



Department of State
Passport Services

2020 Action Plan

Federal Customer Experience

US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

Who are we?

Passport Services' mission is to serve U.S. citizens intending international travel through passport issuance, while protecting the integrity of the U.S. passport as proof of U.S. citizenship at home and around the world. Our customer access passports services by calling the National Passport Information Center, getting information from the travel.state.gov website and visiting local passport offices.

The department is committed to creating the best possible customer experience built on the foundation of a customer-centric culture and continually reinforced by its customer service commitments, the training of its employees and service providers, and its customer satisfaction initiatives.

The Department engages with customers through a variety of touchpoints, as demonstrated in fiscal year 2019 data:

18.2 million passport products issued

4.3 million calls to Passport Services contact center.

69.5 million visits to [Travel.State.gov/passport](https://travel.state.gov/passport).

Face-to-face contacts at local passport agencies: **931,000 visits.**

Over 7,600 Passport Acceptance Facilities (such as post offices, libraries, clerks of court) across the United States that accept applications from customers on the Department's behalf.

525,920 regular passport applications received at over 280 U.S. embassies, consulates, and consular agencies;

59,901 emergency passports issued overseas.

How do we deliver value to the public?

Occasion

Customer is planning well in advance for a family vacation to Europe with her husband and four year old daughter. The child needs a passport. (First-time applicant, non-urgent travel)

Customer's passport is due to expire soon and, though she has no upcoming travel plans, she is assuming it must be renewed before it expires. (Renewal, no travel plans)

Customer's father lives overseas and is ill. He is upset and anxious to travel as soon as possible so he can be present for scheduled surgery.

High-Impact Service

Information on *How to Apply* is available by calling our National Passport Information Center (NPIC) or searching on *travel.state.gov* where forms are also available for download. They can also check on the status of their application.

Those applying for the first time appear at one of 7600+ passport acceptance facilities (AFs) where forms and guidance are available. Both parents must be present when the applicant is a minor.

The customer is reassured that once expired, though a passport is not valid for travel, it can be renewed up to 5 years after the expiration date. She is asked qualifying questions to determine if she is eligible for renewal.

Since the customer is traveling within 14 days can be seen via a scheduled appointment at one of our 27 public counter agencies. Walk-in customers are accommodated when the situation warrants it.

Offering

Customer is educated about how to obtain and complete the application form, what evidence documents are acceptable for proof of identification and citizenship, photo specifications, fees, location of local acceptance facilities. We can also identify a way forward for customers with unusual situations. The application is adjudicated and the passport issued.

She is encouraged to use the renew by mail option. In late 2021, we intend to offer eligible individuals the convenience of online renewal. The application is adjudicated and the passport issued.

Staff do everything possible to issue the customer's passport in time for travel. The application is adjudicated and the passport issued.

Where could we improve?

First-time Applicant (non-urgent)

Steps

1: Information Gathering

2: Preparing Application

3: Submitting Application

Customer Steps

Name and describe the main steps that a person takes to use the service, left to right, start to finish.

Customer Googles “passport”. First search result is travel.state.gov which has information on How to Apply and includes the phone number for our contact center. Many customers prefer to talk to someone.

Customer determines if the evidence of ID and citizenship they have in their possession are sufficient. The customer is also required to submit photocopies. Customer download application forms from travel.state.gov or obtains at local acceptance facility.

Customer must appear in person at a designated local passport acceptance facility (e.g., post office, clerk of court, library) Note: Customers with proof of urgent travel within 2-3 weeks will be seen, by appointment, at one of our regional passport agencies.

Service System

Describe the channels, roles, and tools from your agency or partners.

If accessing information on travel.state.gov, there is guidance to help determine if you are first-time applicant or eligible to renew, explanations of difference between passport book and card, evidence documents required, passport photo specifications, processing times, fees and a fee-calculator etc.

Travel.state.gov has a wizard to help customer determine which form to use. It provides a list of what evidence documents, alone or in combination, are likely to be sufficient. Contact center representatives often talk this through with customers who are not confident they have what is needed. Although there is a form-filler wizard available on our website, customers sometimes want their hand held when filling out the application form.

The customer identifies an acceptance facility near them by using a lookup tool on our website or by calling the contact center. The agent verifies that the application meets the criteria for acceptance, administers the oath, witnesses the signing of the application, assembles it, accepts payment and forwards everything to Department of State.

Pain Points

Describe the highest priority problems to solve

There is a lot of information and wading through it can feel overwhelming at times. Many people simply want reassurance that they are on the right path. Some customers have an unusual situation and, while we can guide them and set expectations, it will ultimately be sorted out during the adjudication process.

If necessary documents are unavailable, we refer customer to other local and federal agencies (eg DMV, USCIS, County Registrar) to obtain a certified copy. Original citizenship evidence documents must be submitted (eg naturalization certificate) there is no electronic transmittal or verification of documents between agencies.

Experiences at acceptance facilities are inconsistent across the network. Some require appointments, others allow walk-ins. Not all have photo services. Agents represent us and, while we do inspections, individual performance varies. Aside from occasional complaints, we lack visibility.

Where could we improve?

Renewal (non-urgent)

Steps

1: Information Gathering

2: Preparing Application

3: Submitting Application

Customer Steps

Name and describe the main steps that a person takes to use the service, left to right, start to finish.

Customer Googles “passport”. First search result is travel.state.gov which has information on How to Apply and includes the phone number for our contact center. Many customers prefer to talk to someone.

Customer downloads application forms from travel.state.gov or obtains at local acceptance facility, encloses a recent passport photo, current passport and fees.

Renewal for non-urgent travel is done by mail.

Service System

Describe the channels, roles, and tools from your agency or partners.

If accessing information on travel.state.gov, in addition to all other info, there is a list of qualifying questions to determine if you are eligible to renew. The customer may opt to call the contact center to determine if they are eligible to renew.

Contact center representatives often talk this through with customers who are not confident they have what is needed. Sometimes a customer has had a name change since their previous passport was issued and needs clarification on what evidence must be submitted. Although there is a form-filler wizard available on our website, customers occasionally want their hand held when filling out the application form.

The application can only be sent via USPS as many overnight delivery services do not deliver to PO boxes. Sending by traceable means is optional and at the customer’s expense.

Pain Points

Describe the highest priority problems to solve

While renewing is simpler than applying for the first time, there is a lot of information. Many people still want reassurance that they are on the right path. Some customers have an unusual situation and, while we can guide them and set expectations, it will ultimately be sorted out during the adjudication process.

We do not have an online renewal option at this time but have one in development that we hope to launch in 2021.

Where could we improve?

First-time Applicant & Renewal
(non-urgent) continued

| Steps | 4: Wait ("in process") | 5: Passport Issuance | 6: Document Return |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>Customer Steps</p> <p>Name and describe the main steps that a person takes to use the service, left to right, start to finish.</p> | <p>Customer is waiting to receive their passport in the mail as well as the return of their evidence documents. They may inquire about status multiple times during this time.</p> | <p>Most people are relieved to receive their passport.</p> | <p>The customer receives any original evidence documents submitted along with their application, in a separate mailing from their passport.</p> |
| <p>Service System</p> <p>Describe the channels, roles, and tools from your agency or partners.</p> | <p>The customer can check status of their application on our website or by calling the contact center. Once mailed, the tracking number can be acquired on our website or by phone. The customer may receive a letter from the agency because additional documentation is needed. Processing is paused and the customer has 90 days to comply with the request. Sometimes the customer will decide to upgrade to expedited service and this must be done by phone.</p> | <p>The passport is delivered, by traceable means, to the mailing address provided on the application.</p> | <p>Documents are returned via first class (not traceable) mail</p> |
| <p>Pain Points</p> <p>Describe the highest priority problems to solve</p> | <p>Sometimes customers don't understand the information request letter or don't know how to comply. If necessary, we arrange for agency to contact them to explain. When a customer checks the status of their application, the update is often not as specific as they would like it to be as it relates to where exactly in the process it is at that time.</p> | <p>Customers are sometimes concerned because they did not receive their evidence documents along with their passport. We explain that they will be sent in a separate envelope about two weeks later. This is also stated on a flyer that accompanies the passport.</p> | <p>In the event the documents do not arrive, they are not traceable.</p> |

Where could we improve?

Steps →

Customer Steps

Name and describe the main steps that a person takes to use the service, left to right, start to finish.

Service System

Describe the channels, roles, and tools from your agency or partners.

Pain Points

Describe the highest priority problems to solve

| | 1: Information Gathering | 2: Preparing Application | 3: Submitting Application |
|-----------------------|--|--|---|
| Customer Steps | Sometimes expedited processing is not fast enough. A customer may have an urgent need for a passport because they accidentally let it expire, it has insufficient validity to meet requirements of the country they are visiting, they don't have enough empty visa pages, they had a recent name change, they have a life/death emergency overseas. | We ask the customer to complete the application before their appointment. We make very clear that the customer must bring proof that they are traveling within 14 days of the appointment. | Customer must appear in person at the regional passport agency for their scheduled appointment. In the event the agency is closed and the customer's situation compels them to travel before it opens, we will connect them with the After-hours Duty Officer who is available on-call [see Customer Success Story] |
| Service System | <p>If accessing information on travel.state.gov, there is guidance for those who <i>Need a Passport in a Hurry</i>. Customers with urgent travel often prefer to talk to someone.</p> <p>The customer will need to make an appointment at one of our regional agencies. The appointment cannot be more than 14 days before the date of travel. The customer can make the appointment online or with one of our contact center representatives.</p> | <p>If there is any concern that their evidence documents are sufficient, we encourage the customer to bring all available evidence documents.</p> <p>Two days before their appointment, the customer will receive a robocall to remind them of their upcoming appointment.</p> | <p>At the time of the appointment, the customer is told when the passport will be ready. Once issued, the passport will be mailed overnight delivery or held for will call, depending on the customer's date of travel.</p> <p>Some agencies accept applications from expediting companies who handdeliver them on behalf of their customers.</p> |
| Pain Points | Customers are usually extremely anxious about their situation until they know what we can do for them. They deal with a degree of uncertainty until the passport is issued. | We do not offer passport photo services onsite so the customer must get a passport photo taken before their appointment. Note: We are currently piloting taking passport photos onsite at a few passport agencies. | Some customers live far from a passport agency and may drive hours or fly to get there. Sometimes there are no appointments available. Agencies try to accommodate customers who walk-in without an appointment if they have proof that they are traveling within 3 business days. |

What will we do?

Purpose

*Why did your agency undertake this project?
What does it hope to achieve, in specific performance indicators, if possible.*

4% of 2019 American Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey respondents complained about the service they received. 17% of them stated that their complaint was not resolved to their satisfaction.

Desired future state?

To develop all employees and service partners to be customer-centric for the purpose of improving the customer experience and increasing customer satisfaction, trust, and advocacy. To foster an environment where employees at all levels of the organization are empowered to contribute to improving the customer experience.

Any measurable indicators and targets?
Improved ACSI survey results in this area

Approach

Describe the timeline and work plan to achieve that purpose. If this is an ongoing initiative, describe your progress.

Process, methods, and expertise?

- Increase Employee Engagement through transparency and communication about CX activities.
- Listen to employees, collect their feedback in areas where they think our programs can be improved.

Deliverables being produced?

- Employee recognition program for feedback/ideas that are implemented
- Library of CX in-person and web-based trainings for our employees and service partners that are annually updated.
- Method for collecting and sharing CX stories throughout our organization.
- Share CX Action Plan and activities with employees and service partners.

Timeline, stage gates and dates?

TBD. Before COVID our goal was Sept 2021

Deliverables being produced?

Training modules

Resources

Describe the stakeholders involved, financial and human capital dedicated to the work, and any partners contributing to the work.

Who is responsible?

Passport Services HQ

Who is contributing to the project?

Working Group with representation from passport agencies and headquarters Customer Service and Community Relations teams.

In spring 2019, we conducted a values exercise throughout the Passport network including direct-hire and contract employees. We collected feedback on what's important to our employees. This data was organized and analyzed and presented to a steering committee who synthesized it and distilled it down to 5 core values we have adopted: Our People, Effective Leadership, Collaboration, Integrity and Professionalism

What will we do?

Purpose

*Why did your agency undertake this project?
What does it hope to achieve, in specific performance indicators, if possible.*

The majority of first-time applicants apply at one of our 7600+ designated acceptance facilities. We currently collect survey data for all channels (annual ACSI, post-call, Qualtrix, focus groups, agency kiosks) but need more data on customer satisfaction of our passport acceptance facilities.

Desired future state?

We will have a method to collect customer satisfaction sentiment at all points-of-service

Any measurable indicators and targets?

We will strive for a satisfaction metric that meets and exceeds industry standards.

Approach

Describe the timeline and work plan to achieve that purpose. If this is an ongoing initiative, describe your progress.

Process, methods, and expertise?

Research to determine what solution is feasible given the large number of acceptance facilities.

Timeline, stage gates and dates?

Start time in FY 2021

Deliverables being produced?

Project charter, timeline and estimated necessary resources will begin in early FY 2021.

Resources

Describe the stakeholders involved, financial and human capital dedicated to the work, and any partners contributing to the work.

Who is responsible?

Passport Services HQ, Customer Service Division.

Who is contributing to the project?

Working Group of representatives from various AF types (USPS, clerks of court, libraries, universities) to provide input.

Estimated budget allocated to the work:

TBD

What are we proud of this year?

Service Improvement

Who is the user and what was the problem?

Sometimes a customer has a family crisis that compels them to travel overseas with little, if any, advance notice. When this happens at a time that the nearest agency is closed, the contact center or switchboard will connect the customer to the After-hours Duty Officer.

What did you build / improve? What does it do for the public or how you deliver your mission? What was the resulting impact?

We established the After-hours Duty Officer program which is staffed on an on-call basis. We have empowered certain front-line employees (even below the GS-13 level) with delegated authority to vet the situation and make decisions to open a passport agency during the weekend or after hours for U.S. citizens.

It would not be possible to take care of these customers without first developing a customer-centric attitude among employees and then by empowering those employees to make this decision.

Customers are truly astounded at the lengths we will go to in order to help them in their time of greatest need.