

Congressional Presentation

Estimate of Appropriations for FY 2003

Federal Consumer Information Center



U.S. General Services Administration
Federal Consumer Information Center
<http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov>
<http://www.info.gov>

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PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Federal Consumer Information Center (FCIC) successfully brings together a vast array of useful Federal information and makes it easily accessible to the public. Whether citizens want information in print, on the web, or over the telephone, FCIC is their help desk for everyday life – giving answers and assistance they trust about the things that matter.

For millions of people, FCIC embodies the best of government – practical, down-to-earth, and dedicated to meeting their needs. For more than 30 years, citizens have written to Pueblo, Colorado to get helpful, timely Federal publications that answer their questions or explain Federal programs. Increasingly, they are visiting www.pueblo.gsa.gov, for instant, free access to an even greater variety of Federal information. They are also calling FCIC's toll-free National Call Center with questions such as how to check social security benefits, find specialized tax forms, learn about the latest product recalls, or apply for a student loan. In fiscal year 2001, citizens placed 1.8 million calls, requested 5.5 million print publications, and completed 22.5 million web page views, for a program total of 29.8 million contacts with the public, as compared to a fiscal year 2000 total of 23.4 million contacts. This represents an increase of 6.4 million contacts or 27 percent over fiscal year 2000.

For fiscal year 2003, a dramatic enhancement of service to citizens is proposed for FCIC's National Call Center. It will be transformed from a basic call center into a next-generation multi-channel National Contact Center (NCC). In addition to incoming calls from citizens, the NCC will begin to accept and respond to e-mails and faxes, and provide self-help capabilities such as an expanded Integrated Voice Response (IVR) system. Additionally, NCC will closely track and analyze the inquiries received and share this government-wide in order to improve the information flow from Federal agencies to citizens. The NCC is the only federal call

center with a legislative mandate to respond to public inquiries covering all areas of the federal government. As such, it is ideally situated to become the central point of contact for citizens searching for information and assistance from their government. The intent is not to replace other call centers but to provide citizens with an efficient central service that they may contact through whatever method they desire to find answers to their questions. The enhanced National Contact Center will quickly answer many general inquiries from the public and will redirect citizens to the agency best equipped to handle their more complex inquiries. Additionally, for agencies without existing call centers or with specific short-term needs for call center services, the NCC would be able to quickly provide these on a reimbursable basis.

The enhancement of FCIC's Call Center is just one part of USA Services, a major Administration initiative that will transform the way that the Federal government interacts with its citizen customers. Citizens contacting the Federal government are often overwhelmed when trying to identify the specific agency or office to ask a question or make a request. USA Services envisions providing Federal government customers with state-of-the-art customer service. This will be accomplished by developing systems that improve the ease with which customers can interact with the government, and also by providing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) shared services for multiple Federal agency initiatives. USA Services will facilitate interactions between Federal agencies and customers by eliminating redundant processes, enabling the sharing of information between agencies, and providing customers with information about government programs and services. An important feature of USA Services is a National Contact Center that is an easy-to-access and well-publicized point of contact for the public.

The FCIC offers an ideal foundation for the contact center component envisioned for USA Services. Public Law 95-461, signed in 1978, provided for the establishment and operation of a center whose purpose was to provide citizens with information about and assistance in accessing their Government. The National Call Center of the Federal Consumer Information Center has been providing these services to the public since 1966. For the last 10 years, after an A-76 process, the services have

been centralized under a single toll-free number at a contractor owned-and-operated facility currently in Indianapolis, Indiana.

FCIC's call center currently handles 2.1 million calls annually and has the capacity to expand to meet higher demand as citizen usage increases. The fiscal year 2003 budget request covers a total of 3.3 million calls, an e-mail system that will handle one million e-mails, expanded hours of operation, aggressive public service advertising, expanded Internet access to information and services, and a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that will enable close tracking, analysis, and reporting of the topics that are of interest to the public.

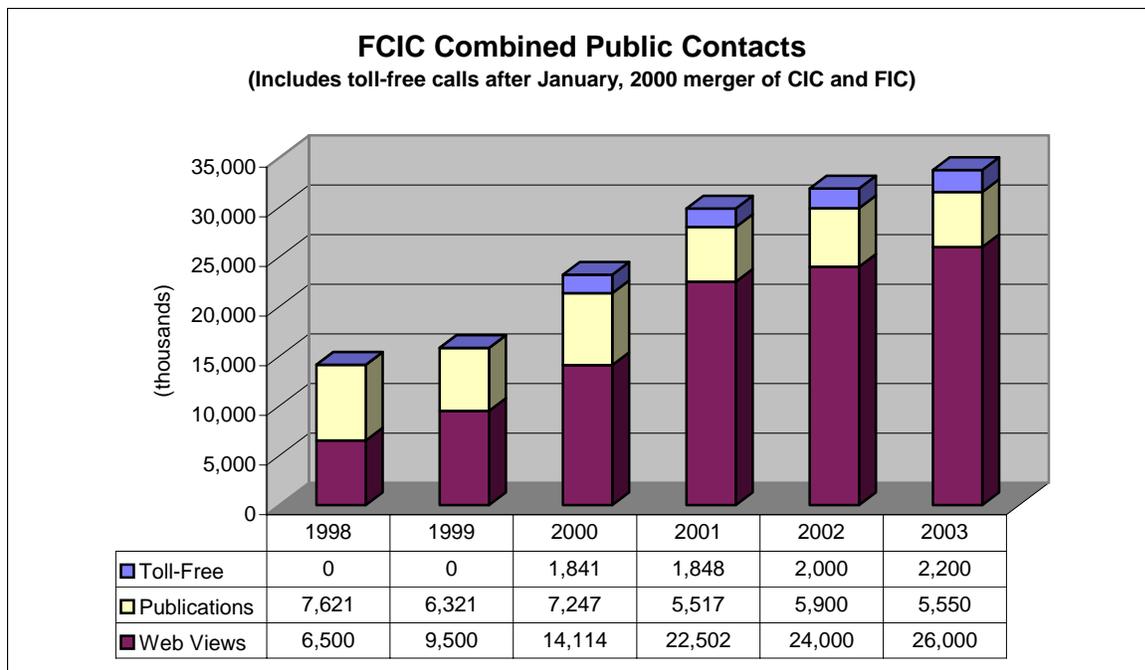
During fiscal year 2003, in conjunction with the enhancement of National Contact Center services, FCIC will continue to provide its excellent publication, marketing, and website services to the American public.

FCIC will continue to publish the quarterly **Consumer Information Catalog**, which lists 200 popular titles from across the Federal government on subjects such as saving for college or retirement, avoiding fraud, exercising and eating for good health, and learning about Federal laws and regulations that affect the daily lives of citizens. FCIC distributes **Catalogs** directly to individuals, as well as through educators, nonprofit associations, large and small businesses, banks, credit unions, libraries, government offices, and Members of Congress who distribute copies as a service to their constituents.

In response to the public's continuing need for proactive, self-directed consumer education and protection, FCIC will also continue to revise and publish the **Consumer Action Handbook (CAH)**, one of the most popular Federal documents. During fiscal year 2001, citizens requested 400,000 copies. State and local consumer offices refer to the **CAH** as the "gold standard" of consumer information and use it extensively, along with other FCIC resources, to bring a national perspective to their consumer protection efforts. Once again, corporate partners and Federal agencies provided financial support for the printing and distribution of **CAH**.

Annual FCIC publication distribution depends largely on agency publishing budgets and initiatives, as well as on public familiarity with and access to new technology. FCIC's fiscal year 2001 distribution totaled 5.5 million publications as compared to 7.2 million in fiscal year 2000. This resulted in user fee revenue that went from \$236 thousand in fiscal year 2000 to \$200 thousand in fiscal year 2001. Looking ahead, FCIC anticipates that publication distribution and the revenue generated by it will trend downwards as agencies continue to reduce printing budgets and as citizens increasingly use the easily accessible free information available on the FCIC websites.

The FCIC website, www.pueblo.gsa.gov, has become the primary way that the public has chosen to access FCIC information. Additionally, during fiscal year 2001, FCIC developed and now maintains www.kids.gov, the “FirstGov for Kids” portal site. This site provides children with easy access to a huge variety of educational websites both in and outside of government. Citizen usage of FCIC online services has grown from 20,000 electronic accesses of the original Bulletin Board System in fiscal year 1991 to more than 22 million web accesses in fiscal year 2001. The following chart illustrates the volume and changing nature of FCIC’s public contacts.



During fiscal year 2003, FCIC will also continue placing feature press releases on new publications as well as public service announcements that highlight the National Contact Center and www.pueblo.gsa.gov. FCIC's multi-faceted media program delivers information directly to the public while promoting use of all FCIC information services.

During fiscal year 2003, GSA will establish a new Office of Citizen Services that will be dedicated to the Administration's initiative to expand Electronic Government (E-Gov) and to make government more citizen-centered. Because of its successful track record in meeting the public's information needs, FCIC is uniquely positioned to becoming a key part of this Office. It brings together an innovative media and marketing program, an efficient and centralized distribution system for publications, a dynamic website, and now a comprehensive toll-free National Contact Center. This convergence of channels will enable America's citizens to easily access a wide variety of Federal information and service and to grow in knowledge, productivity, and self-reliance.

COMPARISON OF FY 2003 REQUEST TO PRIOR YEAR'S REQUEST

\$(Millions)

2002 Appropriation	\$ 7.276
Accrual for Civil Service Retirement and Federal	
Employees Health Benefits	+ .126
Adjusted Fiscal Year 2002 Enacted Budget	\$ 7.402
Personnel Increase	+ .146
Accrual for Civil Service Retirement and Federal	
Employees Health Benefits	+ .014
Increase for National Contact Center	
Costs for 2 additional FTE	+ .275
Contractor Costs	+ 4.725
Increase to Working Capital Fund Payment for Centralized	
Administrative Support Initiatives	+ .042
Inflation	+ .077
2003 Budget Request (Includes CSRS/FEHB Accrual)	\$12.681
Less Accrual for Civil Service Retirement and Federal	
Employees Health Benefits	- .140
2003 Total (Excludes CSRS/FEHB Accrual)	\$12.541

SUMMARY EXPLANATION OF CHANGES FROM 2002 TO 2003

Administrative Expenses

The administrative expenses of FCIC are funded by a combination of annual appropriations from the general fund of the Treasury, fees collected from the public, gifts from the private sector, and unobligated balances in the FCIC Fund. FCIC requests a direct appropriation of \$12,681,000 for fiscal year 2003, an increase of \$5,405,000 as compared to fiscal year 2002. In addition, user fees and other fund balances are projected to cover \$556,000 of FCIC administrative expenses for a grand total of \$13,237,000. This request will enable FCIC to carry forward programs at a significantly enhanced level in fiscal year 2003.

Publication Distribution Costs

FCIC works with numerous private sector entities and serves more than 40 Federal agencies in their mission to provide information to the public. In the process, FCIC provides order fulfillment services on a reimbursable basis through the Government Printing Office facility in Pueblo, Colorado. The participating agencies and organizations fully fund the costs of distributing publications offered without charge to the public. Agency reimbursements from Federal agencies and the private sector will total an estimated \$2,708,939 in fiscal year 2003 to cover projected costs of handling citizen requests for free publications. In addition, an FCIC-appropriated portion of \$251,236 will cover **Consumer Action Handbook** distribution costs. The grand total of \$2,960,175 will fund the distribution, in fiscal year 2003, of an estimated 5 million publications offered without charge to the public. FCIC estimates the distribution of an additional 550,000 GPO sales documents for a total of 5,550,000 publications distributed in fiscal year 2003.

APPROPRIATION LANGUAGE

For necessary expenses of the Federal Consumer Information Center, including services authorized by 5 U.S.C. 3109, [\$7,276,000] \$12,681,000, to be deposited into the Federal Consumer Information Center Fund: Provided, That the appropriations, revenues and collections deposited into the fund shall be available for necessary expenses of Federal Consumer Information Center activities in the aggregate amount of [\$12,000,000] \$18,000,000. Appropriations, revenues, and collections accruing to this fund during fiscal year [2002] 2003 in excess of [\$12,000,000] \$18,000,000 shall remain in the fund and shall not be available for expenditure except as authorized in appropriations Acts. (*Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 2002; additional authorizing legislation required.*)

THE FEDERAL CONSUMER INFORMATION CENTER FUND

In 1983, Public Law 98-63 established the Consumer Information Center (CIC) Fund to provide for a business-like operation of Consumer Information Center activities. Effective during the second quarter of fiscal year 2000, the Federal Information Center (FIC) was transferred to the CIC and the resulting organization was named the Federal Consumer Information Center (FCIC). As of fiscal year 2001, the revolving fund was renamed the Federal Consumer Information Center Fund to reflect the new organization, and covers all the liabilities and commitments of both the CIC and the FIC. FIC activities, primarily its National Contact Center, are consistent with CIC program activities, in that both disseminate Federal Government information to the public. The Fund is authorized to retain unobligated amounts at the end of the fiscal year. The activities of the FCIC are financed from the following:

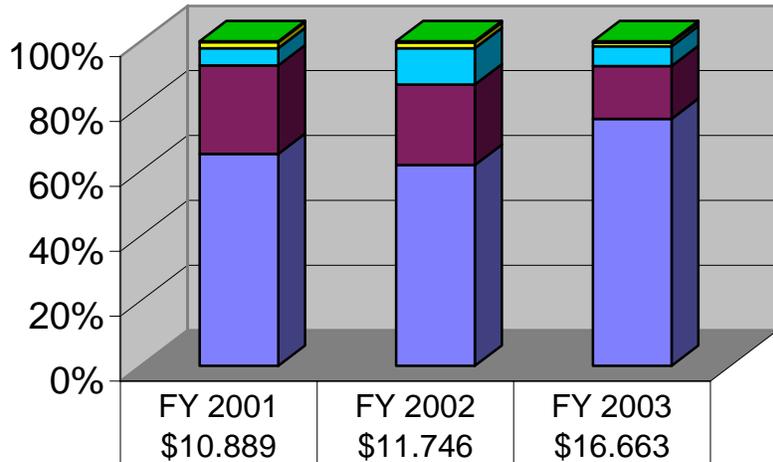
1. Annual appropriations to pay salaries and expenses.
2. Reimbursements from Federal agencies to pay costs associated with the provision of information services to the public. This includes costs such as the telephone ordering system and of publications distributed through the Government Printing Office (GPO) facility in Pueblo, Colorado. It also includes funds received for providing agencies with contact center services.
3. User fees from the public for publications ordered through the **Consumer Information Catalog**. These are used to offset administrative expenses.
4. Other income incidental to FCIC activities, primarily payments from private sector groups to cover the cost of distributing cooperative government-industry publications.
5. Gifts to defray costs associated with the **Consumer Action Handbook** and other information and educational materials, and of undertaking other information activities.

All income is available without regard to fiscal year limitations, but is subject to an annual aggregate limit as set forth in appropriation acts. For fiscal year 2001, public user fees totaled \$200,000, gifts from the private sector totaled \$40,000, and reimbursements from the Federal and private sector totaled \$2,976,000. These reimbursements are projected at \$3,160,000 in fiscal year 2002 and \$2,959,000 in fiscal year 2003, and will pay approximately 29% of FCIC program costs in fiscal year 2002 and more than 18% in fiscal year 2003. These funds will cover approximately \$3 million of FCIC's estimated total costs of approximately \$15.9 million in fiscal year 2003. The following pages provide additional details on the operation of the FCIC Fund, including the source and application of income for the Fund, from fiscal year 2001 through fiscal year 2003.

STATUS OF THE FEDERAL CONSUMER INFORMATION CENTER FUND
(\$Millions)

	<u>Actual</u> <u>2001</u>	<u>Program</u> <u>2002</u>	<u>Request</u> <u>2003</u>	<u>Change</u> <u>FY 03/02</u>
Source of Funding:				
Unobligated Balance				
Brought Forward on Oct. 1.....	\$.581	\$ 1.310	\$ 1.023	-\$.287
Appropriation.....	7.106	7.276	12.681	+ 5.405
Reimbursements for Publication				
Distribution/NCC Services:				
-From Federal Agencies.....	2.534	2.469	2.356	- .113
-From the Private Sector.....	.442	.441	.353	- .088
User	.200	.200	.190	- .010
Fees.....				
Gifts from the Private Sector.....	.040	.050	.060	+ .010
Prior Years' Adjustments.....	<u>-.014</u>	---	---	---
Total Resources Available.....	<u>\$10.889</u>	<u>\$11.746</u>	<u>\$16.663</u>	<u>+\$4.917</u>
Application of Resources:				
Administrative Expenses				
-Salaries and Benefits.....	\$ 1.840	\$ 2.124	\$ 2.606	+\$.482
-Travel.....	.038	.045	.049	+ .004
-Catalog Printing/Transportation.....	.355	.354	.355	+ .001
-CAH Production and Distribution.....	.502	.405	.400	- .005
-Public Service Advertising.....	.347	.415	.824	+ .409
-Administrative Support/Services.....	.282	.342	.429	+ .087
-Rent Payments.....	.154	.170	.187	+ .017
-Direct Marketing.....	.166	.169	.172	+ .003
-National Contact Center	3.058	3.589	7.989	+ 4.400
-All Other.....	<u>.247</u>	<u>.200</u>	<u>.226</u>	<u>+ .026</u>
Total Administrative Expenses.....	\$6.989	\$7.813	\$13.237	+\$5.424
Publication Distribution/NCC Services.	2.795	2.910	2.709	- .201
Prior Years' Obligations.....	-.205	---	---	---
Unobligated Balance				
Carried Forward.....	<u>1.310</u>	<u>1.023</u>	<u>.717</u>	<u>-.306</u>
Total Resources Applied.....	<u>\$10.889</u>	<u>\$11.746</u>	<u>\$16.663</u>	<u>+\$4.917</u>

FCIC Fund - Source of Income
FY 2001 - FY 2003
(In Millions)



Other	0.2%	0.4%	0.4%
User Fees	1.9%	1.7%	1.1%
Unobligated Balance	5.3%	11.2%	6.1%
Agency/Private Reimbursements	27.3%	24.8%	16.3%
Appropriations	65.3%	61.9%	76.1%

DETAIL OF POSITIONS

		Actual, 2001			Program, 2002			Request, 2003		
		C.O.	Field	Total	C.O.	Field	Total	C.O.	Field	Total
ES - GS -	02	1	---	1	1	---	1	1	---	1
	15	2	---	2	3	---	3	4	---	4
	14	4	---	4	3	---	3	3	---	3
	13	4	---	4	9	---	9	12	---	12
	12	5	---	5	3	---	3	4	---	4
	11	2	---	2	3	---	3	---	---	---
	9	2	---	2	---	---	---	1	---	1
	8	---	---	---	---	---	---	1	---	1
	7	2	---	2	2	---	2	2	---	2
	6	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
5	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Permanent Positions		22	---	22	24	---	24	28	---	28
Other		---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
TOTAL		22	---	22	24	---	24	28	---	28

CLASSIFICATION BY OBJECTS
(\$Millions)

	Actual, 2001	Program, 2002	Request, 2003
Personnel Compensation: Central Office	\$ 1.499	\$ 1.760	\$ 2.046
Field	---	---	---
11 Total personnel compensation	\$ 1.499	\$ 1.760	\$ 2.046
12 Personnel benefits	.454	.490	.560
21 Travel	.038	.045	.049
22 Transportation of things	.035	.044	.045
23 Rental payments to GSA	.154	.170	.187
Communications and misc. charges	.383	.370	.733
24 Printing and reproduction	.531	.589	.601
25 Services	6.653	7.304	11.641
26 Supplies and materials	.31	.052	.055
31 Equipment	.119	.025	.029
99 Subtotal obligations	*\$ 9.692	\$10.849	\$15.946
12 Less Accrual for Civil Service Retirement and Federal Employees Health Benefits	- .113	- .126	- .140
99 Total Obligations	*\$9.579	\$10.723	\$15.806

*Total obligations include a net -\$.205 in prior years' adjustments not reflected in amounts for individual object classes.

EXPLANATION OF FISCAL YEAR 2003 REQUEST BY OBJECT CLASS
\$(Millions)

11 Personnel Compensation - \$2.046: To support 28 FTE, all in the GSA Central Office.

12 Personnel Benefits - \$.560: Retirement contributions, health benefits, FICA, and group life insurance. Includes \$.043 to cover the full cost of pension benefits for CSRS employees and \$.088 to cover the full cost of post-retirement health benefits.

21 Travel and Transportation of Persons - \$.049: For travel by FCIC staff members for contract monitoring and to produce and promote Federal information.

22 Transportation of Things - \$.045: For transporting catalogs from the printing company to the Colorado distribution center and to Washington, DC.

23 Rental Payments to GSA - \$.187: For payments to the Federal Buildings Fund for rental of space.

23 Communications, Utilities and Misc. Charges - \$.733: \$.638 for toll-free lines, \$.075 for enhanced call routing, and the remaining for office telephone and other communications charges.

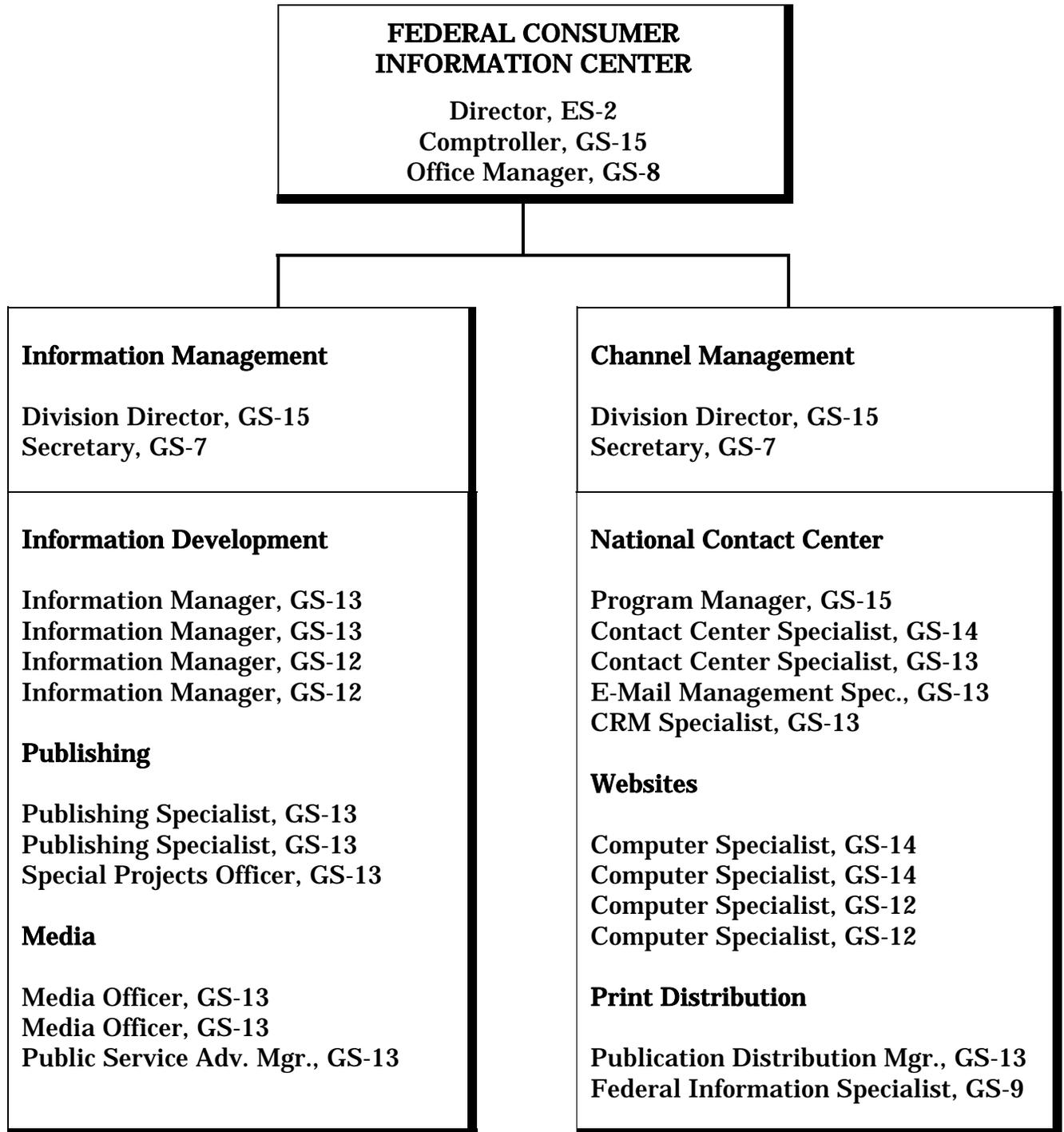
24 Printing and Reproduction - \$.601: \$.400 for printing **Consumer Information Catalogs**; \$.059 for printing the **Consumer Action Handbook**; \$.140 for printing information material for direct marketing; and \$.002 for miscellaneous printing.

25 Other Services - \$11.641: \$2.358 for payments primarily to the Government Printing Office for the cost of distributing consumer publications (the amount is fully covered by participating organizations); \$7.627 for costs associated with contractor performance of toll-free telephone and other services; \$.429 for payment to GSA for administrative support and services; \$.824 for preparation and distribution of public service materials for television; \$.251 for producing and distributing the **Consumer Action Handbook** and related activities; \$.032 for direct marketing; and \$.120 for miscellaneous expenses.

26 Supplies and Materials - \$.055: For administrative supplies and materials.

31 Equipment - \$.029: For the purchase of general office equipment.

**FEDERAL CONSUMER INFORMATION CENTER
FISCAL YEAR 2003 PROJECTED STAFFING**



SELECTED WORKLOAD PROJECTIONS

	FY 2001 Actual	FY 2002 Program	FY 2003 Request	FY 03/02 Change
1. Web Page Views (Millions)	22.5	24.0	26.0	+ 8.3%
2. Publication Titles Available (Print and Electronic)	573	600	630	+ 5.0%
3. Private Sector Publication Income (\$000)	487	441	353	- 20.0%
4. Publications Distributed (Millions)	5.5	5.9	5.6	- 5.1%
5. Toll-Free Telephone Inquiries/Orders (Millions)	2.1	2.3	3.3	+43.5%
6. E-Mail and Fax Inquiries/Orders (Millions)	.008	.015	1.0	+6,567%

FEDERAL CONSUMER INFORMATION CENTER OUTYEAR DATA

\$(Millions)

	<u>FY 2004</u>	<u>FY 2005</u>	<u>FY 2006</u>	<u>FY 2007</u>
TOTAL BA \$(000)	12.914	13.192	13.476	13.766
TOTAL OUTLAYS \$(000)	12.914	13.192	13.476	13.776
TOTAL FTE	28	28	28	28

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

FCIC uses complementary, interdependent information delivery channels to make sure that all citizens can get answers to their questions about the Federal Government and everyday consumer issues. The bedrock of these systems is the information FCIC searches out and develops in cooperation with hundreds of Federal and private sector partners. Now, as over the past 30 years, FCIC makes the core of that information available in print from the Government Printing Office (GPO) facility in Pueblo, CO. FCIC also works with the media to deliver information directly through radio, television, newspapers and magazines. The public can also access this information whenever they need it on easy-to-use FCIC websites. And citizens can get answers over the telephone from FCIC's toll-free National Contact Center.

The following sections cover highlights from these five major programs: researching and developing information; print distribution; media and marketing; the Internet websites; and the National Contact Center.

Developing Information

FCIC acts as the eyes and ears of average citizens, searching out the most important information and making it easy to get and easy to understand. FCIC tracks the consumer-related activities of more than 40 Federal agencies, as well as dozens of trade associations, consumer organizations and private companies, and makes the resulting information available in print, in newspaper and magazine articles, through the broadcast media, from its call center, and on its websites.

The following are examples of FCIC efforts to identify, develop, and make helpful consumer information available to citizens during fiscal year 2001:

- In November of 2001, FCIC released the fiscal year 2002 edition of the **Consumer Action Handbook**. Every copy includes a message from President George W. Bush encouraging citizens to protect themselves and improve the

marketplace by being better-educated consumers. The fiscal year 2002 edition reflects updated Federal agency listings, Better Business Bureaus, and state, county and city consumer protection offices. FCIC received printing support from nine Federal agencies and 28 private and corporate partners, with major funding from the U.S. General Services Administration and the Department of Defense. FCIC has printed 425,000 copies of the fiscal year 2002 edition to meet the continuing high demand from Federal agencies, consumer organizations, libraries, schools and individual citizens. Nearly 375,000 copies of the **Consumer Action Handbook** were requested during fiscal year 2001, making it the most popular publication in the **Catalog** and the most frequent “next click” from the FCIC homepage. State and local consumer agencies routinely refer to the **CAH** as their reference “bible.” And military family service centers around the world use the **CAH** to educate enlisted personnel and their families on the basics of financial planning, and to help them avoid scams and frauds, purchase cars and homes, maintain sound credit, and much more.

The free online version of the **Consumer Action Handbook** is called the *Consumer Action Website*. Consumers can resolve problems and get answers directly as needed from Federal, state, and local governments, consumer organizations and corporations by using the information and links built into the *Consumer Action Website*. The site is updated daily, and FCIC is completing work on a quick-and-easy search feature that citizens can use to find the specific information they need or to connect them directly to the best source for further assistance.

- FCIC’s strength is its ability to know the topics that are most important to citizens and to respond with helpful, easy-to-use information. FCIC listens to the questions that consumers ask when they call, and it monitors the kinds of publications citizens order and download – so that it can provide the most appropriate information. For example, in response to auto sales as the number-one consumer complaint, FCIC brought the Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration together

with Carfax, Inc. to develop **Finding the Best Used Car**. Because dieting is a perennially popular nutrition topic, FCIC encouraged the development of readable, doable advice in **A Consumer's Guide to Fats** from the Food and Drug Administration. Since seniors avidly seek health-related information, FCIC arranged for **Parade Magazine** to offer FDA's **Growing Older, Eating Better**, and the FSIS/FDA publication **To Your Health! Food Safety for Seniors**, as part of a "Food Advice for Seniors" package. Seniors responded by calling, writing and sending electronically for more than 43,000 publications on their special nutritional needs and susceptibility to food borne illness.

- Health information is second only to Federal benefits in the number of requests for information received by FCIC. In response, during fiscal year 2001, FCIC and Federal partners developed **FDA's Tips for Taking Medicines, Drug Interactions: What You Should Know** (co-sponsored by the FDA, Council on Family Health and the National Consumers League), **Buying Drugs Online, Buying Prescription Medicines Online: A Consumer Safety Guide**, **Do I Have Arthritis?** (a bilingual publication), **Questions & Answers About Arthritis Pain**, **Arthritis: Timely Treatments for an Ageless Disease**, **An Aspirin a Day...Just Another Cliché?**, and six new publications on the benefits provided by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.
- According to the 2001 Retirement Confidence Survey, 71% percent of individuals say they have personally saved for retirement, but only 63% feel confident that they will have enough saved to live comfortably. To help bridge this gap, FCIC has worked with a number of Federal agencies to provide citizens with accurate and up-to-date information about savings and investment options. FCIC has worked with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and the U.S. Treasury, Bureau of the Public Debt to offer consumers many new publications related to investment topics during fiscal year 2001. These publications include **I Bonds Investor's Guide**, **Your Rights as a Financial Planning Client**, **Variable Annuities**, **Certificates of Deposit: Tips for Investors**, and **U.S. Savings Bonds**. These publications provide vital

investment information that was not previously available through FCIC. By using these and the other financial publications listed in the **Consumer Information Catalog**, consumers are able to make informed investment decisions and be ready for retirement.

- In fiscal year 2001, FCIC updated and published the popular **Guide to Federal Government Sales**. Government sales of real and personal surplus property are one of the most common areas of inquiry among consumers, and the revised **Guide** provides updated information on 20 government sales programs. It describes the wide variety of items that are for sale, both real and personal property, as well as the different sales methods and locations. Because consumers are frequently beset with offers to buy “inside” information about government sales, the **Guide** is a valuable consumer protection tool that FCIC has promoted widely to the public through the media.
- As use of the Internet increases, so do Internet-related complaints. They increased 62% from 1999 to 2000 according to a recent consumer survey. FCIC has responded by creating a new “Computers” section in the **Consumer Information Catalog** and by highlighting publications such as **Buying a Computer** from MetLife and the General Services Administration (GSA), **Making the Connection: How to Go Online** developed by America Online, GSA, and the National Consumers League, and **Site-Seeing on the Internet** by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). According to the Internet Fraud Watch, online auctions are the most frequently reported area of Internet-related fraud. To help both buyers and sellers protect themselves, FCIC provides **Internet Auctions: A Guide for Consumers and Sellers**. For those consumers just beginning to participate in e-commerce, **Shop Safely Online** by American Express and the FTC gives consumers helpful tips on how to protect their privacy and keep their transactions secure.

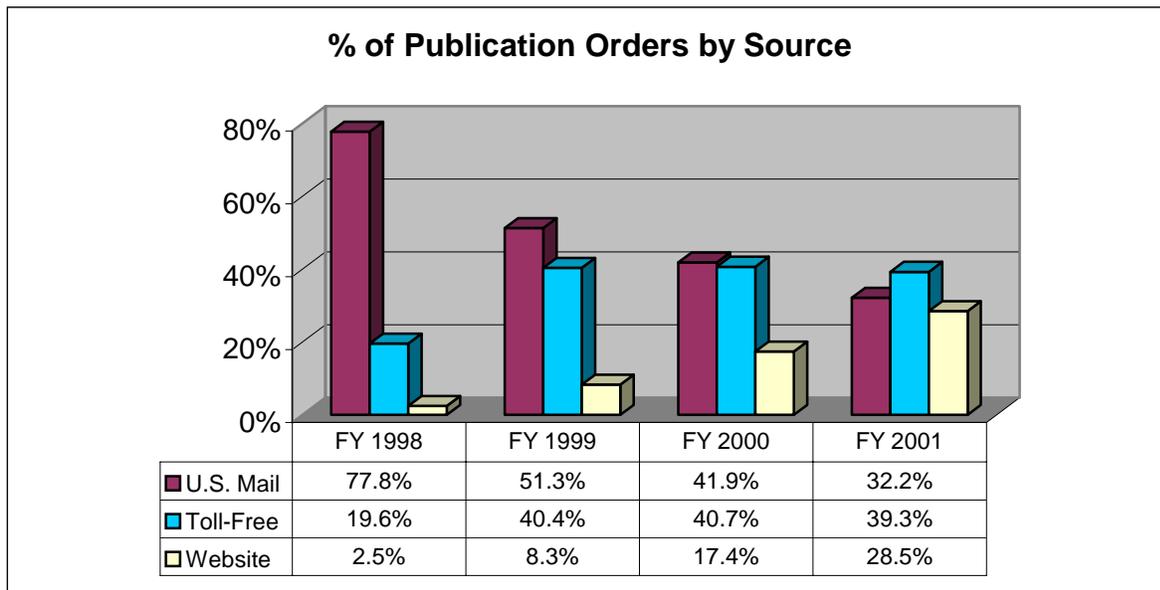
In summary, FCIC identified, promoted, and distributed 60 new consumer publications during fiscal year 2001, including 10 new publications developed

jointly by government and private sector partners under FCIC's cooperative publishing program. During fiscal year 2002 and 2003, FCIC will continue to provide the most helpful and practical Federal information, and to build publishing partnerships that deliver the best combined Federal/corporate wisdom to citizens.

Distribution of Print Publications

The quarterly **Consumer Information Catalog** is the foundation of FCIC's print distribution program. In fiscal year 2001, the **Catalog** was redesigned to make it more user-friendly. The cover design was updated to highlight important new and popular publications, and the order form was revamped to simplify the ordering process. FCIC also added an "Online Only" section, which refers consumers to a page on www.pueblo.gsa.gov featuring best-selling publications that were previously listed in the **Catalog** but are no longer available in print.

For many people, writing to Pueblo, Colorado for printed copies of publications is the preferred information channel. Approximately 43 full-time employees of the Government Printing Office facility in Pueblo served these citizens by responding in a timely and efficient fashion to their requests for 5.5 million publications during fiscal year 2001. Although requests for printed publications are declining, and postal rates and GPO costs are increasing, FCIC is committed to meeting the information needs of all Americans as cost-effectively as possible. Since more than 95% of the current workload in Pueblo is generated by FCIC, GPO and FCIC work together closely to manage overhead costs, to identify and implement creative management practices, and to adopt innovative technological advances.



In addition to offering citizens the opportunity to order print publications through the **Catalog**, the FCIC websites, and from the toll-free National Contact Center, FCIC also utilizes a variety of direct mail marketing offers to reach targeted segments of the public. During fiscal year 2001, FCIC repeated an annual cooperative project with the Treasury Department to distribute three million promotional inserts to citizens who received tax refund checks. As a result, citizens requested more than 215,000 publications on buying prescription medicines, preventing food borne illnesses and saving for retirement.

To meet the needs of educators who are teaching life skills to young consumers, FCIC put together a package of eleven free publications of importance to high school students. FCIC identified more than 19,000 consumer education teachers across the country and sent each one sample publications and an order form. As a result of this effort, more than 250,000 publications were provided to students. The publications covered topics such as savings, budgeting, auto insurance, eating disorders, and renting an apartment. FCIC also developed and enclosed a lesson plan to help teens learn to solve consumer problems. The “Consumer Action Scavenger Hunt” leads students through 10 teen-related questions, all of which can be answered by using the **Consumer Action Handbook**. The teachers responded enthusiastically to both the publications and the lesson plan. FCIC plans to continue providing this service to educators by developing more lesson plans that

teach consumer skills, and by encouraging the development of additional consumer information specifically for students.

FCIC is also serving the information needs of the Hispanic community. During fiscal year 2001, FCIC worked with 13 participating agencies to provide more than 1.1 million publications in Spanish through trusted information gatekeepers within the Hispanic community. This cooperative project was a win-win effort, delivering information on a wide variety of consumer subjects to millions of consumers whose native language is Spanish. During fiscal year 2002, FCIC plans to make information in Spanish available on www.pueblo.gsa.gov and to publish a new edition of the **Lista de publicaciones federales en español para el consumidor (Catalog of Federal Consumer Publications in Spanish)**. This listing describes and provides ordering instructions for approximately 200 consumer publications that are available in Spanish from 46 Federal agencies. Many of these publications are available online and consumers will have access to them on FCIC's website. Copies of the **Lista** will be distributed through the **Consumer Information Catalog**, to Members of Congress, libraries nationwide, and national Hispanic organizations.

Media Promotions and Public Service Advertising

FCIC's media activities are a vital link in delivering Federal information to the public. Over the years, FCIC has forged strong partnerships with writers and editors nationwide who report on subjects of consumer interest. FCIC offers them a wide range of media services, including electronic and print information releases, and broadcast scripts based on helpful Federal information. The releases also explain how consumers can access the information by mail, toll-free telephone, or on FCIC websites. The media makes this information available to citizens as a public service, at no cost to the government. During fiscal year 2001, FCIC media programs received free advertising space and airtime worth \$15.6 million.

FCIC's information releases, scripts, online Press Room, and knowledgeable media staff have been a constant source of stories and articles reaching millions of Americans. FCIC's information releases, known as **New for Consumers**, have been

used regularly by magazines such as **Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine**, **Ladies Home Journal**, **Black Enterprise**, and **Popular Mechanics**. The releases have also appeared frequently in large newspapers such as **The Washington Post**, the **Miami Herald**, **The Baltimore Sun**, **The Daily News** (New York), the **Kansas City Star** and the **Chicago Tribune**, as well as in smaller papers such as the **Siouxland Press** (IA), the **Pittsburgh Tribune-Review News** (PA), the **Grand Rapids Press**, **The Virginian-Pilot**, the **Bloomville Gazette** (OH), and the **Gazette Mail** (WV).

In addition, wire and news services such as Associated Press and Knight Ridder regularly promote FCIC information in articles that appear in hundreds of newspapers around the country. The Sunday insert magazine **Parade** ran seven FCIC-placed articles during fiscal year 2001, delivering information to more than 82 million readers on subjects ranging from buying medicines on line, Medicare benefits, and saving and managing money to child protection and breast cancer awareness. As a result of these articles, consumers requested copies of more than 300,000 publications.

In light of recent events, electronic access to news and information is more vital than ever to the nation's media outlets. News outlets need current and up-to-date information to fuel the content of their products, and many are now wary of communicating via traditional mail. The FCIC "Press Room" at www.pueblo.gsa.gov provides media access to the latest consumer news feature releases and radio scripts, updated consumer scam and fraud notices, news from Federal agencies, contact information for FCIC's media staff and the opportunity to subscribe to both print news releases and a media listserv. FCIC's media e-mail list gives 5,400 subscribing writers and editors the latest consumer news as soon as it is available, along with how consumers can order copies of publications by mail, toll-free telephone, or on the web, or how they can get the information directly by phone or on the web.

Information from FCIC's website has been featured on such online media outlets as www.bankrate.com, the real estate resource center at www.latimes.com,

www.popularmechanics.com, www.motortrend.com, www.usatoday.com, *Trailer Life* Magazine online and *Link-Up* Magazine online. Additionally, more than 15,000 citizens to date subscribe to FCIC's e-newsletter. It goes out electronically 4 to 6 times a year and highlights important new publications in the latest edition of the **Catalog**, includes a lighthearted quiz with little-known facts about Federal or consumer issues, links to current news items, and gives examples about how consumers can use FCIC services.

Newspapers and magazines also donate space to FCIC's print public service ads at no cost to the government. FCIC's newest print ad, "Your New Best Friend," uses the theme of the fiscal year 2000 television public service advertisement (PSA) to promote the free *Consumer Action Website*. Everyone's new best friend is this trusted website where they can get the right answers and track down the best help to fix their consumer problems. During fiscal year 2001, magazines such as **Business Week**, **Psychology Today**, **Popular Science**, **Woman's Day**, **Sunset**, and **Field & Stream** provided space worth more than one million dollars to FCIC-produced print ads.

FCIC's television public service announcement (PSA) program continues to be one of the most cost-effective and visible ways of encouraging consumers to use FCIC services. Many Americans first learn about the Federal Consumer Information Center by watching these humorous television public service advertisements. This year's campaign, "Up In The Air," features a senior citizen battling a stubbornly stuck refrigerator door. She learns how to handle her consumer problem and finds satisfaction by using the *Consumer Action Website*, the **Consumer Action Handbook** portion of FCIC's website.

Since June, 2001, the campaign has been used in 208 out of 211 markets and aired on 90 percent of the commercial television stations that received tapes. (Note: The industry considers a fifty-percent station pick-up to be outstanding.) The campaign received strong network support from ABC, and was seen during the award-winning and highly-rated Anne Frank miniseries in May, 2001. FCIC also distributed the TV PSA via shared reel distribution to more than 600 cable stations

during fall 2001. FCIC estimates that the television networks, individual stations and cable stations will donate television airplay worth a combined total of \$14.6 million over the life of the campaign.

Websites

In 1991, FCIC was among the first Federal government agencies to establish an electronic bulletin board system (BBS) to allow individuals with computers to directly access Federal information. When the World Wide Web began to emerge, FCIC was among the first to use this medium to provide useful information to citizens through our www.pueblo.gsa.gov website, which launched in October 1994. FCIC has seen usage of its online services grow from 20,000 electronic accesses in fiscal year 1991 to 22.5 million in fiscal year 2001.

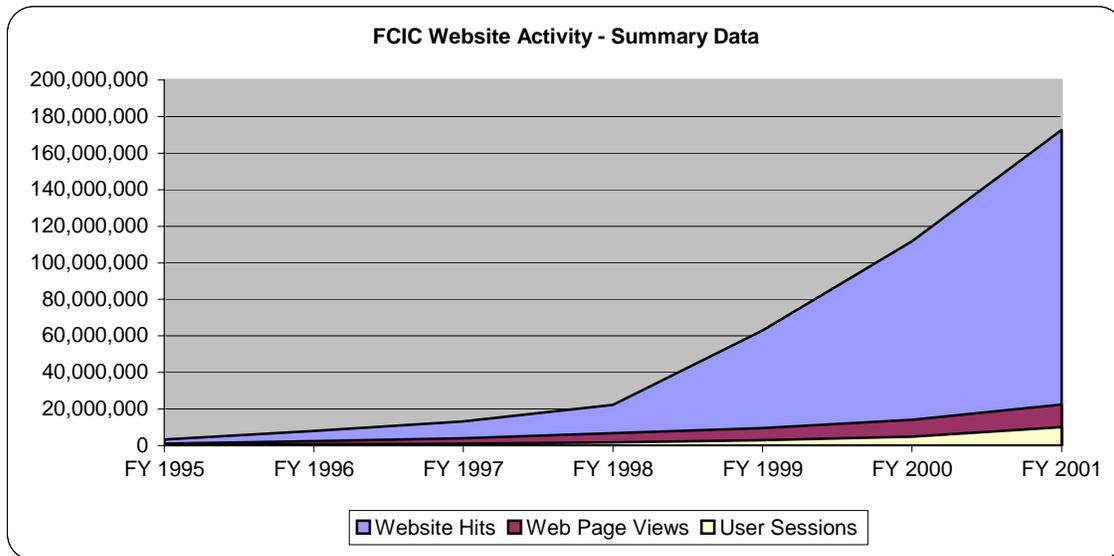
FCIC currently operates four websites to serve the public.

- www.pueblo.gsa.gov, contains the full text of hundreds of the most generally useful Federal publications in a variety of formats, along with consumer news and publication shopping services. Early in fiscal year 2001, FCIC published its first e-mail subscription newsletter on www.pueblo.gsa.gov.
- www.pueblo.gsa.gov/crh/respref.htm, the Consumer Action Website that provides online access to all of the valuable advice and reference information in the Consumer Action Handbook.
- www.info.gov, provides information and answers to the public's questions about their Federal government, which are a by-product of the toll-free answer service provided by FCIC's National Contact Center. FCIC has updated the existing links to a comprehensive list of Federal websites, all Federal telephone directories, and Federal toll-free telephone directory listings. Additional resources added include a new listing of Federal agency news and press release websites, and providing the user with the ability to search the NCC database. This database contains approximately 17,000

subject areas and 122,000 points of contact in the Federal Government and in other levels of government nationwide, and is used by the telephone specialists to research and retrieve information for the public.

- www.kids.gov, was originally a component of www.info.gov. This site was redesigned and enhanced by FCIC in fiscal year 2001 in support of FirstGov's cross-agency portals initiative. Working cooperatively through FirstGov's Cross-Agency Portal Working Group, FCIC built and maintains this portal site to provide children easy access to hundreds of websites both in and outside of government for their education and entertainment.

In counting website activity, FCIC uses the more conservative calculation of page views. This equates to the download of one web page of information. This number roughly measures information products delivered in much the same way as counting publications distributed. During fiscal year 2001, FCIC page views rose 58.5% to 22.5 million. As shown in the following chart, this number of page views was generated by over 8.7 million user sessions and accounted for almost 173 million hits on FCIC websites.



	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001
Web Hits	3,324,324	7,978,378	13,297,297	22,287,508	62,929,536	111,831,174	172,712,377
Page Views	1,000,000	2,400,000	4,000,000	6,806,949	9,534,997	14,114,111	22,502,147
User Sessions	270,270	648,649	1,081,081	1,819,000	3,033,644	4,929,525	8,768,142

FY 1995-1997 hits and user sessions are estimated based on the FY 1998 ratio.

National Contact Center (NCC)

Currently, the National Contact Center (NCC), operated under contract by Aspen Systems Corporation (Aspen) in Indianapolis, Indiana, has two main functions for the FCIC: responding to telephone inquiries about Federal programs, benefits, and services, and processing telephone orders for publications. A specially selected and trained staff answers the calls from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. eastern time, Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

During fiscal year 2001, the NCC responded to nearly 1,850,000 general information requests, either providing the information or locating the source of assistance for the caller. Recorded information on frequently requested subjects is available around the clock. In fiscal year 2001, the average length of an inquiry call was about 3 minutes and the average cost to the government was \$1.22.

Calling the NCC is one of the principal ways that the public requests printed information from the FCIC. Nearly 40% of the publication orders during fiscal year 2001 came through the NCC. Citizens call 1 (888) 8 PUEBLO, and provide any needed credit card information. NCC then transmits the order electronically to the Pueblo, Colorado distribution facility for fulfillment. All FCIC Catalogs and promotions include the toll-free telephone number for consumers to order publications. In fiscal year 2001, the average length of a publication order call was 3 minutes and the average cost to the government was \$1.15.

The NCC responded to a total of more than 2.13 million calls during fiscal year 2001, 1.85 million of which related to questions about Federal programs, and 280,000 of which were publication orders. The most popular topics of inquiries were: Federal loans and grants, government sales, Federal benefits, passports/travel requirements, immigration and naturalization, and savings bonds.

For 35 years, the mission of the NCC has been to simplify access to Federal Government and Government-related information by serving as a single, initial point of contact for citizens with questions about their government. The scope of the program has evolved from regional walk-in information centers located in major metropolitan areas, to a centralized toll-free number serving the nation. The number is currently listed in nearly 500 telephone directories, serving 75% of the American public.

FCIC is now proposing a significant enhancement of its service to the public. The enhancement is three-fold. First, it would extend the toll-free telephone service to the rest of the United States by obtaining listings in telephone directories serving the remaining 25% of the American population (primarily small population cities, towns and rural areas). Secondly, and more significantly, it would transform the current National Call Center to a multi-channel National Contact Center that will be able to receive and respond to e-mail and fax inquiries as well as telephone inquiries. The third enhancement is to provide the contact center with customer relationship management (CRM) tools to allow FCIC to record, analyze and report

on current and emerging topics of public interest and to identify areas where additional public information is needed.

Currently, the toll-free number (1-800-FED-INFO) is accessible in all parts of the country. However, the number is listed only in the 500 largest telephone directories serving approximately 75% of the population. So while the remaining 25% of the population can use the toll-free service, they may not be aware of it. In the current deregulated telecommunications environment, there is no centralized or consistent approach to how directories are organized or published. In the United States, there are at least 7,000 different telephone directories published by more than 225 different telephone directory publishing companies, many of which have overlapping areas of coverage. In order to assure universal awareness, FCIC will now expand the range of directory listings to capture the smaller population centers. This will add listings to more than 3,000 additional directories at a cost of approximately \$320,000.

The transformation of the National Call Center to a multi-channel National Contact Center is the natural outcome of the explosive growth of the use of the Internet as a means of daily communication for the public. "Messaging Online" reports that in the U.S. there was a 73% growth in the number of e-mail mailboxes in calendar year 2000. The public has turned to e-mail as a preferred way of communicating with friends and family, businesses, government representatives, and government programs. The momentum away from mail to electronic communication has increased in the wake of the tragic Anthrax incidents last year. The public's desire to use e-mail even when there are toll-free telephone services available has led most major service companies to install systems to handle the increasing volumes of e-mail that they receive.

Up until now, the NCC has been unable to respond to e-mail because of the cost in both capital expenditures and labor. However, with the extraordinary growth in people using e-mail, the time has come to invest in an e-mail response system to insure that FCIC continues to be an available and useful resource for all citizens.

Fortunately, increasingly capable software and hardware solutions are available that provide cost-effective ways to respond to and manage the public's use of e-mail. With the purchase, installation and operation of these new systems, the NCC will provide a single consistent face to government information and services to ensure that citizens are efficiently and effectively served. Currently, the public can search the same knowledge management data used by NCC telephone representatives and also access frequently asked questions at FCIC's website at www.info.gov. FCC will enhance this website to enable the public to submit questions via e-mail forms and, as the need develops, to provide online chat options to the public.

These systems include customer relationship management (CRM) capabilities that will permit, among other things, the NCC to gather, analyze, and share reports on the information needs of the public with other government agencies. CRM capabilities will also enable the NCC to provide an expanded array of reimbursable Contact Center support services to help agencies meet their legislatively-mandated customer service goals. These CRM capabilities are also integral to a number of government-wide e-gov initiatives that are currently underway and will greatly enhance the use of the NCC as a single channel for the delivery of e-gov services.

To support this enhancement of services, FCIC is requesting an increase of \$5 million in fiscal year 2003. This increase is composed of:

- \$2 million to develop and implement an e-mail receipts and processing software system that will receive a projected one million e-mails and automatically acknowledge, analyze, and forward 80-85% of e-mails directly to agencies for their information or response;
- \$475,000 to cover increased contractor costs for maintaining the system and responding to the remaining 15-20% of general inquiry e-mail;
- \$1.0 million to cover contractor costs of handling a nearly 45% increase in call volume from 2.3 million per year to 3.3 million in fiscal year 2003;

- \$300,000 to cover the additional telecommunications costs to receive and to respond to this increased volume of calls;
- \$425,000 for the acquisition and installation of customer relationship management software and the maintenance and use of data gathered through it;
- \$320,000 to obtain nationwide telephone directory coverage for FCIC's toll-free numbers; and
- \$480,000 for a nationwide public service advertising campaign to promote the availability of this enhanced service.

These enhanced services would produce a state-of-the-art contact center able to provide superior service to the American public and to provide support to an array of other e-gov initiatives that will make government more accessible and citizen-centric. The General Services Administration has taken the lead in exploring and implementing this initiative that ultimately envisions providing Americans with exceptional customer service in a seamless relationship where handoffs between agencies are invisible to the customer, as are the actions taken behind the scenes in each agency. The National Contact Center will play a significant role in its implementation by providing an easy-to-access and well-publicized initial point-of-contact for citizens.

Response to September 11th Events

A crucial example of the value of one program with four integrated information channels was FCIC's response to the events of September 11th. FCIC coordinated its resources and used all four information channels (print publications, media scripts and releases, contact center services, and website) to give consumers the most up-to-date information to deal with the crisis.

- At the request of the State Department, FCIC set up a special toll-free hotline to provide information to citizens concerned about the safety of international travel. Callers can get the latest State Department travel warnings and public announcements, as well as consular information for any country in the world. FCIC highlighted this new service in a special release targeted to travel editors and writers across the country. Mentions of the hotline appeared in the *Washington Post* as well as in newspapers such as the *Wheeling News Register* (WV) and the *Canarsie Courier* (NY). FCIC also let the public know about the travel safety hotline through live announcer copy radio PSAs sent to 3,000 radio stations nationwide.
- The NCC obtained and coordinated the telecommunications support needed so that the Department of Justice could provide toll-free assistance to victims of the 9/11 tragedy.
- FCIC posted a special “Coping With Crisis” page on www.pueblo.gsa.gov. This page features the specific publications that are of interest and answer consumers’ most pressing questions. The list includes **Our Flag, Being a Blood Donor, Fly Smart, Helping Your Child Cope with Disaster, Your Family Disaster Supply Kit**, and more. FCIC also distributed a feature release highlighting these publications to its e-mail distribution list of 5,400 writers and editors at a variety of media outlets. In addition to featuring “Coping with Crisis” on its homepage, FCIC also linked to Firstgov.gov’s “America Responds to Terrorism” web page.
- FCIC also created and distributed “Helping Your Child Cope With Disaster”—a live announcer copy radio PSA in 60, 30, 15 and 10-second lengths. FCIC sent the scripts to 3,000 news/talk and country radio stations that were the most likely to use the scripts, and whose listeners were most likely to be parents of younger children.
- In response to the anthrax mail scare, FCIC posted an information release on “Suspicious Mail: What You Can Do,” along with its other crisis resources

at www.pueblo.gsa.gov. This page gives consumers the facts on how to safely handle suspicious mail and links to the Federal agencies with the latest information on the anthrax investigation.

CONCLUSION

The Federal Consumer Information Center's requested appropriation for fiscal year 2003 totals \$12,681,000, an increase of \$5,405,000 as compared to fiscal year 2002. The request will enable FCIC to deliver dramatically enhanced services to citizens nationwide, while maintaining the program's core value - information that is easy to get, easy to understand, and that makes a difference in citizens' everyday lives. FCIC will continue to publish and distribute the **Consumer Information Catalog** and the **Consumer Action Handbook**, which have proved their worth time and again over the years to grateful users. FCIC will work with Federal agencies and private sector partners to make sure that citizens who have not yet crossed the digital divide are not left without the printed information they need and have relied on in the past. FCIC will continue to expand its online information program, so that Americans who increasingly turn to e-information can avoid fraud and misinformation by having a trusted and reliable source at their fingertips. And the FCIC National Contact Center will be the people-to-people presence of the Federal government. As FCIC talks directly to citizens and answers their questions each day, it will be building a database and a feedback system that will enable Federal agencies to deliver better, most cost-effective customer service tomorrow.

FCIC is uniquely positioned to continue proactively developing both the content and the delivery channels that will meet the public's information needs. It brings together an efficient and centralized publication distribution system, innovative media and marketing programs, user-friendly, content-rich websites, and now a citizen-centered National Contact Center. Together these programs have helped, and will continue to help America's citizens grow in knowledge, productivity and self-reliance.