

Government Accountability and Transparency Board

September 8, 2011 Minutes

A meeting of the Government Accountability and Transparency Board (GAT Board) was held at the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board (Recovery Board) Office in Washington, D.C. on Thursday, September 8, 2011, at 9:00 a.m. and continued until 10:05 a.m.

ATTENDEES

Board Members:

Earl E. Devaney, Chairman, Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board
W. Scott Gould, Deputy Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs
Allison C. Lerner, Inspector General, National Science Foundation
Daniel Levinson, Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services
Ellen Murray, Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources and Chief Financial Officer, Department of Health and Human Services
Calvin L. Scovel, III, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Transportation
Daniel I. Werfel, Controller, Office of Management and Budget
Neal Wolin, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Treasury

Proxy Attendees

Richard Ginman, Director, Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, U.S. Department of Defense
Mary Mitchelson, Deputy Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education
Dan Tangherlini, Chief Financial Officer, Department of the Treasury

Agency Staff:

Ross Bezark, Executive Director, GAT Board, and Chief of Staff, Recovery Board
Atticus Reaser, Assistant General Counsel, Recovery Board
Joel C. Spangenberg, Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary, Veterans Affairs
Sandra Swab, Senior Data Manager, Recovery Board
James Warren, Chief Innovation Officer, Recovery Board
Cynthia Williams, Board Secretary, Recovery Board

Discussion:

Chairman Devaney called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The minutes of the August 18, 2011 GAT Board meeting were approved, as corrected, by unanimous vote of the members present. Chairman Devaney provided an overview of the meeting materials. These included significant findings from a Congressional inquiry on the management information technology systems of 26 federal agencies and a recently released executive summary of a report on the Recovery Act from the IBM Center for the Business of Government.

The members engaged in a discussion of five potential recommendations for the required GAT Board report set forth in the Executive Order. There were questions regarding the scope and depth of each recommendation. Chairman Devaney and Mr. Levinson both commented that the recommendations should not be shortsighted or agency-centric, but must have relevance across all federal agencies. Members also commented on the resources, costs, and redundancy of efforts that might accompany recommendations proposed by the GAT Board.

The GAT Board then discussed the recommendation for a single government-wide alphanumeric award identification system. Mr. Warren provided the group with a description of the challenges to data collection and data display caused by non-standardization. He explained that the interpretation of data also might be compromised by a lack of data standards. There was a brief discussion of the Recovery Board's study of the impact of imposing a standard award identification system on federal agencies. Chairman Devaney concurred with a statement by Mr. Ginman on the significance of including the Department of the Defense (DoD) in the study, and agreed to add DoD to the list of participants.

Chairman Devaney reminded the members of the timeline for producing the report set forth in the Executive Order. Mr. Werfel proposed a framework for formulating and articulating the recommendations. He suggested that each incorporate a problem statement, guiding principles, and practical steps for implementation. The members discussed this suggestion at great length. A motion by Mr. Gould was adopted that the members prepare the report to the Administration with the following the format:

1. A high-level description with a strategic introduction and an analysis of identified gaps.
2. A statement of guiding principles incorporating the experiences of the Recovery Board.
3. Practical steps that address the issues, using the five recommendations reviewed during the meeting as the starting point.
4. A high-level discussion of how each step can be executed, including milestones and action plans.

The members discussed the pending DATA Act legislation which proposes the creation of a permanent Federal Accountability and Transparency Spending Board. Chairman Devaney informed the members that the GATB has the opportunity to provide valuable input that might help Congress shape the legislation. A second motion by Mr. Gould was adopted that the members provide to Congress a two-to-five page letter of input on the DATA Act legislation.

The members engaged in a discussion regarding the frequency and length of meetings. The members agreed that the next meeting should be scheduled for two hours. Chairman Devaney asked Mr. Warren and Ms. Swab to provide a final discussion of Recovery systems and other current government systems at the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for 9 a.m. on October 4, 2011.

Cynthia Williams
Secretary