

## **Government Accountability and Transparency Board**

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 Wednesday, January 21, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. and continued until 11:32 a.m.

### **ATTENDEES:**

#### **Board Members:**

Richard Ginman, Chairman and Director, Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, U.S. Department of Defense

Dave Williams, Inspector General, U.S. Postal Service

David Lebryk, Fiscal Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of the Treasury

Allison Lerner, Inspector General, National Science Foundation

Daniel Levinson, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

David Mader, Controller, Office of Management and Budget

Kathleen S. Tighe, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education

#### **Agency Staff:**

Brett Baker, Assistant Inspector General for Audit, National Science Foundation

Ross Bezark, Executive Director, GAT Board and Recovery Board

Kay Daly, Assistant Inspector General for Audit, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Nancy Gunderson, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Grants and Acquisition Policy, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Amy Haseltine, Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Grant Policy, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Christina Ho, Executive Director of Data Transparency, Bureau of the Fiscal Service, U.S. Department of the Treasury

Carrie Hug, Director of Accountability, Recovery Board

Karen Lee, Chief of Management Controls and Assistance Branch, Office of Management and Budget

Karen Pica, Management Analyst, Office of Management and Budget

Alicia Rau, Developmental Assignment, Office of Federal Procurement Policy, Office of Management and Budget

Atticus Reaser, General Counsel, Recovery Board

LeAntha Sumpter, Deputy Director, Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Program Development and Implementation, U.S. Department of Defense

Cynthia Williams, GAT Board Secretary, Recovery Board

### **DISCUSSION:**

Mr. Ginman called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and by unanimous vote, the members present approved the minutes of the November 19, 2014, meeting. Mr. Ginman remarked that on December 3, 2014, Mr. Lebryk and Mr. Mader testified before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform on the status of the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act) implementation efforts. He also reported that several meetings of the Inter-Agency Advisory

Committee (IAC) for DATA Act implementation had occurred since the November 2014 GAT Board meeting. Mr. Ginman then recapped the meeting agenda items. He remarked that Mr. Mader and Mr. Lebryk would provide the featured presentation on the status of the DATA Act implementation effort, which would be followed by a discussion of the future direction of the GAT Board.

Mr. Mader briefly discussed the purpose and the key deliverables of the DATA Act legislation. He commented on the numerous regular meetings between representatives from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Department of the Treasury (Treasury) to develop strategies and build the framework for successful implementation. Mr. Mader also commented on the importance of stakeholder engagement in the process, adding that a meeting with the members of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) had occurred on January 20, 2015, using similar slides. He addressed the DATA Act timeline for completing required agency activities and its impact on the Inspector General's (IG) initial reporting requirement due in November of 2016, as well as the oversight roles and responsibilities of the General Accountability Office (GAO) and the IG community. Mr. Mader informed the members that there have also been meetings with the GAO to discuss roles and responsibilities under the DATA Act.

Mr. Lebryk then discussed the status of the DATA Act implementation activities underway and the accomplishments made to date. He informed the members that the data transparency vision is to provide reliable, timely, secure, and consumable financial management data to both the public and federal managers to promote data transparency, facilitate better decision making, and improve operational efficiency. Mr. Lebryk also discussed the key goals and specific elements of the approach being followed to ensure that data transparency is achieved. Mr. Lebryk remarked that federal Chief Financial Officers are committed to the DATA Act because it will result in better access to the complete lifecycle of spending data, and lead to better use of the data. Mr. Mader added that the users of the data include cabinet secretaries and program managers, who will have access to data previously locked away in agency silos and stovepipe operations and be able to use it in a way never possible. Mr. Ginman remarked that program managers would need more than financial data to understand how federal funds were used in order to make sense of the data, adding that access to transactional data would also be required. There was then an exchange regarding the best approach for capturing the levels of federal spending data needed to provide public transparency and improve operational efficiency.

The members then engaged in a detailed discussion of data definition standards. Mr. Lebryk commented that data standardization is a critical and challenging piece of the transparency effort. He described the work underway to identify the required data elements and develop the data standards. Mr. Lebryk remarked that foundational work has been performed to determine where the needed information resides, authoritative sources for the data, and how best to map to these sources. Mr. Lebryk informed the members that a list of data elements areas as well as a preliminary data model of data element sources and relationships was developed. Ms. Tighe reminded the members that the public has a different perspective on transparency that affects data definitions, citing the differences in the definition for the place of performance data definition as an example. Ms. Tighe questioned if adequate public representation is included in the process of standardizing data elements. Mr. Mader commented that the stakeholder engagement elicits

feedback from the public on the implementation efforts. Mr. Lebryk added that the initial set of data standards would be published shortly for public review and comment.

A discussion of the information that the public requires versus data required inside the federal government ensued. Mr. Ginman questioned the completeness of the data elements required in the DATA Act. He commented that the list might fall short of what is needed to improve operational efficiency. He recalled the previous work performed by the acquisition (contracts) and financial assistance (grants) communities, which identified definitional contention for several hundred data elements used in business processes by both communities. He cautioned that without standard definitions for spending and non-financial data elements, data sharing could not be performed successfully across agencies. Mr. Ginman added that agencies involved in similar transactions would be better able to share data to determine indicators of risk if the data elements were aligned. He cited health care contracts awarded by the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as a prime example.

Ms. Haseltine noted that the public generally uses data to answer specific questions that identify what agency awarded the money; the amount of funding awarded; what program received the funding; the timing of the funds awarded, and the manner the funding was spent. She added that the data required to answer these questions may not be available from an initial set of data elements in the financial system but might be contained in the data elements from business processes that share a linking relationship to the initial set of data elements. Mr. Williams remarked, and the members agreed, that a critical role of the data should also be to identify what happened because of awarding the funds. Ms. Sumpter cautioned that the need to manage expectations for what can be achieved in short order is vital. She added that in some instances information required will not be captured in existing systems and may be burdensome for agencies to collect, so may require several years to become available. Ms. Pica acknowledged the importance of a cost-benefit analysis in defining information collection requirements.

Mr. Williams questioned if the transactional data elements map back to the required data elements included in the DATA Act. Ms. Ho and Ms. Lee commented on the distinction between true data elements and data characteristics. Ms. Lee added that the effort to identify and compile the initial set of data elements involved a review of the data elements included in the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act and the interpretation of those elements as displayed on the USASpending.gov website. Mr. Ginman recommended that OMB and Treasury not lose sight of the previous work performed by the various communities to achieve standardization across all data elements. Ms. Lee commented that the efforts underway build on the collaborative work such as that performed by DoD and HHS on behalf of the contract and grants communities.

Mr. Lebryk briefly cited the accomplishments in the other areas of the implementation plan. These included the following:

- Piloted the “intelligent data” prototype to determine how best to access and display data;
- Launched a comparative analyses of the Do Not Pay Business Center and the Recovery Operations Center to determine the need to create or expand a Treasury data analysis center;

- Facilitated regular collaborative briefings, established a public page for open source collaboration, and completed numerous other efforts to ensure ongoing stakeholder outreach and communication;
- Are in the midst of completing significant usability improvements to the USASpending.gov website; and
- Informed agencies of the new 120-day reporting requirement for delinquent debt referral.

Mr. Mader provided the members with an overview of the DATA Act governance established by OMB and Treasury. He remarked that OMB and Treasury recognized that successful implementation of the DATA Act requires representation from across the government. He added that key users and owners of the data were identified and assembled into the IAC. He commented that the members of the IAC represent their respective councils as well as play a key role in updating their agencies and obtaining buy-in to implement guidance resulting from the DATA Act. He added that OMB and Treasury serve as the executive steering committee leading the effort.

With the conclusion of the featured presentation, the members engaged in the next agenda item: a detailed discussion of the viability of the GAT Board and its alignment with the DATA Act implementation effort. Mr. Ginman recapped the history of the GAT Board, which included events that precipitated the creation of the GAT Board, its mandate, composition, and accomplishments. The members questioned the need for the GAT Board in light of the creation of the IAC. Mr. Mader commented that the IAC includes representation from the majority of the communities represented by members of the GAT Board as well as additional communities not represented on the GAT Board, though he noted the IG community was not yet represented on the IAC. Several members also noted the mission overlap between the IAC and the GAT Board.

The members discussed four potential alternatives for the future of the GAT Board. After considerable debate and deliberation, the members reached consensus on a recommendation for the IAC to assume GAT Board responsibilities, if the IAC included representation from the IG community. The members briefly engaged in a discussion regarding the need to broaden the IAC's focus, to include the section of the GAT Board's mandate not explicitly covered in the data transparency vision. Most members agreed that the IAC's mission is generally consistent with the broader goal of the DATA Act, and as a result did not need to be altered. The members also agreed that with the aggressive timeline set in the legislation, the DATA Act implementation efforts must be the priority at this point for the IAC. Mr. Lebryk commented that inclusion of the IG community on the IAC would help facilitate the work on data analytics.

In light of the Executive Order that created the GAT Board, Mr. Mader agreed to discuss the recommendation with OMB Deputy Director for Management, Beth Cobert to determine how best to move forward. Additionally, Ms. Lerner consented to discuss the recommendation with CIGIE Chairman, Michael Horowitz and coordinate a joint discussion with OMB, Treasury, and CIGIE to recommend potential representatives and define the context of the IG's role on the IAC. Both Ms. Lerner and Mr. Mader committed to report to the full membership at the next meeting.

Based on the recommendation, Mr. Ginman suggested that the GAT Board's final report focus on the 2014 accomplishments. Several members suggested that the report also include mention of the

recommendation for the IAC to assume GAT Board responsibilities. Mr. Ginman concurred. He asked the principal working group members to forward their accomplishments for inclusion in the draft. Mr. Ginman informed the members that a final draft would be forwarded to the full membership for review and comment.

Ms. Tighe informed the members that as the Recovery Board prepares to sunset, a decision is needed on how to transition or sunset the GAT Board's records currently housed on Recovery.gov. She commented that the decision would depend on the final way forward for the GAT Board. Ms. Tighe offered to have Mr. Reaser confer with the Recovery Board's point of contact at the National Archives and Records Administration and report back to the members with recommended alternatives. The members concurred with this approach.

The next GAT Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 25, 2015.

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**Cynthia Williams**  
**Secretary**