

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION
2014 Open Government Plan
June 2, 2014

The Federal Trade Commission has taken specific actions relating to the issuance of the Office of Management and Budget's 2009 [Open Government Directive](#) to incorporate the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration set forth in the President's January 21, 2009 [Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government](#). Following the Directive and Memorandum, the FTC presents its updated Open Government Plan.

The FTC's current Open Government page may be found here: www.ftc.gov/open.

The FTC created its 2014 Open Government Plan in collaboration with senior policy, legal, and technical leadership within the FTC as well as through conversations with key stakeholders and the general public.

New and Expanded Initiatives

A. Flagship Initiative

The FTC's flagship initiative to create a more open and transparent Agency for the public is to continue to improve its recently redesigned FTC.gov website. The site is easier to use and accessible on tablets and smart phones. Users can now sort FTC [cases](#), [early termination notices](#), [advocacy filings](#), and other documents by date, type, and more. In addition to enhanced sort and filter functionality, the revised site provides an updated [calendar of public events](#), every FTC [job opening](#), biographical information and select publications by [FTC economists](#), a place to report fraud or other consumer problems with the new and improved [Complaint Assistant](#), as well as other resources for the public. As the FTC continues to improve its redesigned website, it is working with its vendor to make its public data assets more readily available for download and use through an application programming interface (API). The development process for APIs is underway; we expect that the initial FTC APIs will be available to the public during fiscal year 2015. Further development will include expanding the amount of data available through the APIs and possibly adding additional APIs.

The databases to be made available via APIs will represent some of the most in-demand and most widely-distributed information offered by the FTC. These APIs will provide data that we believe would be of high interest and utility for prospective developers who would write applications using the APIs.

The redesigned website launched in 2013. It moved from a static page structure to a dynamic structure built in a content management system (CMS). The FTC met with the public as it worked on the new design and received input on the design through:

- Interviews;
- Card sorting to determine the optimal information architecture;
- Usability testing on new page wireframes;

- Revised wireframes based on usability test results; and
- Revisions based on post-launch feedback from staff and the public.

The site uses the principles of responsive design, which makes it much easier to use on mobile devices or other devices with varying screen sizes and means of navigation. The FTC also continues to ask the public to share their thoughts or ideas on how to improve the website through email at ftcgovweb@ftc.gov.

B. Open Data and Proactive Disclosures

The FTC is committed to improved transparency and the benefits it provides to the public. The FTC posts [consumer information](#); [business guidance](#); [economic reports analysis](#); [press releases](#); and information about [workshops](#), [events](#), [speeches](#), and a wide range of other information. The FTC also places a large volume of records relating to both its [enforcement](#) and [policy](#) mandates on its public website. This includes, among other things, public versions of [adjudicative decisions](#) and [pleadings](#), and [rulemaking](#) materials.

The FTC's FOIA Unit meets as a group biweekly to discuss recent requests. During those meetings, the Unit discusses whether requests are similar enough to be considered "Frequently Requested Records" (*i.e.*, documents requested three or more times). The FTC then posts those [Frequently Requested Records](#) and documents relating to [Hot Topics](#) on its online FOIA reading room. Recently, the FOIA Office posted frequently requested records, such as complaints relating to health insurance scams and documents relating to Herbalife and Google, as well as hot topics such as the Do-Not-Call and Consumer Sentinel complaint databases, and other matters that have a significant public interest.

The FTC works to provide easy public access to our datasets. Biannually, individuals across the Bureaus and Offices meet to identify whether new datasets have been created that should be posted or whether an existing dataset not previously identified for posting should be posted. The FTC updates existing database information on a quarterly basis and if new datasets have been identified for posting, those datasets are also loaded onto our website. In addition to meeting with key stakeholders as to what data they would like to see posted on the FTC website, the FTC also has an [email](#) address for the public to provide us with comments and suggestions relating to our datasets. That email is checked on a weekly basis. These practices help the FTC build on our past successes to ensure greater openness and transparency in the coming years.

Currently, the FTC's [datasets](#) are populated with information from Bureau of Competition and Bureau of Consumer Protection matters. These datasets consist of non-merger enforcement actions, merger enforcement actions, and civil penalties action from fiscal year 1996 to fiscal year 2013. Other posted datasets include information on merger filings received on a monthly basis under the Hart-Scott-Rodino Antitrust Improvement Act, fiscal year data on second requests issued as well as data on requests for early terminations and the outcome of those requests. In addition, the FTC maintains the Consumer Sentinel Network. It is a secure online database holding millions of consumer complaints of alleged illegal business conduct concerning issues such as identify theft; Do-Not-Call Registry violations; and financial, telemarketing, business opportunity, and health care scams. Consumer Sentinel Network [datasets](#), ranging from

2008 to 2012, are available to the public in a spreadsheet format. These datasets consist of the Do-Not-Call Registry and product service codes for the Consumer Sentinel Network.

C. Privacy

The FTC prepares and submits all required and relevant privacy compliance reports. The FTC's Office of Inspector General posts its summary Federal Information Security Management Act Reports online. *See, e.g.,* [FISMA 2013 Summary Report](#). In addition, all of the FISMA components — Office of the Chief Information Officer, Inspector General, and Senior Agency Official for Privacy — as well as the additional privacy reports listed below, are reported into Cyberscope annually in compliance with FISMA requirements, and become a single FISMA report. The FTC does not currently prepare or submit either Computer Matching or Data Mining Reports because the FTC does not engage in activities that would require the filing of those reports. In fiscal year 2013, as required by OMB Memorandum M-14-04, the FTC submitted the following privacy reports to OMB:

- Fiscal Year 2013 Annual FISMA Report — Senior Agency Official for Privacy section (summary response to Cyberscope privacy-related questions);
- Description of FTC's privacy training for employees and contractors;
- Breach notification policy;
- Progress update on eliminating unnecessary use of Social Security Numbers; and
- Progress update on the review and reduction of holdings of personally identifiable information.

After OMB acceptance of the FTC report, the above privacy-related reports were provided, on a non-public basis, to:

- Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs (Chairman and Ranking Member);
- Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation (Chairman and Ranking Member);
- House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Chairman and Ranking Member);
- House Committee on Science, Space and Technology (Chairman and Ranking Member); and
- Comptroller General of the United States, General Accountability Office.

This list will also be submitted to privacy-oir@omb.eop.gov.

D. Whistleblower Protection

The FTC's [Office of Inspector General](#) provides Whistleblower Protection guidance and information on its web page. This describes and defines protections for whistleblowers, retaliation, protected disclosures, where whistleblower complaints should be made, and provides

a link to the Office of Special Counsel's (OSC) [website](#). The FTC has met the requirements of OSC's 2302(c) Certification Program.

The FTC posts Informational Posters at the elevators and throughout its buildings. The posters address Whistleblower protections, retaliation, and Prohibited Personnel Practices, respectively. For its new employees, the FTC's onboarding orientation materials include information about Prohibited Personnel Policies, the Merit System Principles, and the rights of employees under the Whistleblower Protection Act.

No Fear Act Training is mandatory for all current employees and managers. This course covers the rights and remedies available to federal employees under both Antidiscrimination Laws and Whistleblower Protection Laws. New employees are required to take the training in their first 90 days at the FTC and all employees must take the training every two years.

E. Websites

The FTC's Digital Government Strategy can be found at <http://www.ftc.gov/digitalstrategy>.

The FTC began using the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) to measure how satisfied visitors are with our websites. Over 100 federal agencies use this survey to measure customer satisfaction. The FTC currently offers surveys on three of its websites: ftc.gov, ftccomplaintassistant.gov, and OnGuardOnline.gov. (OnGuardOnline.gov is the federal government's website to help consumers be safe, secure, and responsible online. The FTC manages the site.) The ACSI survey measures users' overall satisfaction with the site and allows us to get specific feedback about key elements such as navigation, look and feel, and content. In addition to the standard questions to gauge website satisfaction, FTC's survey includes the following open-ended custom questions about usability and user experience:

- Please specify what you were trying to accomplish during your visit to ftc.gov.
- Please specify how you looked for information on the site today.
- Please specify your other navigation difficulty.
- Please specify the section of the site you primarily visited today.
- If you could make one improvement to ftc.gov, what would it be?

The FTC's complaint assistant tool and consumer education materials consistently score above the government benchmark. In fiscal year 2013, OnGuardOnline.gov maintained an overall customer satisfaction score of 80, well above the benchmark score for government websites (73). In addition, 71% of respondents said the site helped them do what they wanted and 60% said they learned something on the site that would change their online behavior in the future. This is a strong indication that the site is an effective and helpful tool for consumers. The current overall ACSI score for the FTC's website is 72.

In the near future, we expect to conduct additional usability testing. The results may indicate a need for refinement or revision of the information architecture or the layout of certain pages. Also, we expect that FTC staff will devote additional time and attention to evaluating results of the ACSI survey, particularly the open-ended questions.

Top pages accessed by the public include:

- Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (full text)
- Fair Credit Reporting Act (full text)
- Contact the Federal Trade Commission
- Press Releases
- I Would Like to... Submit a Consumer Complaint to the FTC
- Media Resources: Protecting Consumer Privacy
- National Do Not Call Registry
- About the FTC
- Bureau of Consumer Protection home
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- Cases and Proceedings
- I Would Like to... Get a Free Copy of My Credit Report
- Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule ("COPPA") (full text)
- FTC Privacy Policy
- What We Do
- Enforcement
- Recent FTC Cases Resulting in Refunds
- I Would Like to... List a Number on the National Do Not Call Registry
- Tips & Advice

Thirteen of these items are available directly from the home page with only one click; twelve of these items are available from every page on the site with only one click.

The FTC also includes five “top tasks” within the “I Would Like To...” menu in the primary navigation. This makes those tasks available from everywhere in the site with only one click. The two most-requested items (Report a Consumer Complaint to the FTC and Access the Do Not Call Registry) from FTC are also placed on the homepage as prominently placed and labeled buttons.

The FTC currently uses Google Analytics to track and analyze traffic to our websites. The data we collect through Google Analytics helps us to understand which FTC resources are most popular and to evaluate the effect of our outreach campaigns. By tracking visitor trends over time, we can measure the impact of design and content changes, and assess the value of different marketing strategies.

Each year, the FTC distributes millions of its consumer and business publications for free to people and organizations (and Congressional offices, too) that request them. We track the number of publications distributed, which helps us to identify the types of information that are of most interest to consumers.

In fiscal year 2013, there were over 43.6 million consumer protection messages accessed – more than 30.5 million were accessed online, more than 1.3 million were accessed via video, and over

11.8 million were print publications distributed by the FTC. Of the messages accessed, free credit report information is the most popular.

Ongoing Initiatives.

A. Participation in Government-wide Transparency Initiatives:

1. The FTC does not participate in Grants.Gov because we do not award grants.
2. The FTC does not award grants or federal domestic assistance and thus does not fully participate in CDFA.gov. The FTC does, however, offer assistance to the general public for “Advisory Services and Counseling” and “Investigation of Complaints.”
3. Contractors conducting business with the FTC are registered in [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) prior to contract award. Members of the public can search SAM.gov to learn more about active and inactive vendors who have done business with the government, or who are preparing to do business with the government, including the FTC. Currently, the FTC has issued one permanent SAM.gov waiver.
4. Contracts awarded at the FTC are reported via the Federal Procurement Data System-Next Generation (FPDS-NG) with the appropriate contract values. The system data is cross-referenced with SAM.gov and DUNS information for verification. Data in FSRS is made available to the public via a single, searchable website: USAspending.gov.
5. IT Dashboard: The FTC is not among the agencies required to submit data from any 53s or 300s for the public IT Dashboard.
6. eRulemaking: The FTC participates in the eRulemaking initiative, as part of eGov, through its interagency agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency, the lead partner in the initiative. FTC Federal Register notices seeking public comment on proposed rules and Commission consent agreements appear on www.regulations.gov, and the public can submit comments through that site. Most public comments in FTC proceedings are submitted electronically, providing the public a user-friendly way of participating in these proceedings. Most commenters on FTC proceedings submit comments through web-based forms maintained by a Commission vendor, rather than through www.regulations.gov. The link to the comment form is included in the agency’s Federal Register notices, on all the www.regulations.gov postings of those notices, and on the agency’s website. The agency posts the comments on www.ftc.gov for public access. While FTC does not post comments on the eRulemaking site, the agency is currently exploring expanded use of www.regulations.gov and its non-public facing “back-end,” the Federal Docket Management System.

7. The FTC maintains and frequently updates its webpage dedicated to the [datasets](#) it has made public. When new FTC datasets are uploaded on the FTC site, we also post data on [Data.gov](#).
8. Although the FTC has a [Recovery Act](#) page, the FTC did not receive or disburse funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and thus is not required to submit data to [Recovery.gov](#).
9. The FTC's Open Government page requests the public to give us their thoughts on how we can better develop our Open Government Plan, prioritize information, and improve the availability and quality of information. We ask the community to provide feedback to opengov@ftc.gov.

In addition to the government-wide transparency initiatives listed above, the FTC creatively uses private and public partnerships to reach the public, particularly underserved audiences who may not seek information directly from or provide information to the government. For example, in both headquarters and every regional office, FTC staff form and maintain relationships with advocates who provide free or low-cost legal services to low-income communities. This is one way the agency learns about the consumer protection issues low-income communities experience. The FTC also convenes regional conferences with legal services and law enforcement partners to explore consumer protection issues that are of interest. As a result of these partnerships, and in response to feedback from legal services providers, the FTC created new consumer education materials for people with low literacy skills and those who speak English as a second language. For those for whom reading is difficult, text reinforcement with sound and pictures is essential. Therefore, these webpages are designed with a special focus on the use of simple meaningful graphics and short videos, and the pages contain a feature that, at a click of a button, reads the web text aloud.

The FTC often convenes public conferences or workshops to examine various consumer protection and competition issues. These workshops bring together experts and other knowledgeable parties, including representatives from industry, consumer advocacy groups, academia, and government. The workshops are open to the public and are webcast so that individuals from across the country can view the proceedings. During 2013, the agency hosted a series of consumer protection events dealing with various aspects of technology. For example, in November 2013, the FTC hosted a workshop to explore the consumer privacy and security issues associated with the [Internet of Things](#) — the growing connectivity between everyday devices and people. Earlier this year, the Commission held a workshop to explore competition issues involving [biologic medicines](#), which target difficult-to-treat diseases, such as cancer and multiple sclerosis.

The Commission regularly reviews all of its rules and guides to ensure their relevance in the marketplace, and public participation in these reviews is critical. The FTC begins each review by seeking public comment on the rules and guides. The requests are posted on the FTC's website and publicized through its blogs and newsletters. The public can use www.regulations.gov to file comments electronically with the Commission. Depending on the nature of the review, the FTC also may convene a public meeting to more closely examine certain issues and obtain greater public input. For example, in March 2014, the FTC held a public roundtable to discuss proposed

amendments to its [Care Labeling Rule](#). The roundtable was webcast, and the agency invited viewers to submit questions to moderators online. FTC staff live tweeted the event and accepted questions via Twitter, Facebook, and email. The comment period remained open after the event so that the public could respond to issues raised by the roundtable participants.

B. Public Notice

The Commission will continue to publish timely news releases to the redesigned [FTC.gov](#) website to inform the public about relevant agency news, resources, and upcoming events including press conferences, press call-ins, proposed and final rulemakings, public comment periods, and workshops. News will initially post to the FTC homepage, and reside indefinitely on the [FTC's news pages](#). To highlight bigger events and news, the FTC may use a banner across the top of its website, or use a slider on the homepage slide show that links to embedded site content for more information. Furthermore, the FTC hosts a public calendar on its website to promote upcoming events including workshops, speeches, hearings, and Commission meetings.

As part of its webpage redesign, the Commission will move from a static, weekly calendar to a more interactive monthly calendar with other new features. Content on [FTC.gov](#), including upcoming events, will be searchable through the search function on the website, and by a series of topic tags, which are hyperlinked throughout the website to make relevant content easily accessible. Upcoming events will appear on the Commission's homepage, and all events will reside on the [Events Calendar](#) indefinitely.

To supplement news releases, FTC staff uses social media to promote upcoming events, and engage the public in an open and transparent manner. All official social media accounts are approved and monitored by the agency's Social Media Task Force. Commission staff actively blogs for a variety of audiences to provide simple, plain language information across multiple topics including [general consumer protection](#), [competition](#), [technology](#), [computer security](#), [business education](#), [military consumer protection](#), [scam alerts](#), and [National Consumer Protection Day](#).

Users can [subscribe to FTC press releases, blogs, and newsletters](#) via email. This is a service provided at no cost to users. For blogs, users can also subscribe to free RSS feeds.

The [FTC](#) will use [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [reddit](#), and other [social networking sites](#) to share [FTC](#) news and resources, promote upcoming events, and more. The Commission maintains official accounts on [Twitter](#) in English and Spanish; and each of the Commissioners, as well as the Chief Technologist, maintains their own individual [Twitter](#) accounts. When the [FTC](#) hosts an interactive [Twitter](#) chat or live-tweets a workshop, the agency may publish a press release online, post the upcoming event to its [Events Calendar](#), and/or share the information via email and other official social media channels. When the agency participates or hosts interactive events, staff creates a [chat](#) or [workshop](#) transcript for historical reference. This also applies for chats on other official agency sites such as [Facebook](#) or [reddit](#).

When feasible, the [FTC](#) will live webcast press conferences and workshops from its offices in Washington, D.C. Archives and transcripts of webcasts will be posted to [FTC.gov/videos](#) for at

least three years. The FTC will provide webcast links to users via a press releases, email notices, and/or via official agency social media channels. During live events, the FTC may take questions from the public via email, Facebook, and Twitter. The agency may also encourage the public to file general comments on proposed changes to Rules, upcoming events, and more via public comment periods, and post the information on the agency's website.

In addition to enhancing the overall look and feel of the FTC website, staff will continue to evaluate content throughout the site on a rolling basis to ensure content is fresh and current for maximum transparency.

C. Records Management

FTC has adopted records management policies and procedures to implement the requirements of the Federal Records Act and National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) regulations. The [Records and Filings Office](#) (RFO) webpage provides an explanation of its work.

The agency provides training and guidance to Commission personnel on identifying federal records and on retention and disposition under the agency's comprehensive retention schedule approved by NARA in 2012. The agency uses a comprehensive "big bucket" retention schedule that groups agency records by business function. FTC does not have any unscheduled records. Annual training, required for all staff and all contractors with network access, conducted in connection with FTC's "Privacy Week" focuses on document management, protecting confidential information, federal records management, and privacy and data security. In 2013, in preparation for a move of over half the agency's staff to a new location, the RFO provided additional records management training to divisions and offices throughout the agency. All records for FTC case matters are transferred to RFO for retention, disposition, or permanent transfer to NARA.

FTC is working to meet the requirements of the November 28, 2011 Presidential Memorandum on Managing Government Records and the accompanying August 24, 2012 OMB/NARA Managing Government Records Directive (the Directive). The Directive requires that agencies transition to electronic recordkeeping to the fullest extent possible. This is an important part of meeting open government goals.

FTC's comprehensive retention schedule approved in 2012 is media neutral and thus gives the FTC the legal authority to maintain its federal records in electronic format. Previous schedules required the FTC maintain its federal records in paper format. The transition to maintaining agency records in electronic format is well underway. In 2013, RFO issued guidance to agency staff that federal records, including email, could be stored on shared drives as part of the matter file. Use of shared drives to store records is consistent with the agency's business process and with NARA Bulletin 2012-02 (December 6, 2011), on Guidance on Managing Content on Shared Drives.

As part of the transition to maintaining agency records in electronic format, the FTC has used its Electronic Recordkeeping Certification Review (ERCR) process to evaluate recordkeeping requirements for existing and new systems. RFO has certified two systems to house permanent electronic records — the agency's Matter Management System and its E-Filing system used by

the parties, the Office of the Administrative Law Judges, and RFO for FTC administrative litigation.

FTC also plans to transition to the use of an Enterprise Content Management System (ECMS) that staff will use to draft, collaborate on, finalize, and store work. FTC plans to utilize the ECMS to maintain agency records in electronic format for the required retention period and then to transfer permanent agency records to NARA. As part of FTC's overall IT modernization strategy, the agency anticipates defining its strategy for an ECMS in the latter part of fiscal year 2014 and in fiscal year 2015. In preparation to manage agency records in electronic format through an ECMS, RFO is working with agency stakeholders to develop information governance for FTC records. In connection with the move of staff and in anticipation of moving to use of an ECMS, in 2013, the FTC arranged for a multi-year digitization contract.

The FTC is also exploring expanded use of cloud computing as an integral part of FTC's overall IT modernization strategy as set forth in its IT Strategic Plan and Roadmap. Consistent with the interagency Federal Cloud Compliance Committee's guidance in "Creating Effective Cloud Computing Contracts for the Federal Government," planning is already underway to ensure that records and information management requirements are an integral part of any solicitation and contract for cloud services.

In further compliance with the Directive's requirements, FTC has provided NARA with a list of the agency's permanent federal records over 30 years old. Transfer of old permanent records to NARA will support the transition to e-recordkeeping. Also in compliance with the Directive, FTC reported to NARA on any unscheduled federal records (paper or electronic), of which it has none.

D. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests.

The FTC does not have a significant backlog of outstanding FOIA requests because the Agency continues to close the vast majority of its requests promptly within the statutory time period. At the end of fiscal year 2013, the FTC had only three overdue requests. Contributing to the shorter rapid response time has been the ability of FOIA Officers to correspond with requesters via e-mail or telephone. Since 2001, individuals have been able to file requests and receive status updates by sending an e-mail to FOIA@ftc.gov or via an online request [form](#). Increasingly the FTC uses e-mail communications with requesters and, barring prohibitive file sizes, requesters can ask for their responses to be sent via e-mail. The FTC provides [instructions](#) on the methods for filing a FOIA request.

The FTC FOIA Unit operates in an electronic environment. We process all FOIA requests from receipt of the initial request through the final decision electronically using FOIAXpress, an internal server-based application for electronic processing and tracking of FOIA requests. This software allows the FTC to electronically store, retrieve, redact, and print documents for accurate and appropriate conveyance to FOIA requesters. FOIAXpress has the capability to track and report workflow, and compute statistics, as well as generate fee calculations and invoices. Upon receipt of a FOIA request, the FOIA Unit scans or downloads it into FOIAXpress and begins its review process.

As part of the FTC's ongoing efforts to keep members of the public informed about the status of their pending FOIA request, a requester can track the status of their request on the FTC's public website. The FTC posts two FOIA logs on the agency's public website. The logs are updated on a monthly basis. One log lists the pending request and the second log reports closed FOIA requests.

These logs are created by FOIA Unit staff based on data from the FOIAXpress system. Currently, the FTC does not have a public tracking system in place that tracks the status of a FOIA request in real time because of security concerns. However, requesters can seek status updates by sending an e-mail to FOIA@ftc.gov, or by calling the FOIA Officer who is processing their request.

The FTC provides the public with a description of its FOIA office and [Freedom of Information Act Contacts](#). This includes information on how to contact the FOIA Public Liaison. The FTC's [FOIA Annual Reports](#) and [Chief FOIA Officer Report](#) are also publicly available.

E. Congressional Requests

The vast majority of Congressional requests for information are made by phone or email. The [Office of Congressional Relations](#), (OCR) in conjunction with relevant Bureaus or Offices at the FTC, generally responds to these within one or two days. When the FTC receives a letter from a Member of Congress requesting information on his or her own behalf or on behalf of a constituent, the FTC has a process in place to respond in writing within 30 days, absent extenuating circumstances. All letters are logged, assigned, and tracked by the Office of the Secretary and distributed to appropriate agency staff for a response. Once the response is completed and approved by the relevant managers, it is signed by either the Chair or the Secretary. OCR, again in coordination with the Office of the Secretary, is responsible for transmitting the completed response to the Congressional requester.

F. Declassification

The FTC does not maintain any classification or de-classification program for its information.

G. Participation and Collaboration

The FTC has engaged in innovative methods to open its forum to obtain ideas from, and to increase participation and collaboration with, those in the private sector, non-profit, and academic communities. Specifically, in fiscal year 2013, the agency launched its first contest on [Challenge.gov](#) to engage the public in creating a technological solution to the problem of robocalls – illegal, pre-recorded telephone messages. The FTC had observed a rise in the number of consumer complaints related to robocalls and deployed every tool at its disposal to stop the problem.

Technological advances have reduced the cost of making large numbers of illegal calls, and have made it easier to spoof caller ID information, thus making it harder for consumers and law enforcement to identify the source of the calls. In addition to taking aggressive law enforcement

actions to stop robocalls, the FTC hosted a Robocall Summit that brought together stakeholders to explore innovations designed to trace robocalls, prevent wrongdoers from faking caller ID data, and stop unwanted calls. At the conclusion of the Summit, the FTC announced the Robocall Challenge.

The FTC created the challenge because it could not identify a currently available commercial product or service that would be able to solve the problem, nor could the FTC predict what form the solution would take. The FTC's goal was to attract a diverse array of individuals to tackle this problem — including, for example, students and retired telecommunications engineers — without predetermining their approaches. A prize competition created incentives for multiple innovators in the private sector to work on solutions they can offer directly to consumers. The FTC took a number of steps to publicize the challenge. The initial announcement took place at the Robocall Summit, which had attracted many of the relevant stakeholders, who either attended in person, participated via Webcast, or followed the agency's live-tweeting of the event. The FTC also did outreach about the challenge, resulting in significant media coverage, including by all four major TV networks. The agency hosted social media "chats" about the challenge on Twitter and Facebook, conducted broad outreach via relevant email listserves, and made in-person visits to several prominent institutions to spread the word to academics, students, and entrepreneurs with the necessary expertise.

The contest provided a forum for citizens to voice their ideas, concerns, and solutions. Over 3,544 people registered for the challenge at robocall.challenge.gov, and collectively, they started 129 discussion threads and made 798 eligible submissions. Out of the nearly 800 eligible submissions, two winners tied for the \$50,000 prize for Best Overall Solution to block illegal robocalls. One of the winners was able to make his product "Nomorobo" available to consumers on September 30, 2013, less than six months after the challenge announcement. The winner reports that his product has blocked over 2 million robocalls.

In addition to technical proposals such as those put forth by the winners, the challenge also stimulated the communication of practical tips from consumers about what they do to reduce robocalls. The General Services Administration helped us create a video to share some of consumers' most helpful "tips and tricks." The FTC also received insightful long-term proposals about potential policy, regulatory, and technical changes. The agency created an opportunity for challenge participants to file a public version of their submissions so that these thoughtful entries could contribute to the ongoing discussion about fighting illegal calls.

The Robocall Challenge and the broad attention to potential solutions has spurred international collaboration among technical experts, law enforcement, regulators, and industry to address illegal calls and the related problem of fraudulent caller ID information. Currently, the Internet Engineering Taskforce, the Messaging, Malware and Mobile Anti-Abuse Working Group, and the London Action Plan International Do Not Call Forum are in the process of forming new working groups to address these thorny issues.

In addition to the Challenge, the FTC reaches out to the public through various pages as described above.