

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release
March 3, 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Conducting "Conversations with America" to Further Improve Customer Service

This Administration has made significant progress toward reinventing Government to improve customer service since I issued [Executive Order 12862, "Setting Customer Service Standards," on September 11, 1993](#), followed by my [memorandum of March 22, 1995, "Improving Customer Service."](#) For the first time, the Federal Government's customers have been asked what they want and have been told that they have a right to expect first-class service. Now they can see the results achieved against the customer service standards that have been set in place.

On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the establishment of my Administration's reinventing Government initiative, it is time to increase efforts to engage customers in conversations about further improving Government service. This initiative -- "Conversations with America" -- will enable your agency to discover what is most important to its customers and what the Federal Government can do to meet their expectations. As your agency learns what Americans care about, use this information to provide service that will equal the best in business and serve as a model for others.

To carry out this effort and assure that Government works better and gets results Americans care about, I am now directing the additional steps set forth below.

Actions

The agencies covered by [Executive Order 12862](#) are directed as follows:

1. Agencies shall create activities and programs, continuing throughout the year, that will engage customers in a discussion about how to improve Government service by determining the kind and quality of services they want and their level of satisfaction with existing services.
2. By no later than March 16, 1998, agencies shall designate a person within the agency to serve as the primary liaison to coordinate information and programs dealing with the "Conversations with America" initiative. Agencies shall then provide the National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR) with their agency's primary liaison and a list of events the agency will conduct to engage

- Americans in conversations about improving Government service. This monthly report should provide the date and a brief description of each event.
3. Agencies shall engage the largest number of customers possible in these conversations. The use of all forms of media is encouraged to reach the largest possible audience. Particular emphasis should be placed on conducting these conversations in the areas where agency customers live and work.
 4. In 1998, agencies shall put in place a process to address customer complaints. Agency customers should be provided opportunities for finding solutions to problems, such as "Problem Solving Days" and other venues. Agencies shall track and analyze the data they receive and use it to change processes that do not serve customers well. As your agency identifies individual problems, work to solve them quickly and systemically.
 5. Agencies shall use the information from "Conversations with America" and continue to track customer service measurements, then take necessary actions to change or improve how the agency operates, as appropriate. Integrate what your agency learns from its customers with your agency's strategic plans, operating plans, and performance measures required by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, reporting on financial and program performance under the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990, and the Government Management Reform Act of 1994.
 6. As required by my memorandum on improving customer service of March 22, 1995, each agency shall, on at least an annual basis, report on the customer service results they have achieved in terms readily understood by individual customers. Agencies shall continue actions required by [Executive Order 12862](#) as well, including, but not limited to surveying employees and conducting benchmarking studies to assure we achieve customer service for the American people that is equal to the best in business.

Independent Agencies.

Independent agencies are requested to adhere to this directive.

Judicial Review.

This directive is for the internal management of the executive branch and does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable by a party against the United States, its agencies or instrumentalities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON