

Semiannual Report to the Congress FAQs

What is it?

The *Semiannual Report to the Congress* (“SAR”) is a report mandated by the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended. It formally summarizes major Office of Inspector General (“OIG”) activity for the reporting period covered by each document. Preparation of the document follows the pattern of the Federal Government fiscal year (October to September), with reports published in May (covering October 1st through March 31st activities) and November (covering April 1st through September 30th activities).

The SAR provides an official account and report to the Congress on OIG’s oversight of federal government activities. The General Services Administration (“GSA”) OIG reports on how it has approached various “management challenges” within the GSA, as well as how the GSA OIG has addressed its mandate to “promote and protect integrity” of the GSA’s financial statements, programs, and operations, and that the taxpayers’ interests are protected.

Who gets it?

The SAR is submitted by the Inspector General (“IG”) 30 days after the end of each reporting period to the GSA Administrator, so that the GSA may take appropriate corrective actions. The Administrator has a 30-day period to review and make any comments on the SAR. By the end of May or November, the Administrator must convey the SAR and any comments to both the President of the U.S. Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The GSA OIG also distributes copies of the SAR to Members of Congress, Congressional staffers, other IGs, and interested parties, as well as to all GSA OIG components. The SAR is also posted on the OIG’s website.

When do they get it?

Deadlines established for preparation and submittal of the SAR are also established in legislation and may not be changed. The SAR must be submitted twice a year to the Congress for the period covered by the immediately preceding six months (e.g., the October – March SAR is prepared in April and submitted to Congress in May, and the April – September SAR is prepared in October and submitted to Congress in November.) The drafts of the SAR, approved by the IG and all heads of the OIG functional units, must be submitted to the GSA Administrator by April 30th and October 31st.

Who works on preparing the SAR?

Each component of the GSA IG plays an important role in preparing the SAR. Major sections of the document are written by the Office of Audits (this office generates much of the information for the “Management Challenges” section), the Office of Counsel to the Inspector General and the Office of Investigations (these offices generate much of the information for the “Promoting and Protecting Integrity” section).

Tables and appendices in the document are also part of the input from each of the OIG components. The GSA Chief Financial Officer and the Agency’s Office of Audit Resolution provide additional information that is included in the SAR.

When does the OIG work on preparing the SAR?

Work usually starts with a series of emails a month or two prior to the end of the reporting period to alert OIG component offices that the SAR cycle is beginning again. Planning meetings are scheduled to decide on major focuses for the document, what to include or exclude, what various emphases are going to be, and so forth. Components start submitting their input for the SAR by about a week following the end of each reporting period – either early October (for the March – September SAR) or early April (for the October – March SAR).

During April and October, the SAR is compiled, edited, checked for accuracy (the “referencing” process), formatted, reviewed for approvals from the components, finalized, and submitted to the printer.

Who pulls this all together?

The Office of Communications and Congressional Affairs (JX) is the coordinating unit for the process of compiling, editing, preparing, and submitting the SAR. Calls must be issued for a wide range of information and drafts of narrative portions from each of the OIG functional units, as well as input from the GSA’s Chief Financial Officer, and review by an independent referencer. This process involves coordinating many interconnected, simultaneous tasks, hosting interim and OIG-wide roundtable meetings, and usually takes two to three months to complete, each time a SAR is produced.

JX also coordinates preparation of the final version of the SAR, and interfaces with other offices within the GSA to produce the published document. After submittal of the SAR copies to the Administrator, the document is also sent in electronic, printed, and folio formats to the printer. Printing the SAR takes about three weeks, so that finished copies of the document are usually returned from the printer near Memorial Day or Thanksgiving depending on which reporting period is involved. Following receipt of the finished copies, JX also coordinates a large mailing of the document mainly in pdf format with a few printed hard copies to about 150 recipients.

For any other questions, please contact:

Dave Farley
(202) 219-1062
email: david.farley@gsaig.gov

Jen Riedinger
(202) 501-4634
email: jennifer.riedinger@gsaig.gov

Sarah Breen
(202) 219-1351
email: sarah.breen@gsaig.gov