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GSA envisions 18F will be the new hub of digital innovation



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The Presidential Innovations Fellows have a new home, and the General Services Administration is building on federal Chief Technology Officer Todd Park's vision for the government to act as a lean start-up.

GSA Administrator Dan Tangherlini today announced the creation of [18F](https://18f.gsa.gov/#team) (<https://18f.gsa.gov/#team>), a digital government program with the goal of accelerating innovation among agencies. The name 18F refers to GSA headquarters building, which is located on 18th and F streets in Washington.

"The mission of 18F is to make the government's digital services simple, effective, and easier to use for the American people," Tangherlini said in a release. "This service delivery program will make GSA the home of the government's digital incubator. By using lessons from our nation's top technology startups, these public service innovators will be able to provide cutting-edge support for our federal partners that reduces cost and improves service."

18F brings together 15 public and private sector digital technology experts, including designers, developers and product specialists, to work with agencies to rapidly deploy tools. A GSA official, who requested to speak on anonymity, said 11 of the 15 experts are former Presidential Innovation Fellows.

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The official said the employees come with a range of skills, some as front end or back end developers, while others focus on design and usability while others manage teams of designers and developers.

A second GSA official said 18F will work as a cost recovery or fee-for-service model where agencies will reimburse the office for its work.

The new program also will house the Presidential Innovation Fellows Program, which the White House rolled out (<http://www.federalnewsradio.com/245/2877084/White-House-looking-for-a-few-bad-asses-to-kick-start-5-projects>) as part of the Digital Government Strategy in May 2012. The fellows worked on five programs initially and expanded over the last two years.

The administration recently announced round three of fellows (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/innovationfellows>) with applications due by April 7. The fellows would address projects around three areas:

- Creating a digital one-stop shop at the Veterans Affairs Department to bring together all the veteran benefit programs into a single place.
- Focusing on eight Data Innovation projects to make federal data more accessible and easier to use, specifically around information from the Census Bureau, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NASA, IRS and the Interior, Labor, Health and Human Services and Energy departments.
- Working on five crowdsourcing projects to try to address different challenges across the departments of State and Energy and NASA, National Archives and Records Administration and the Patent and Trademark Office.

Last summer, the administration chose 43 fellows (<http://www.federalnewsradio.com/239/3370063/Innovation-Fellows-combine-new-old-technologies>) as part of the second round to work on nine different programs

GSA's 18F program will build on those successes, creating a place for these approaches to live.

“First and foremost, by being focused on our users. We provide effective user-centered services focused on the interaction between government and the public it serves. At 18F, we want to build the 21st century government you deserve,” GSA wrote in a blog on a TUMBLR site (<http://18fblog.tumblr.com/>) for 18F. “Agencies should see 18F as a new way to procure, build and

deliver innovative technology, digital services, and public-facing applications. We operate using three models: for you, with you, or by you. We can build your solution for you; work with your team and provide additional expertise or core capacity; or consult on how to build or buy user-centric interfaces most effectively. 18F's team of experts is here to help. After all, we all share the same goal of delivering incredible, easy-to-use digital services for the people and businesses we serve.”

The blog stated 18F favors agile development based on customer feedback and analytics.

The first GSA official said 18F will announce a list of its initial projects in the coming months.

Tangherlini offered a preview of a potential program at the recent Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs [hearing \(http://www.federalnewsradio.com/513/3581192/OMBs-Cobert-says-new-performance-goals-to-drive-tangible-outcomes\)](http://www.federalnewsradio.com/513/3581192/OMBs-Cobert-says-new-performance-goals-to-drive-tangible-outcomes) on federal government management.

Tangherlini said FBOpen, which is an open source search tool that would make it easier for small businesses and less traditional federal contractors to find and bid on government opportunities.

18F is part of the Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies (OSCIT) and complementary to the Digital Services Innovation (DSI) Center launched as part of the Digital Government Strategy.

The second official said the DSI is focused on different goals than 18F, where the center provides agencies with no-cost tools and help, 18F is providing more traditional business-like services.

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