

the WHITE HOUSE



Using Behavioral Science Insights to Make Government More Effective, Simpler, and More People-Friend

FEBRUARY 9, 2015 AT 12:19 PM ET BY MAYA SHANKAR



Summary: This month marks one full year since the launch of the first-ever Social and Behavioral Sciences Team (SBST), which was created in response to the President's call to make government programs more effective and efficient. SBST had a successful first year, launching a wide variety of evidence-based pilots. To mark the one-year anniversary of SBST, the team met with President Obama last Friday.

"It makes sense for us to be able to redesign government so that it can deliver on the functions that the American people are looking for. We should all want a government that's smarter, quicker, and more responsive to the needs of the American people."

-President Obama, July 8, 2013

This month marks one full year since the launch of the first-ever Social and Behavioral Sciences Team (SBST), which was created in response to the President's call to make government programs more effective and efficient. SBST comprises leading experts who have been recruited into government to harness behavioral science insights to help Federal government programs better serve the nation while saving taxpayer dollars.



Members of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Team visit the Oval Office to brief the President on their work.

SBST had a successful first year, launching a wide variety of evidence-based pilots with objectives ranging from connecting veterans with employment and educational counseling benefits to [helping struggling student borrowers understand their loan repayment options](#).

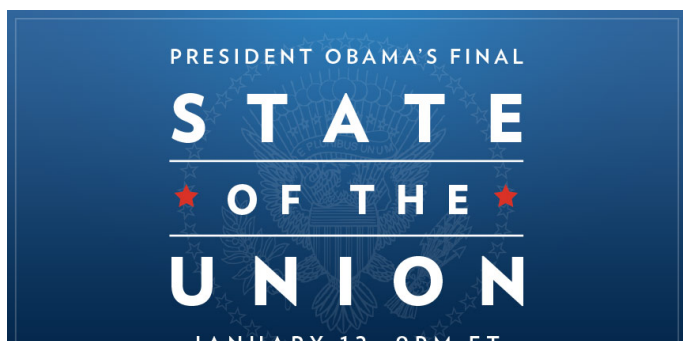
In one recent pilot, SBST collaborated with the Department of Defense (DOD) to help members of the Armed Forces continue contributions to their Roth Thrift Savings Plans. Due to a change in the military pay system in January 2015, nearly 140,000 members needed to re-enroll in their plans online, or else their contributions would be suspended indefinitely. SBST worked with DOD to redesign their planned communications to better serve our service members, by making the language clear and concise, charting out clear action steps for service members to take, and personalizing the emails.

Results from the first week of the pilot indicated that the redesigned email led 22% more service members - 3,770 individuals - to re-enroll compared to the original message. Since the redesigned email was more effective at prompting re-enrollment after just one week, DOD sent a version of the redesigned email to the entire population in follow-up messages, demonstrating the rapid scalability of insights from these types of low-cost pilots.

The [President's FY 2016 Budget](#), which was announced earlier this week, supports funds for an expansion of SBST. To mark the one-year anniversary of SBST, the team met with President Obama last Friday.

We would love to hear your ideas for other issues SBST could address to help the government better serve the American people. Also, let us know if you're interested in joining the effort. Send us your thoughts at sbst@gsa.gov.

Maya Shankar is Senior Advisor for Social and Behavioral Sciences at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.



THE FINAL STATE OF THE UNION

Watch President Obama's final State of the Union address.



THE SUPREME COURT

Read what the President is looking for in his next Supreme Court nominee.



FIND YOUR PARK

Take a look at America's three newest national monuments.



HOME

BRIEFING ROOM

ISSUES

THE ADMINISTRATION

PARTICIPATE

1600 PENN

[En Español](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Copyright Information](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[USA.gov](#)