

## **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, March 26, 2014, 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  
David C. Williams, Vice Chair and Inspector General, U.S. Postal Service  
Nani Coloretti, Assistant Secretary for Management, U.S. Department of the Treasury  
Gregory Friedman, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Energy  
Ellen Murray, Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources and Chief Financial Officer, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Mark Reger, Interim Controller, Office of Management and Budget  
Calvin Scovel, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Transportation  
Kathleen S. Tighe, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education

#### **Agency Staff:**

Ross Bezark, Executive Director, GAT Board and Recovery Board  
Amy Haseltine, Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Grant Policy, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Christina Ho, Assistant Commissioner, Government-Wide Accounting, U.S. Department of the Treasury  
Karen Lee, Chief of Management Controls and Assistance Branch, Office of Management and Budget  
Karen Pica, Management Analyst, Office of Management and Budget  
LeAntha Sumpter, Deputy Director, Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, U.S. Department of Defense  
Elise Stein, Intergovernmental Liaison, Office of External Affairs, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Cynthia Williams, GAT Board Secretary, Recovery Board

### **DISCUSSION:**

Mr. Ginman called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., and by unanimous vote of the members present, the minutes of the February 26, 2014, meeting was approved. Mr. Ginman welcomed Mr. Reger to the Board. Mr. Reger provided the members with a brief overview of his background in the state and federal government. He commented that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is committed to maintaining the momentum of the work generated by the GAT Board and other federal transparency initiatives.

Mr. Ginman informed the members of his invitation to participate in the Data Transparency Summit sponsored by the Data Transparency Coalition, scheduled on Tuesday, April 29, 2014. Several members commented that they were also invited to participate in various panel discussions. The group also mentioned that the DATA Act is moving forward.

In an effort to allot sufficient time for the scheduled Grants Data Standardization briefing<sup>1</sup>, the members agreed to shift the order of the agenda items and discuss the Way Forward document later in the meeting. The scheduled grants working group briefing then began with a welcome to Ms. Haseltine. Ms. Haseltine began her discussion with an overview of the core responsibilities of the Grants Policy Office within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). She explained her role in the implementation of grants policy, the management of Grants.gov, and the transmission of key grants data to USASpending.gov.

The members engaged in a discussion of the mission and mechanics of Grants.gov. Ms. Haseltine described the evolutionary process of Grants.gov and provided the members with information on the current use of the system across the federal government. Ms. Haseltine explained that all federal grant making agencies currently use the system to advertise available grants but many agencies still use agency-specific systems for the application process. She noted the differences among agency application requirements and past technical issues as the primary reasons for the agencies' decision to maintain their own application systems. Mr. Reger commented that prior OMB guidance directed agencies to use the Grants.gov system as one method for the grants application process and to develop an agency transition plan that would ensure the use of the Grants.gov solution. Ms. Lee added that the opportunity exists to drive all agencies to the Grants.gov solution but that the development of Grants.gov as a centralized application solution is still in process. Ms. Haseltine confirmed that while challenging, the Grants.gov team is moving forward with the design and development of a solution that accommodates the application requirements of all agencies as well as the varying types of potential recipients.

Several members commented on the lack of full government use of the Grants.gov solution and the lack of data and process standards in the grant arena. Mr. Ginman inquired on the ability of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) to initiate a broad review of these issues. Ms. Tighe agreed that such a review might be worthwhile and commented that the scope of such a review would have to be defined before being presented to the CIGIE members for consideration. Mr. Williams commented that the GAT Board should be the sponsor of such an effort. Ms. Lee acknowledged the work of the Council on Financial Assistance Reform (COFAR) to streamline grants requirements contained in eight OMB circulars into one uniformed grants policy guidance document.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Reger suggested that the agencies first be given an opportunity to become acquainted with the new policies and sufficient time to comply before a review is contemplated.

Ms. Haseltine discussed the grants standards governance, informing the members that HHS has been selected to lead the grants data standards initiative. She further discussed the goals of this plan, the work completed to date, and the next steps. Ms. Haseltine also provided the members with an update on three other grants data standardization efforts. These included the grants data standard independent assessment and verification, the Federal Funding and Transparency Act (FFATA) data elements collaboration with the Department of Defense, and the small-scale proof of concept tool designed to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of federal sector business processes. The members were provided a handout with detailed descriptions, goals, completed work, and next steps for each of these efforts.

Mr. Ginman inquired on the approach to codify the recommendations of the Grants Data Integrity and Standardization Working Group (working group). Ms. Haseltine commented that the data standardization effort is a collaborative initiative requiring the buy-in of the grants community. She

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<sup>1</sup> Upon approval, the Grants Data Integrity and Standardization working group briefing is expected to be made available on Recovery.gov.

<sup>2</sup> The OMB Super Circular was finalized and announced in the Federal Register on December 26, 2013.

also commented that discussions with OMB and the COFAR have resulted in the inclusion of 99 standard data elements in the uniformed grants guidance. Ms. Lee added that other opportunities exist to codify grants data standards including regulatory changes through efforts such as the joint FFATA initiative, OMB guidance, and the adoption of agreed upon data elements in the centralized business repository.

There was a brief discussion of efforts to track funding from appropriations to expenditures. The members also discussed the differences and similarities among grant and procurement data elements. Ms. Pica cited “dollars spent” as an example of where data definitions do not match for grants and procurement communities. Mr. Ginman stated the procurement community has a set of standard definitions, but the interpretation of the definitions can vary. Mr. Reger emphasized the importance of having definitions move across functional silos. The members thanked Ms. Haseltine for the updated information. Mr. Ginman acknowledged the progress that the working group has made thus far.

The members then turned their attention to the current draft of the 2014 Way Forward document. A discussion of the introductory section of the document and the GAT Board’s alignment with the broader Open Government effort ensued. OMB representatives indicated that suggestions might be forthcoming on Exhibit 1, depicting the components of the National Action Plan and the GAT Board’s alignment to the broader open government initiative.

There was a brief discussion on the GAT Board’s ability to provide strategic direction in the pursuit of government-wide transparency and accountability. Most members agreed that the GAT Board has provided impetus for the procurement and grants data integrity and standardizations efforts. Mr. Ginman commented that the GAT Board has helped refocus current efforts and that many agency-specific efforts to enhance transparency have transformed into government-wide initiatives as a result of the GAT Board’s involvement. Mr. Williams asked the members to consider if there is a better strategic approach that would increase the velocity of change. He also reminded the members that the GAT Board’s mission includes improved government-wide accountability efforts.

Mr. Ginman asked the members to consider if the 2014 strategic plan should include efforts that reach beyond the procurement and grant arenas to others involved in improved transparency and accountability efforts. Ms. Murray commented that working groups are going beyond their own agencies and driving collaboration across the federal government. The members also discussed the public’s request to receive additional spending information to include the need to publish data that was once available in the Consolidated Federal Funds Report.

Mr. Ginman acknowledged the members that have provided feedback on the Way Forward document and that any further suggestions would be incorporated into the document.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Ginman encouraged all members to provide input before the April meeting. The members thanked Mr. Ginman for the work that has gone into coordinating member feedback and preparing a final document.

The next GAT Board meeting is scheduled for April 30, 2014.

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**Cynthia Williams**  
**Secretary**

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<sup>3</sup> The Secretariat distributed an updated Way Forward document on April 9, 2014, with any final feedback requested by April 14, 2014, in order to present a document at the April meeting for Board adoption.



# Grants Data Standardization

## Status Update Briefing to the Government Accountability and Transparency Board

March 26, 2014

Amy Haseltine

Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary, Grants



# PURPOSE

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- June 2013 – Previous brief focused on the benefits of fostering standard grant data elements/definitions and results of HHS’ grants data elements and data definition analysis. The key recommendations and action items included:
  - Establish Grants Data Governance model to support data standardization
  - Establish a Enterprise Business Glossary/Repository to “house” agreed upon data elements and associated definitions
  - Streamline Business Processes to facilitate use of standard data element names & associated definitions
  - Continue analysis of additional data sets as needed
- Today’s purpose is to provide a brief overview of the Grants Data Standardization effort, including the goals/objectives and the status of the actions involved:
  - Grants Data Standards Governance
  - Grants Data Standards Assessment & Verification
  - FFATA Data Elements Collaboration
  - Grants Data Elements and Information Collection Records Management Tool



# Grants Data Standards Governance

## Description:

Determine How and Who Will Govern Grants Data Standards

## Goals:

- Verify HHS analytical framework and associated recommendations for grants data standards' initiative
- Use the HHS Grants Life Cycle Data Standards Analysis to help identify Grants Data Standardization priorities for the future

## Work Completed to Date:

- HHS named lead for grants data standards
- Determined that the Financial Assistance Committee on e-Gov (FACE) will govern grants data standards
- Agreed that the data elements to be standardized will be approved by the COFAR
- Briefing to COFAR in January & March 2014 affirmed HHS analytical framework and recommendations

## Next Steps:

- Convene the Grants Data Standard Workgroup (Q3, FY2014)
- Validate data standards priorities via COFAR and FACE (Q4, FY2014)
- Develop work plan for additional grants data standard analysis
- Brief COFAR and FACE (NLT Q1, FY2015)



# Grants Data Standards Assessment & Verification

## Description:

Independent Assessment to Validate Initial Findings and recommendations from the 2013

## Goals:

- Create Grants Data Standards Working Group
- Create a Working Group Charter
- Ensure delineation of roles and responsibilities

## Work Completed to Date:

- HHS review Grants Life Cycle and related Financial Data Standards analysis & incorporation into OMB Grants Reform Guidance
- Independent review and verification of HHS's Analysis
- Brief COFAR in January & March 2014 affirms HHS's analytical framework and recommendations

## Next Steps:

- Task Complete



# FFATA Data Elements Collaboration

## Description:

Initiate Cross-Cutting Data Standards in the Federal Sector

## Goals:

- Agree to common terms and attributes across acquisitions and grants portfolios for FFATA specific data elements
- Increase data element definition consistency across communities
- Increase Accuracy, Data Quality & Transparency on USASpending.gov

## Work Completed to Date:

- DoD and HHS kick-off meeting on Mar 13; agreed to scope and approach

## Next Steps:

- Identify common FFATA data elements and associated definitions between federal acquisition and financial assistance communities (Q3, FY2014)
- Analysis due to Award Committee on e-Gov (ACE) (Q3, FY2014)





# Proof of Concept

## Grants Data Elements and Information Collection Request Management Tool

### Description:

Small scale Proof of Concept Tool to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Federal Sector Business Processes

### Goals:

- Provide a repository, streamlined process, and governance approach to document and enforce the use of established data standards
- Reduced agency burden on developing Information Collection Requests and OIRA burden on reviewing Information Collection Requests
- Reduced duplication and increase reuse of existing data standards
- Measured/accurate burden hour estimates

### Work Completed to Date:

- Awarded support contract
- Conducted Records Management Regulatory Assessment and Policy Analysis to document information collection business process
- Drafted the Grants Management Data Repository Functional Requirements Document to drive technical parameters of proof of concept

### Next Steps:

- Complete build of Proof of Concept and populate with initial grants data standard and definitions (Q3, FY2014)
- Briefing to COFAR (Q3, FY 2014)
- Obtain concurrence and support of COFAR to garner funding for expansion of proof of concept, and functional requirements analysis of govt-wide financial assistance community (Q4, FY2014)