

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY BOARD

WAY FORWARD FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2013

MARCH 27, 2013

Government Accountability and Transparency (GAT) Board: Way Forward for Calendar Year 2013

Purpose

This “way forward” document provides brief background information on the Board’s purpose and defines its way forward for Calendar Year 2013. This document was created through a deliberative process, was adopted at the Board’s March 27, 2013 meeting, and reflects the Board’s consensus on the proper implementation approach towards fulfilling its mission. There are two key points to note about this document:

- It will be available for public consumption. Sharing information with the public is an important part of the Board’s mission.
- It does not replace reports/updates to the President and/or Vice President.

Background

The Board’s mandate appears in Executive Order 13576 (June 13, 2011),¹ which states the Board shall:

1. Provide strategic direction for enhancing transparency of federal spending and advance efforts to detect and remediate fraud, waste, and abuse in federal programs
2. Work with the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board (RATB) to build on lessons learned and apply the approaches developed by the RATB across federal spending
3. Submit a report to the President by December 2011
4. Provide regular progress updates²

As the GAT Board prepares for its Calendar Year 2013 activities, it has held several deliberative meetings. Its membership is focused on:

- Long-term:
 - Affirming its long-term strategy
 - Ensuring it executes its mandate to provide strategic direction
- Near-term:
 - Establishing its near-term plan to make concrete progress
 - Securing means to execute the near-term plan

I. Long-Term

The Board is committed to enhancing transparency of federal spending and advancing efforts to detect and remediate fraud, waste, and abuse in federal programs.

A. Strategy to Improve Federal Spending Transparency and Accountability

The following framework applies to the Board’s long-term strategy and considers the three key audiences for spending transparency: the American public who deserves to have information on federal

¹ Section 3 of Executive Order 13576 established the GAT Board.

² Executive Order 13576, Section 3(d), states the Chair of the Board, in consultation with the Director of OMB, shall provide monthly updates to the Vice President on the progress obtained.

spending, the federal agencies who spend, and the federal overseers who protect against fraud, waste, and abuse.

- **Goal:** Provide the American public access to reliable Federal spending data, enable Federal agencies to fully trace expenditures, and protect Federal expenditures against fraud or waste.
- **Vision:** Citizens will have access to trustworthy information on Federal spending through contracts, grants, and assistance agreements. Federal agencies can trace funds throughout their lifecycle—from the amounts set aside, to when and where agencies spend this money, to whether the government received what it bargained for. Federal overseers will protect taxpayer dollars through effective oversight of Federal spending.

B. Approach to Strategic Direction

In order to fulfill its mandate, the GAT Board will remain at the strategic level. To remain strategic, the Board will engage three communities:

1. Strategic federal leaders. The Board will establish a schedule and means for providing progress updates to the Vice President and/or President.
2. Strategy executers. The Board will establish a way to execute forward progress against the Board's strategic direction, receive periodic updates, and provide Board input on how progress comports with Board strategic expectations.
3. The public. The Board will establish a way to inform the public of its intended outcomes and progress.

To ensure all three communities are synchronized with the Board's strategy, the Board has established the following strategy, objectives, and approach for the next three to five years:

- **Strategy:** Ensure contract, grant, and assistance data is sound, meaningful, and accessible. To provide the public with confidence in federal spending information, build a solid foundation through data reliability. To help federal agencies answer questions about federal expenditures, ensure lifecycle traceability. To help federal overseers protect spending integrity, determine ways to navigate information to identify risks and mitigate fraud and waste.
- **Strategic Objectives:** Pursue four strategic objectives: 1) *reliability*—ensure data is more reliable and present in real time, 2) *identification*—connect the data more closely to the investment and its intended purpose, 3) *usability*—provide better means to use the data, and 4) *awareness*—ensure Executive Office and public awareness of planned and actual progress.
- **Strategic Approach:**
 1. Optimize *transparency* and *accountability*
 2. Focus on effectiveness and efficiency.
 - a. Consider relevant audiences (the American public, federal agencies, and the federal overseers)
 - b. Work with the RATB to build on lessons learned and apply the approaches developed by the RATB across the federal government
 - c. Consider recommendations in the GAT Board's December 2011 report.
- **Strategic Milestones:** Define near-term milestones that show tangible results, make incremental progress towards long-term goals, and relate to the long-term strategy:
 1. Optimize *transparency* by focusing on effectiveness and efficiency.

- a. Aim for federal-wide unified approaches, but leverage existing (sometimes agency-specific) approaches.
 - b. Consider the role of government-wide data standards and/or universal identifier.
 - c. Due to maturity spectrum of existing agency-wide standards associated with federal spending vehicles, pursue parallel tracks for i.) *grants and assistance* and ii.) *contracts*. While focusing on optimal federal-wide unified approaches, recognize the solution set for grants and assistance agreements, which have a less mature set of existing standards, may differ from that for contracts.
2. Optimize *accountability* through a framework that leverages lessons learned, speeds risk identification/detection, and informs management decisions on key investments. Aim for a cohesive government-wide approach while recognizing agency-specific drivers.

II. Near-Term

To ensure forward progress in its quest to enhance transparency of federal spending and advance efforts to detect and remediate fraud, waste, and abuse in federal programs, the Board is focused on defining its near-term plan, establishing who will execute the near-term plan, and ensuring the board receives and provides progress updates.

A. Calendar Year 2013

To establish its plan for calendar year 2013, the Board has held several meetings in 2012. As backdrop, the Board has discussed the recommendations in its December 2011 Report to the President, and proposed key, near-term actions that relate to the earlier recommendations, as shown below:

GATB Strategic Mandate	December 2011 Report: Recommendation Title	December 2011 Report: Recommendation Description	Calendar Year 2013: Key Topics
Accountability	Governmentwide Accountability Framework	The government should adopt a cohesive, centralized accountability framework to track and oversee spending.	Data Analytics
Transparency	Data Collection and Data Display Phased Integration	The government should rationalize the way it collects and displays spending data.	Data Display Data Integrity
RATB Lessons Learned/ Approaches	^a Universal Award ID	The government should migrate to a universal, standardized identification system for all Federal awards.	Data Standardization
Progress Updates	N/A – See Entire Published Report to President as Progress Update	N/A – See Entire Published Report to President as Progress Update	Strategic Direction and Awareness

^aWith regard to its earlier recommendation for a universal award ID, the Board is considering the progress that the procurement and grants communities collectively, and agencies individually, have made in achieving the standardization objective.

Progress updates will be made public on the GAT Board web site. This includes posting meeting minutes and any reports.

B. Execution of Near-Term Plan

Similar to a major construction project, multiple parties are required to successfully execute any large-reaching effort: owner, architect, project manager, builder. To ensure action against these key topics in 2013, the Board (“owner”) requires appropriate sponsors (“architects,”) as well as executors (“project manager” and “builders”). The Board will rely on the following to make definitive progress through working groups in calendar year 2013:

GATB Strategic Mandate	Topic	Sponsoring GAT Board Member (Architect)	Working Group Lead (Project Manager)	Interagency Working Group (Builder)
Board Action				
Strategic Direction and Awareness	Strategic Direction and Awareness	Chairman	N/A	N/A
Board Strategic Guidance to Other Executors				
Transparency	Procurement Data Integrity and Standardization	DoD, as representative of Procurement Operational Community	DoD, with OFPP	Chief Acquisition Officers Council (COAC)
Transparency	Grants Data Integrity and Standardization	HHS, as representative of Grants Operational Community	HHS, with OFFM	Council on Financial Assistance Reform (COFAR)
Transparency	Financial Management Integration (FM) & Data Display	Treasury, as representative of the Financial Management Operational Community	Treasury, with OFFM	TBD
Accountability	Data Analytics	USPS, as representative of the Inspectors General/Oversight Community, as well as any other GATB IGs	Working Group, led by USPS	Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE)

There are three transparency topics, each with a different functional community perspective: procurement, grants, and FM. In addition, data display is being examined. This entails examining the future vision for USAspending.gov. The oversight community perspective drives the accountability topic.

For the transparency and accountability initiatives, the *sponsoring GAT Board member* will ensure (1) it has a representative who participates in the interagency forum, and (2) the representative communicates the Board’s strategy.

The assigned *working group lead* will ensure the interagency forum:

- is focused on the assigned GATB topic, through establishment of working groups or other means,
- creates draft action plans, including milestones, on the assigned GATB topic
- recommends approaches that consider RATB lessons learned and approaches, costs and benefits of alternatives, and presents the analysis of alternatives to the Board, as appropriate

- executes against the action plan, and
- engages the GATB at appropriate intervals, including presenting progress updates to the GATB.

C. Progress Updates on Near-Term Plan

The Board will establish:

- a schedule for its calendar year 2013 meetings, including featured topics and presentations from strategy executers.
 - The Board's schedule and topics for calendar year 2013 appears as [Appendix A](#)
 - A listing of topics that strategy executors should consider when developing action plans appears as [Appendix B](#)
- whether/how to communicate its progress to strategic leaders.
- whether/how to communicate its progress to the public.

The working group lead will coordinate with interagency forums to develop and present action plans to the Board in accordance with the schedule (Appendix A).

Appendix A.

GATB Calendar Year 2013 Schedule

The following identifies a notional schedule for the GATB calendar year 2013 activities, focusing on meetings (a) of the key interagency forum with the GATB sponsor and (b) before the GATB principals. It covers the topics identified for calendar year 2013: (1) strategic direction; (2) procurement data integrity and standardization; (3) grants data integrity and standardization; (4) data analytics; and (5) and FM integration and data display.

Calendar Year 2013 GAT Board Meetings

*(Where Possible: Working Group Prepares Approx. First Wed. of Each Month;
Principals Meet Last Wed. of Each Month)*

1st Quarter

January: Strategic Direction

- Independent review of this “Way Forward” document

February: Strategic Direction Discussion

- M 2/25/13: GATB Principals Meeting
(Monday due to Chairman’s travel)

March: Action Plan for Procurement Data Integrity and Standardization

- W 3/6/13: Working Group Prep
- W 3/27/13: GATB Principals Meeting

2nd Quarter

April: Action Plan for Data Analytics

- W 4/3/13: Working Group Prep
- W 4/24/13: GATB Principals Meeting

May: Action Plan for FM Integration and Data Display

- W 5/1/13: Working Group Prep
- Th 5/23/13: GATB Principals Meeting
(Later due to avoid CIGIE conflict)

June: Action Plan for Grants Data Integrity and Standardization

- W 6/5/13: Working Group Prep
- W 6/26/13: GATB Principals Meeting

3rd Quarter

July: Progress Report for Procurement Data Integrity and Standardization

- W 7/10/13: Working Group Prep
- W 7/31/13: GATB Principals Meeting

August: Progress Report for Data Analytics

- W 8/7/13: Working Group Prep
- W 8/28/13: GATB Principals Meeting

September: No Meeting

4th Quarter

October: Progress Report for FM Integration and Data Display

- W 10/9/13: Working Group Prep
- W 10/30/13: GATB Principals Meeting

November: Progress Report for Grants Data Integrity and Standardization

- W 11/6/13: Working Group Prep
- W 11/20/13: GATB Principals Meeting
(Earlier to avoid Thanksgiving week)

December: No Meeting

Appendix B.

Action Plan Topics

This appendix provides information on topics that strategy executors should consider when developing action plans. There are no prescribed action plan formats. The action plan should be submitted in advance of the teams' first presentation as a read-ahead, followed by an overview during the Board meeting. GATB endorsement will be by majority vote of members present. The team will incorporate any appropriate GATB comments received during the presentation and distribute the final version via the Board Secretariat to the Board. No additional plan submissions to the Board are required, since periodic updates by the strategy executors will keep the board apprised of progress including any changes made to approach or dates.

I. Title:

GATB Strategic Mandate	Topic	GAT Board Sponsor	Lead Execution Organization	Key Interagency Forum(s)

II. Relationship to GATB Goal and Vision:

Purpose (Supports overall Goal): *{To be filled in by lead execution organization, in conjunction with key interagency forum, and approved by GAT Board Sponsor.}*

End State (Supports overall Vision): *{To be filled in by lead execution organization, in conjunction with key interagency forum, and approved by GAT Board Sponsor.}*

III. Approach to Leveraging RATB Lessons Learned/Approaches:

{To be filled in by lead execution organization, in conjunction with key interagency forum, and approved by GAT Board Sponsor.}

IV. Plan of Action:

Plan (Supports overall Strategy): *{To be filled in by lead execution organization, in conjunction with key interagency forum, and approved by GAT Board Sponsor.}*

Key Actions (Support overall Strategic Objectives): *{To be filled in by lead execution organization, in conjunction with key interagency forum, and approved by GAT Board Sponsor.}*

V. Tradeoffs*:

Tradeoffs (Supports Strategic Approach and Milestones): *{To be filled in by lead execution organization, in conjunction with key interagency forum, and approved by GAT Board Sponsor.}*

*Discuss cost/benefit and audience.

VI. GATB Response: {To be filled in by lead execution organization, following presentation to GAT Board. }

- Concur
- Concur with comment
- Nonconcur