



Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board
1717 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 700
Washington DC 20006-4614

November 5, 2010 Minutes

A meeting of the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board was held in Washington, D.C. on Friday, November 5, 2010, at 1:30 p.m. and continued until 2:25 p.m.

ATTENDEES

Board Members:

Earl E. Devaney, Chairman, Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board
Richard L. Skinner, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Phyllis K. Fong, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Todd J. Zinser, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Commerce
Gordon S. Heddell, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Defense
Kathleen S. Tighe, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education
Gregory H. Friedman, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Energy
Glenn A. Fine, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Justice
Eric M. Thorson, Inspector General, U.S. Department of the Treasury
J. Russell George, Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration
Mary Kendall, Acting Inspector General, U.S. Department of the Interior

Board Staff:

H. Glen Walker, Executive Director
Ed Pound, Director, Communications
Michael Wood, Director, Recovery.gov
John Higgins, Director, Accountability
Alan Boehm, Deputy Director, Accountability
A.J. Benavidez, Assistant Director, Accountability
Douglas Hassebrock, Assistant Director, Investigations
Ivan Flores, Paralegal
Cynthia Williams, Board Secretary

DISCUSSION

Mr. Devaney called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. By unanimous vote of the Board members present the October 8, 2010 minutes were approved.

Mr. George, Chair, Recovery.gov Committee, briefed the Board members on the most recent reporting statistics, posting updates, and the website enhancements for Recovery.gov. It was noted that the reporting period, which ended September 30, 2010 represents the 5th consecutive reporting quarter and that data posting has been completed on time for each cycle. Mr. Wood commented that the collection of the Education Jobs Fund data has been finalized and the results are scheduled to post on www.federaltransparency.gov on November 15, 2010. Mr. Devaney acknowledged the assistance of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) with obtaining the website domain name. Mr. Wood circulated screen shots of the enhanced Recovery.gov home page and noted that the upgrades to the site were based on public feedback and the best practices of the internet industry. Mr. Wood discussed the new features, which include a developer center, map gallery, featured story carousel, an enhanced job search feature, and user-focused navigation. Mr. Wood reported that the IG oversight work is now more prominently displayed on the site and that the CIGIE awards data is also available. Mr. Wood also commented that the enhancements have been well received and added that the Recovery Act continues to be the most visited page on the site.

Mr. Higgins, on behalf of Mr. Scovel who was absent, provided the members with an update of activity from the Recovery Funds Working Group Committee. The three initiatives currently underway are the production of a Grant-Fraud Audit Guide; an ARRA Suspension and Debarment Survey; and a Statistical Sample of Recovery Funded Jobs. Mr. Higgins informed the group that the Committee and OMB are in discussion regarding the questions and process for the Statistical Job Sample Audit. Mr. Higgins noted that the two were not in full agreement on the issues. Mr. Higgins noted that cumulative financial data through September 30, 2010 for IG Oversight activities reveal that IGs continue to utilize ARRA and non-ARRA appropriated funds for Recovery oversight activities. Mr. Higgins concluded his remarks by informing the members that the FY 2011 OIG Recovery Act Work Plans have been submitted to the Board and will be published on Recovery.gov shortly.

Mr. Skinner, Chair of the Accountability Committee provided an update of key committee issues. Mr. Skinner informed the group that the Committee is exploring viable ways to capture and communicate oversight efforts for Recovery Act programs not required to report under section 1512 of the Recovery Act (non-1512 programs) without placing new audit requirements on the IG community. Mr. Skinner added that the Committee is planning to report the results in March 2011. Mr. Skinner discussed the Committee's examination of ways to share Recovery Operations Center (ROC) capabilities with the IG community. Mr. Skinner discussed a phased approach beginning with a pilot project but noted that increased costs would accompany increased capabilities. The members discussed the benefits and restrictions to information sharing. Most members agreed on an incremental approach and expressed the need to move forward even if IGs opt-in at different points. Mr. Devaney added that all 29 IGs with oversight responsibility should be included in the process. Mr. Devaney asked the Accountability Committee to present a description of the Phase 1 process and a plan to conduct the pilot project with the Department of Justice OIG at the December Board meeting. Mr. Devaney noted that the ROC operations should be a value-added tool for both auditors and investigators. Mr. Fine commented that the Committee should also begin planning the future phases of the information sharing project. Mr. Skinner concurred. Mr. Fine commented on the positive outcome of the meeting with the Department of Labor (DOL). He noted that DOL has agreed to share various fraud data with the Board beginning with the new reporting month.

Mr. Devaney discussed the next steps for the ROC. He noted that beta testing will begin shortly for the ROC's electronic reporting system and added that volunteers will be solicited. Mr. Devaney and Mr. Fine discussed the official announcement merging the Financial Fraud Procurement Task Force and the National Procurement Fraud Task Force. Mr. Devaney noted that the first joint meeting occurred on November 5th and noted that there appeared to be genuine excitement about moving forward together.

Several of the members discussed the status of current ARRA whistleblower cases. Mr. Friedman commented on the willingness of the public to report Recovery Act fraud and described information on a complaint filed by a concerned citizen to his office.

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for December 3, 2010

Cynthia Williams
Secretary