

Reimagined: Introducing a new USA.gov and USAGov en Español – Transcript of audio

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Well, after welcome, everyone. We have another great webinar for you today. My name is Joe Paskoski from GPO. In federal depository support services. I am with my colleague, Donald Sensabaugh who will be tech support for today's webinar. The title of today's webinar is Reimagined: Introducing a new USA.gov and US a.gov in Espanola. With us today as our presenters from USA.gov, Marietta Jelks , Claire Loxsom-DeSorbo , and Joanne McGovern. I hope I got those pronunciations correct. Marietta serves as the project, as the product manager of USA.gov and USAGov in Espanola. She sensed the strategy for the websites and works across the organization to prioritize the work that meets the public's needs. Marietta has held multiple rows in USA.gov prior to this she led research efforts, written content, piloted a [Indiscernible] program, most notably, served as the interim chief of USA.gov's consumer action handbook. In all roles she is dedicated to empowering people to get information they need and to apply it to their lives.

Trend four leaves the outreach team with the you do as a public experience portfolio. She oversees the program's outreach strategy, bilingual social media channels, and email marketing efforts that connect the people to the government, information, and services available to them. That includes regular messaging on social media, Facebook, twitter, Instagram, as well as developing public engagement campaigns with agency partners to support their mission. Notable recent efforts including amplifying fairness information during hurricane Ian with FEMA and the CDC. Sharing COVID-19 related updates such as the affordable connectivity program with the FCC come on connecting the public to the new USA.gov and USA.gov it has been you'll. Joanne McGovern is the UX designer/research. Joanne makes websites easier to use. We can use her here at GPO, I think that she's a long time extra USA.gov and has done everything from answering emails to working on developing teams, writing, editing, and currently focusing on user interfaces. Joanne has served as a cochair of the UX community of practice in Goleta GSA TTS research Guild. With those impressive credentials I will head the virtual microphone over to the USA.gov team who will take it from here.

Awesome. Thank you so much, Joe. I know we are going to give a second, I believe Marietta is sharing her screen on behalf of her team today. Can everybody see that? It looks like we are good to go. Thank you again, Joe, for the introduction. Thank you to Marietta for sharing her screen on behalf of our presenters today. I think Claire Loxsom-DeSorbo thank you all for being here to listen to our presentation. Welcome. We are here to talk about reimagined, introducing the new USA.gov and USAGov in Espanola. Slide two, please.

Awesome. You know more about us through our bios so far. We are excited to present today as a three person team but this is really representative of the cross functional work that got us where we are. And got the websites where they are today. My name is trend Four on the acting outreach to me that USAGov and I'm joined by Marietta Jelks, who is the product manager of our website and Joanne McGovern who is UX designer extraordinary. I wanted to share a little bit more about USAGov as a program, who we are, and what we do. Slide three, please.

USAGov is the front door to government information and services. We are hosted at the General Services Administration Technology Transformation Services branch. Our public experience portfolio really focuses on enhancing the public's experience with their government. And how do we do that? That leads to our mission statement, which is really USAGov creates and organizes timely needed government information and services and makes them assessable anytime, anywhere, via a channel of

your choice. No matter people need to answer a question, to apply for services and programs directly or contact an agency USA.gov is here to help.

Our current state is really built on the shoulders of giants this really started back over 50 years ago with print distributional. Distributing those government consumer publications. Really led to yourself progress on getting to our current channels and opportunity to connect with people but currently, we share information through USA.gov and USA.gov in Espanola, which are our bilingual websites, which is the focus of today. There are other ways that people engage with us. They can call and chat with our bilingual contact center. They can also engage on social media and email, through our public engagement channels. That they can follow, subscribe, and interact with on a daily basis. Now that you have a better idea of us, I'm going to pass it over to Joanne to introduce the reimagined websites and really the process of how we got here. Joanne.

Thank you, Claire. This is Joanne speaking. Slide five. This slide shows us images of the new USA.gov and USA.gov in Espanola pages. Desktop and mobile. About to play five years ago we were in the very early days of working on a new website. This web site. One of the first things we did was a content design phase. We had never approached our content this way before, but we realized we had an opportunity to closely examine our content and look for ways to improve it. Slide six. We started off with some high-level goals. We wanted to make sure that we had the right content and no more, no less. In order to do that we need to understand our audience and what they are trying to achieve. We call that a user intent. We designed each page to satisfy one user intent. An example of a user intent might be how do I replace my Social Security card? The structure of the content is really important to us as well. Our website visitors need to be able to navigate around the site to find what they need, but search engines need to be able to understand it and find it as well. The majority of the traffic to our sites comes from commercial search engines. It's critical to us that when people search for government information the search returns the point to our site and offers a clear description of what you'll find there. We pay careful attention to search engine optimization, or SEO. And every aspect of page creation from custom meta-descriptions to meaningful URL to page titles and headings. We explored new ways to present our content using the U.S. Web Design System and any other solutions we could come up with. We also knew that we wanted to reduce the length of our pages on our old site our pages were organized by topic, like they are now. But it was common to find quite a few subtopics on a page. This led to very long pages, which is problematic for the majority of our visitors who view our website on tiny little mobile device screens. So, in the end, we wound up with a 77% increase in the number of pages we have, but our pages now have about 44% fewer words and 58% fewer external links but this really helped us to focus our content and really make sure we are meeting the needs of our audience. Slide seven.

We took a human centered design approach, making sure that we knew as much about our user intent as possible. And then developing our content to meet those specific needs. Slide eight.

Our human centered design approach really helped us focus on the most important things for our users. And led to the adoption of engaging U.S. Web Design System components and the development of some custom tools to stream, streamline content discovery. Like everything else on our website, nothing is ever done. We never stop looking for ways to improve our products. Slide nine.

Here is how we approached our content design phase. We weren't writing any content at this stage. We were charged with thinking about what topics we should include on how we would like to structure and present them. Small teams of content writers, editors, and UX folks focused on one topic at a time. We reviewed English and Spanish content that we had existing on the website. We looked at website analytics, survey comments, contact center analytics and search data and thought about structure and problem areas. We defined the audience and user intent for every piece of content we recommended and we were encouraged to come up with solutions without thinking about constraints. It took us several months to get through this process. It was a lot of work, but it was a really valuable exercise. Slide 10.

This process was all about acting on data. When we saw that mobile traffic surpassed desktop traffic and we saw people spending a lot of time on long pages we knew that we should keep our pages shorter and focused on one subject. Our survey comments told us that people weren't finding what they expected on some pages we made sure that our page titles and descriptions were clear and didn't over promise. What we saw in our contact center and on the website, we were having increased traffic about reporting scams and contacting elected officials. We have developed tools to make it easier for people to complete those complex tasks on their own. Slide 11.

Let's take a look at some of the work. We will start with the report a scam tool. Flight well.

How to report scams and fraud is a top task at USA.gov. Our scams team reviewed all the data we had and among other things, took note about how much time and effort it took to read and understand all the dense text that we presented on this site. On the slide you can see a screenshot of the page that we have. They also took the user's emotional state into consideration. When somebody has just been scammed they are in a highly emotional state. We all know that when we are emotionally upset our cognitive abilities are impacted. The scams team looked for ways to streamline the experience. Slide 13.

Thus, the report a scam tool was born. It's a clean interface that presents the user with some simple options to describe their scam in order to learn the correct place report it to the new tool was launched with our new website earlier this year. The report a scam tool is now live on USA.gov and USAGov in Espanola. Slide 14. We recently did user testing on the report a scam tool. We learned some things that will help us improve the tool. At the same time, Opera dispensary and forest that the simple interface improved their experience. We recruited people who had been scammed in the past and we asked them to figure out how to report their real-time, real-life scam using our old website with the big long heavy text page. And then using the report a scam tool. Our test participants appreciated the more streamlined experience of the tool and they were able to accurately identify where to report their scam. Slide 15.: Here are some key findings from our usability testing all of our participants really impressed on us that a person who has been scammed is in a highly emotional state when you think about it, that's a good message for us to hear over and over again, because let's face it, when you come to USA.gov you are usually here to solve a problem. Maybe you can't afford groceries for your family and you need assistance. Or your passport was stolen. Or you need government assistance to rebuild after a disaster. The fact is, people don't come to USA.gov to find fund distracting content on a Saturday night they come to solve a problem. We need to consider their emotional state and do our best to make complex government content as simple as we can. We are also thinking about other topics that might lend themselves to this type of treatment for things like how to report a crime or how to file a complaint. That doesn't mean work on the report a scam tool is done. Not at all. We know that this product is in early stages. We are actively looking for ways to improve it. Slide 16.

So, now we are leveraging the content work we did to streamline and develop report a scam content and turning it into conversational content, so that people who use smart speakers can ask how to report a scam. We're still in early development stages, so I don't have a product to show off just yet but maybe we will come back and talk about that experience next year, if you have us as we approach the voice interaction we know it's important for us to be using the channel to convey the same information that we have on the website and in the contact center. We work hard to be sure that we are delivering the same information, no matter what channel people use to reach us. Slide 17.

This is a slide that you have to read. It's just boxes and arrows. I wanted to include it to show you how we are adapting our web content to conversational content adapting web content to conversational content is a task unto itself. We have the structure, and that's a great starting point. When I'm speaking to someone, even if it's a thought, use different words or phrases than you would. And with conversational content we have to consider our tone, inflection, even where it makes sense to make a brief pause. Or not. We were able to bring in a conversation designer, that's a hold.title now, working with our content team as well as folks in the contact center. Who is better at understanding what scam

conversations are like than the people who have conversations about scams every day? At this point we have settled on the content, but we won't consider it final until we are able to do a it with an actual voice assistant. We do our best to have these pretend conversations together, but conversing with a bot is different than conversing with a human. We are holding off on final approval until we can see it in action later this summer. Slide 18.

Another top task at USA.gov is learning about contacting elected officials. We know that's pretty difficult to figure out who your elected officials are and how to contact them slide 19.

We built a tool where you can enter your address and we will return all of your elected officials at federal, state, and local level. Slide 19.

We did comparative usability testing on this tool as well. We gave our participants a fictional address in Atlanta, Georgia. We asked them to identify their representative in the state House of Representatives. On our old website this was a seven step process. Slide 21.:

Even when they got to the seventh step they were presented with a list of many people in the state house that represent Atlanta. Disciplines were not aware that only one of those people represented them. They thought they could just pick from the list. Slide 22.

The tool we developed shows only their representatives, based on the address they entered they don't have to know the number of their voting district or understand how the government is organized. People saved an average of over five minutes over our old websites. The accuracy rate went from one in nine people finding the right answer to nine of nine people finding the correct answer. We still have work to do on this tool as well. Our usability test really enforced a message that we have known for a long time, that the public does not know how the government is organized. We still saw a lot of confusion about elected to elected officials with the state and federal level. We are exploring ideas of how to improve that as well. Now I handed over to Marietta to show you some of the work we have done. Take it away, Marietta.

Hello, everyone. Where going to jump into a tour of the websites now. Just as a foundational note of everything I'm going to show you is on USA.gov English website, but the same principles and design, motifs, and structure are the same wheels on the Spanish website. Whatever you see here, if you work with the Spanish audience or people who speak Spanish they can use the same site the same way in Spanish. We are going to start with our homepage. Joanne gave a glimpse of the homepage when she announced the site in the earlier slide. I just wanted to give you a fuller view of the entire site from top to bottom. Including the footers. There are prominent things I want to highlight on the homepage but starting this how do I write here. In this space we are using it to highlight tasks that are most common for our users based on data. And based on what they have searched for, commonly, on pages that are most popular. Right now they reflect what's most common now, but we will use this space and updated regularly based on what the current data is showing us about how people are using the website and what they need most at this particular time. In addition, we also have this life events area, which I will delve into a bit more later on in our conversation. It's a pilot we are testing to see if this is an easier frame work for people to find the information they need in specific points in their life path journey and seeing if there's a better experience for them. Going up a little bit, you will see common features on every page of the website. A toggle for a spaniel is here. It will take to the corresponding pages, Spanish. About 90%, my little over 90% of our content that's in English is available in Spanish. Some a bit more of the discrepancy is on directories most of the content has been created in Spanish and English. As well as this search box that allows people to search not just on USA.gov, but all government websites and some commercial ones that are managed by government, the USPS.com. You will see here along the top, this ribbon of navigation options for users. It will take you, based on data, to the topics that are most commonly used and clicked on, in our websites. We will update it as time progresses. Right now, taxes, is more timely. We will look at some data and see what is replaced with Alan. Ribbon on Spanish is slightly different, because those user needs are different, in some ways. They reflect that in our

navigation ribbon that shows up on every page. We will see this all topics and services. When you click it it takes her to the bottom of the site, which we saw earlier, to our full menu of all the topics that we cover and provide on the website. From A-Z it's government down through voting and elections and everything in between. We are including a small icon as a visual cue for the types of the topic itself, as well as small descriptions of the section of the types of information that you find within each of these sections of the website. Just to see how that works but I will click on this complaints tile. When we click there it gives you the navigation for the complaints section. Again, using data we have populated the most popular box here that makes it really easy for people to get to the page that they need based on what people are commonly coming to us for. In addition to those most popular topics, we have categories for other topics, other needs, that the public may need in that particular topic. It makes it really easy in the larger font to see the topic or category that most best applies to what you need and being able to navigate through that.

Going forward we went to show you some of the content. Joanne showed you the long pages that we to have on our old websites. And how we have tried to incorporate action ability in our websites. Going to start with our page on food stamps, or snap, program. Before jumping to the content, just to help you see some of our design decisions, you will see we have red crumbs across the top. You will see what page you are on in relation to the entire site structure. We are within the food assistance section which is within the government benefits section and from there it something that helps you understand where you are within the site along the left side of the site it shows a similar reflection of where you are with the page you are on in red, bold font. Indented under need food assistance section. And then the food assistance section is underneath the government benefits. Having people get an understanding of the relationship of where you are for people, in case they need to come back to it or come and go. As you will see here, we are using large font for our headlines. Really trying to not over promise, as Claire mentioned earlier but people into acquire about food stamps, but USA.gov is not the place to apply, the helping frame what's possible in this page, to learn the process of how to apply in helping them understand this is what the purpose of the page is my to know how versus to actually apply. This but down here is a link to the state snap offices. That the starting point for applying. That helps you just go right to the source, versus trying to wade through lots of content and links to determine which one it is. We kept it focus versus our old page which had many, many links on it. Helping you just focus on solving that one problem end-user intent.

I'm going to show our Social Security card page. The same visual elements are consistent with the breadcrumbs and the navigation one thing that definitely we have used a lot across the site are these subheadings. You saw the top heading with the title of the page of how to get, replace, or correct a Social Security card. We have these Subban navigation subtitles here, replace a Social Security card, correct a Social Security card, and further down, get one for a baby for the first time. That helps someone skimming on a site but they don't have to read all the content more how to read this entire page. I can skim it and go to the section that's most relevant to what I need to do. You also see that we have incorporated these process list. One, two, three, along the left side, which serve as steps in a process and showing the relationship that thread, if you see that light blue line, that the connector between the one, two, three. It shows the process you have to do this before that and then then that before the third. That helps people frame that there are, there is a dependency in place to accomplish this task. We use it again lower down for people hitting a Social Security card for the first time. A couple of other elements I wanted to show you on this page is that our lengths are very descriptive. It may just be the word documents that was the link on the old website or address. We are using an entire sensor praise to help people understand where you're going to go or what you will be able to accomplish by clicking that specific link on the page. You can set expectations for people. You also see on every page we have a last updated. People want to know how current or fresh our content is. We do conduct

regular reviews and updates on helping people get that visual cue. As well as methods to share content with friends or loved ones, or themselves for future reference.

I'm going to show this page on job training. Again, those same elements are in place, same processes, in terms of using very deliberate use of hyperlink language. On this page I want to explicitly call out accordions. Sometimes we create content that is for a specific group or not relevant for everyone. We have used these accordions to help filter for people, in a sense, and only show what is relevant to them. I will pretend I'm still a young adult. I will click this programs for young adults section. Here I find that information without having to ignore or wade to the content for people who are veterans or Native Americans or older workers. I'm able to see what's relevant to my experience at the time and get to what I need and what's most relevant for me. Going to our directories. Directories are one of the most popular features of USA.gov. They have accounted for up to 20% of visitation as a collective unit. That's something we had to have on the site. As we relaunched. We have kind of a starting point. This index of all U.S. federal government directories. I'm sorry, departments and agencies. If you click on one, I will go to W as our example, you will be able to see summary information for an agency or program or office I will choose White House. That's one that we all know. You will see that quick summary of what the White House is along with a link. Link to the website for the White House. The phone number and contact form. If you want more information about the White House and their information you can go to this dedicated page that features all of the contact information that we have available for the White House. Some things are consistent in the phalanx as what showed on that index page. A more expansive view of ways to contact the White House, including the mailing address. It includes ways to share this page as well. In case you just need the space in contrast to all the different agencies.

State governments are very popular. Sometimes people don't realize that states, you know, what the division of labor are for state things or federal tasks. We have tried to make it easy by creating one page per state. It encapsulates, again, those most popular common things, the website for the state, the governor's name and a link to their contact information. The website for the statehouse. Yeah, the statehouse. We have linked back, instead of trying to curate our congressional members for all the states, which is cumbersome, we have included a link to our content for elected officials, which allows people to find their specific elected officials in their districts as a matter said that. And then a listing of links to the eight agencies that are really commonly used and have implications for people in their regular lives. There are more that really focus on one's that people really rely on in their regular lives. This makes it really easy just in one place to have access to all of the states government agencies. In one place. We also glanced over the life events section of the website. Something we are piloting as a means to see how people navigate. We have created this dedicated page, a landing page, for life events where we are piloting the six experiences from someone who has just had a child to recovering from a disaster. Someone facing financial hardship. And putting them all, all the things in one place. Looking at the transition to adulthood page. If we click on this link you will see we have curated the content from multiple topic areas or sections of the website into one place that are relevant to this point in my. How to register to vote, the travel section on how to apply for an adult passport from the military section, if someone is a male and has just turned 18. They will need to register with the selective service. Will call the information from those areas into one easy-to-use place and making it, without them having to navigate throughout the site and toggle to and from, it's all easy available in this one umbrella, so to speak.

Will transition to clear who will talk about how we have promoted the website thus far.

Thank you, Marietta. I think it's helping to connect the dots and see all of those elements on the websites in action. I'm going to talk a little bit more about promoting the website but now that we have these and they have a publicly available to everybody over the last few months, how do we communicate about them to the public? We really focused on reintroducing USA.gov as a whole. So, focusing on that top level, making sure that people knew this was a change coming from us really setting

those expectations moving forward. So, this was an active shift to self-promotion. You can see that in our changes to first-person language really talking about us and telling our story. We are doing this, our websites are new and improved. That really helped us to be ownership and authority of these changes. Especially in this digital space and with the example that Joanne shared earlier about the scams wizard. We know that people's digital experience can be uncertain. Really making sure that people knew this was coming from us and these were those changes. Like I said, we have really started at that mean reintroducing USAGov level, so starting with a raising awareness phase. This included talking about and showing the visual and branding changes, so that people knew there was a different look and feel that maybe they were used to in the past. While also using some tried-and-true elements that we knew would be successful across outreach channels. Because this was a long-term project we really kept this phase model ever since we did some testing back in the fall. We started with that raising awareness. We also wanted to make sure we were hitting the user intent side of things with our outreach as well. So, part of that phase was also gathering feedback. Asking people to use the feedback loops on our site, share what you think, use the page level survey with survey. Visit this. Explore, so we that we could really respond and react and adapt to their feedback and then, finally, is this was a long-term project, this is our product that we own. We also want to make sure we are giving this life and keeping this as a sustainable public engagement campaign, if you will. The last phase we are currently in, although we are still building off of the previous two, is taking action. Slide 29, please.

After reintroducing we really wanted to get back to business and emphasize that we are still your guide to government information and services. We really started with a manageable model, not only for us internally, but to show consistency across our channels. We did a tried-and-true element of create once, repeat many. We would create topline messages and clear information that we can adapt across social media platforms in English and Spanish, so that we could meet people where they are. Really at any time, anywhere, your channel of choice model as well. We still include some of that we and our language, but we have really shifted it back to you, to the public. To make it really action oriented for people. So, using some of the same principles we used for the how do I section on the top navigation of the website, we shifted to top tasks really wanted it to be an actionable experience on our outreach channels for the public. So you can find this explore this. Here's what to expect when you get to this site. And really kind of shifting it back to that user. A big element of this is really also adapting to data. As people are going to the contact center, calling in, or using different search terms having a high volume of traffic on certain pages we are responding to that. We are using that parallel language. We are also responding to the world around us. There are changes coming from other agencies and partners as well as current events, the world that people really want to adapt to and see in their outreach. So, overall, we just really want to emphasize that we are really proud of these new sites but we can't wait to talk more about them to our networks, to other agencies, to the public. These new versions are really great, but to Joanne's point, our work is not finished but we will continue to apply a lot of those principles that we used initially to create these new versions of the websites in the first place, like data analysis, user feedback and research. Working with others, testing and iterating on what we started to do but USAGov will really keep adapting and creating the best products with the public in mind and for the public, so with that slide 30, please. We are going to say thank you and shipped to the questions portion in our last few minutes here. If you have anything you think of after we wrap up please reach out to us but we know these slides will be distributed and we are looking forward to connecting more and hearing more from you all. Thank you for having us.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. That was a fantastic webinar. I learned an awful lot thank you Ator. Any questions for the USA.gov team? Please put them in the chat. We got a few minutes. Closing out at 2:45. I have one question. I was surprised to realize that your directories get 20% of your traffic. I know they are great directories. The subsections, is not consistent across all states or do you tailor that to

each individual state? Do you know what I'm talking about? You have it listed with the state government websites.

Like the Department of State, Department of emergency, or whatever? Right now it's standard collection.

Okay.

We have a tailored to the states specifically.

That's what I thought. That must take a tremendous amount of effort finding all that information. I can imagine. Any questions? We have some questions here. Chris Brown asked, since to thousand to 2023 domain domain has included state and local governments as well as federal. Is are anyway the search engine could limit search results to only federal government and not to include state and local results?

I will take that one. I know a little bit about the search. It's possible to customize your search returns. Right now we are working on a version of our search box that only searches our federal directory records. If you didn't want to click on the W for the White House information you could just type White House into the search and do a search box. It's possible, but it does require a degree of customization that he have to do on your own.

Thank you. Donald, if you could put the satisfaction survey into the chat and also links to our file repository. This presentation will be there in a day or so. With slides, et cetera. Another question, does USA.gov provide a database for content information for all or a select number of federal employees? Particularly, department/agency heads or high-level support staff?

The short answer to that question is no. But if you did a little bit of searching you know that if you wanted to contact the secretary of agriculture you can certainly find that the the USDA website. No. We don't provide it right out there.

Probably some privacy issues there. Please look at that satisfaction survey and the training repository. We keep the last three or so years of webinars in our training repository. They usually post a day or so after the webinar. Any more questions for the government info team? Before this webinar I have learned about the life events site. It's fantastic. I shared with my colleagues here. I was saying, could we maybe put some pages up on our site that model the way you lay that out? I really love it. It's a fantastic site. I recommend everyone check that out. Let's see, anymore questions for our government info team? We've got a few more minutes. We are supposed to stick pretty closely to our time schedule. Anyway. We've got a couple more minutes. Just as an aside, GPO has what we call it basic collection, which is what we consider to be the top most important publications or websites from the federal government. There is 23 of them. USA.gov is one of those. We really value USA.gov in our Federal Depository Library Program. Let's see if we have any more questions. Please fill out the satisfaction survey, if you would. That is a great website. I love everything about it. Any last questions? We have two minutes here. Before we have to close out. Very helpful. We got some shout outs here. Thanks.

We definitely want to reiterate that if anybody has any questions after the fact, I know our emails are on that last slide that we shared. Please feel free to reach out we know it's also a lot to digest this was years of work in a 30 minute presentation. Please feel free to engage afterwards. We are really happy to be able to speak with y'all and keep connecting on this. You are always great supporters and help us enhance this work as well.

Please come back to our Academy. We have two more webinars in May. We have one next week, next Thursday, June 22nd, geography 101 from census. And all of our past conferences, recent conferences, have been recorded and the recordings are training repository. Donald just put a link in there. 2:45. I reluctantly have to close out. I could stay with our friends here all day, I think. I would like to thank you one more time. Thank you for the fantastic webinar. Really appreciate it but I love the USA.gov website. Thank you, audience. Thank you, Donald, for your great tech support. Please come back to the Academy again. Have a great rest of the day. Goodbye.

Thank you.

Thank you. [Event Concluded]