impact Service Provider (HISPs)?

High-Impact Service Providers are those Federal entities designated by OMB that provide the most high-impact customer-facing services, either due to a large customer base or a high impact on those served by the program. A HISP is one that interacts with the public to provide a transactional service or perform a regulatory function in which time, money, or information is used to receive a good, service, or authorization. HISPs will be reviewed and updated periodically by OMB. The current list of HISPs is available at [Performance.gov/HISPs](https://www.performance.gov/HISPs).

280.10 What additional steps shall HISPs take to manage customer experience?

Given the significance of the services they provide, HISPs must:

- Collect customer feedback for each of the indicators developed in accordance with [280.7](#);
- Submit data dashboards to OMB quarterly, until feedback data is provided directly to [Performance.gov](https://www.performance.gov) through an open application programming interface (API) (once developed);
- Conduct an annual CX Self-Assessment (submitted to OMB by January 31st) and create a CX Action Plan (submitted to OMB by March 31st) annually;
- Begin to embed more customer-focused practices into their service design and delivery such as conducting customer research through qualitative and quantitative research and journey mapping, and continually user-testing program elements with customers to refine and improve.

OMB will meet with each HISP to provide support and clarification of expectations.

280.11 What shall the data dashboards submitted to OMB include?

Templates, examples, and instructions will be provided quarterly on the [CX MAX Community page](#). The template includes a section for reporting on the overall customer experience metrics, as well as values across each of the service-related measure categories, a placeholder for program-specific service-level indicators as appropriate, and space to summarize recent accomplishments as well as planned actions for the following quarter.

280.12 When are the data dashboards due?

As part of quarterly reporting for the Improving Customer Experience Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) Goal, programs will provide a data dashboard to OMB each quarter until data is reported directly through an API to [Performance.gov](https://www.performance.gov). Submittals will be due at the end of the second month following the end of the quarter. See section [200](#).

HISPs with current capability to collect data related to the government-wide measures outlined in [280.7](#) shall begin reporting that data starting with FY 2019, Quarter 1. HISPs without the current capacity to collect data using the government-wide measures must identify a target date for reporting of these metrics not to exceed FY 2021, Quarter 1. The measurement of the government-wide customer experience metrics and initial service-related measures will begin to be shared publicly in 2019.

280.13 What shall HISP CX Action Plans include?

The content of CX Action Plans shall address the core CX functions outlined in [280.6](#) and include these primary components:

- **Organization/Accountability**: Describing how the HISP’s CX resources are organized, the leadership responsible for CX, and what measures are in place to ensure program accountability for CX performance improvement and service delivery;
- **CX Program Maturity**: Providing the results of an annual self-assessment of the CX program maturity using the maturity model noted above and describing initiatives underway or planned to improve CX program maturity;
- **CX Data Collection and Metrics**: Describing the types of data collected to support CX assessment, the methods for obtaining feedback, and the methods used to report the data internally and publicly; and
- **CX Delivery Improvement**: Describing the initiatives underway or planned to improve the program’s service delivery.

Templates for the Self-Assessment and Action Plan are provided on the [CX MAX Community page](#). Self-Assessments shall be completed and submitted to OMB by January 31st, 2020. Self-Assessments are meant to be a mechanism for an intra-agency convening and discussion of CX management, and HISPs should engage at a minimum performance representatives, program leadership, front-line employees, and functional representation such as IT, Operations, Communications, Digital, etc. Action Plans shall be completed by March 31st, 2020, submitted to OMB, and will be made publicly available on performance.gov.