

**Federal Grants Community Town Hall Meeting
December 10, 2012
White House Conference Center Truman Room**

Summary of Meeting

General Summary

- This is the second COFAR Federal Town Hall meeting; building on the input that was received from the first meeting this past August.
- Based on the feedback from that discussion, the COFAR adopted the priorities described in the PowerPoint presentation for this meeting.
- This meeting was held to review each priority, share opportunities to participate, and solicit feedback on substantive considerations the COFAR should take into account going forward in these areas.

Outreach

- Outreach for the COFAR and the Federal grants community will include the following:
 - Continued town hall meetings (at least semi-annually)
 - MAX page available at <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/0AcdJg>
 - Circulation of draft policies for input before they become final
 - Public facing webpage (forthcoming) through www.cfoc.gov
 - Additional ad hoc opportunities for collaboration as appropriate for a given initiative

COFAR Priorities (see COFAR MAX page for priorities presentation available at:

<https://max.omb.gov/community/x/0AcdJg>)

- **Grant Reform**
 - OMB expects the reform proposal to be published in the next few weeks for a 90 day comment period.
 - Upon release of the proposal, agencies can send comments directly to OMB; the public will submit comments via the regulations.gov mechanism. Federal agencies will have one additional comment period during clearance before the guidance is finalized.
 - Several agency representatives noted concerns with the proposed effective date/implementation date for the revised guidance in light of the magnitude of the reform effort and resulting work to be done on revising agency implementing regulations, policy manuals, and other pertinent material.
 - OMB encouraged agencies to provide additional feedback on the timing of implementation when submitting comments on the proposal.
- **Standardized Business Processes**
 - HHS will lead the COFAR efforts on standardizing business processes.
 - The COFAR has agreed that the work completed by the GPC and GEB on a data dictionary for the award notice should be the first step in implementing new data standards.
 - The draft award notice data dictionary will be circulated formally for Federal agency final approval in the coming weeks.
 - The COFAR will look at closeout processes and certifications as the next areas for standardization.
 - Agencies noted the need for more coordination and direct guidance on efforts like Do Not Pay, FAPIIS, and others stemming from the need for clarity on various related policies aimed at identifying and mitigating fraud, waste, and abuse.
 - The discussion included variation in how agencies use information to make decisions on assistance awards from related systems that aim to prevent and stop improper payments from being made, e.g. 'hits' against Do Not Pay
 - The discussion noted the importance of flexibility for agencies to make final determinations at their discretion based on all available information.

- **Validated Public Financial Data**
 - The COFAR will work to develop guidance to implement the goals discussed on the slide; which will be circulated to all for review.
 - A key aim for validation of public financial data is to ensure integrity of spending data between accounting systems and public reporting systems while accounting for any differences.
 - Agencies noted that implementing a requirement to sample award agreements for validation should consider that small agencies end up sampling a high percentage of their award agreements to make it statistically valid, and that it can result in a highly resource intensive effort.

- **Training and Certification**
 - The COFAR will build on the work completed by the GPC and GEB (including review of past final documents of the group) and leverage the work of the Leading EDGE group as we work towards establishing a body of knowledge, core competencies for staff, and certification standards in FY2013.
 - OMB and the COFAR have had discussions with GAO, the procurement community, the human capital community, professional groups, and others to inform our federal grants professionalization work.
 - Agencies noted the importance of basic, core grants training, but recognized the need for more focused 'on-the-job training' to realize maximum benefits for the government-wide grants workforce.
 - This effort will need to consider how training and certification efforts can reach people who aren't necessarily hired through the 1109 series.
 - The COFAR will further engage the community as the work progresses.

- **Audit Resolution**
 - A COFAR pilot is underway to address Federal programs with "unclean" audit opinions with a goal of reducing the amount of Federal funds at risk for waste, fraud, abuse, and improper payments.
 - The pilot will focus on the 8 COFAR agencies, using data derived from A-133 reports; other agencies are encouraged to participate and will work with each agency to provide data and set up the process. Other agencies are welcome to participate as well.
 - We discussed variations in agency practices for sharing the A-133 with appropriate functional offices coupled with how agencies can make better use of this important tool for better program oversight.
 - A spreadsheet with detailed data on audit findings for each agency is available on MAX at: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/8Qg4Jg>

IAE/SAM Governance Update

- OMB has been conducting a TechStat review of the IAE/SAM platform with GSA, and a big part of that review is re-structuring the governance of the system so that the grants community has a clear voice in decisions that affect us.
- The current governing body, the ACE, will be replaced with a new council made of 7 agencies that are split between assistance and procurement representation.
- In addition, there will be groups designated to represent the broader grants and procurement communities for issues that affect only them.
- The make-up of representation from the grants community is still under development, any suggestions from the community are welcome.
- Finally, there will be a renewed change control board that will have a member from each agency that pays contributions to IAE/SAM, which will have one representative to speak to all that agencies awards.
- The Change Control Board (CCB) will be responsible for resolving technical issues.

