GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY BOARD

WAY FORWARD FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2014

APRIL 30, 2014

Government Accountability and Transparency (GAT) Board:
Way Forward for Calendar Year 2014

Purpose
This "way forward" document describes progress made by the Board in Calendar Year 2013 and planned activities in 2014. It was created through a collaborative process, adopted at the Board's April meeting, and reflects the Board's consensus on the approach towards fulfilling its mission.

Background
The Board's mandate appears in Executive Order 13576 (June 13, 2011), which states in part that the Board shall:

- Provide strategic direction for enhancing transparency of federal spending and advance efforts to detect and remediate fraud, waste, and abuse in federal programs, and
- 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.

Composition
The GAT Board's membership is key to achieving its Presidential mandate. The Board has 11 members, representing different communities across the federal government:

- 6 individuals from the inspector general community (U.S. Postal Service, Department of Energy, National Science Foundation, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Education, and Department of Transportation)
- 3 from the Chief Financial Officer (CFO)/Secretary community (Department of Treasury, HHS, Department of Veterans Affairs)
- 1 from the Office of Management and Budget (Official of Federal Financial Management)
- 1 from the Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO) community (Department of Defense)

To provide strategic leadership, these senior officials bring a range of deep functional expertise and represent diverse agencies, which is essential to government-wide initiatives. The inspectors general and CFO/CAO operational communities each bring an important perspective to the issue of fraud, waste, and abuse.

Scope
The GAT Board was created for strategic advisory purposes. It is not a decision-making body, nor does it have funding and staff. The Board provides strategic advice to the Office of Management and Budget, Federal-agencies, and related interagency working groups.

Open Government

The GAT Board is one of the Administration's Open Government initiatives.[1] The Board is committed to the Open Government principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration. The Open Government National Action Plan (NAP) features a two-year blueprint for multiple initiatives; the GAT Board is an initiative supporting the Administration's focus on managing public resources effectively:

- The first Open Government NAP (September 20, 2011) announced the GAT Board as a new initiative.[2]
- The second Open Government NAP (December 5, 2013) highlighted the GAT Board's focus on data analytics and data integrity and standardization for procurement and grants.[3]

Strategic Direction

Specifically, the 2013 NAP states the GAT Board will provide strategic direction as one of five overall spending actions. Exhibit 1 provides context for the GAT Board's efforts within the overall Open Government initiative.
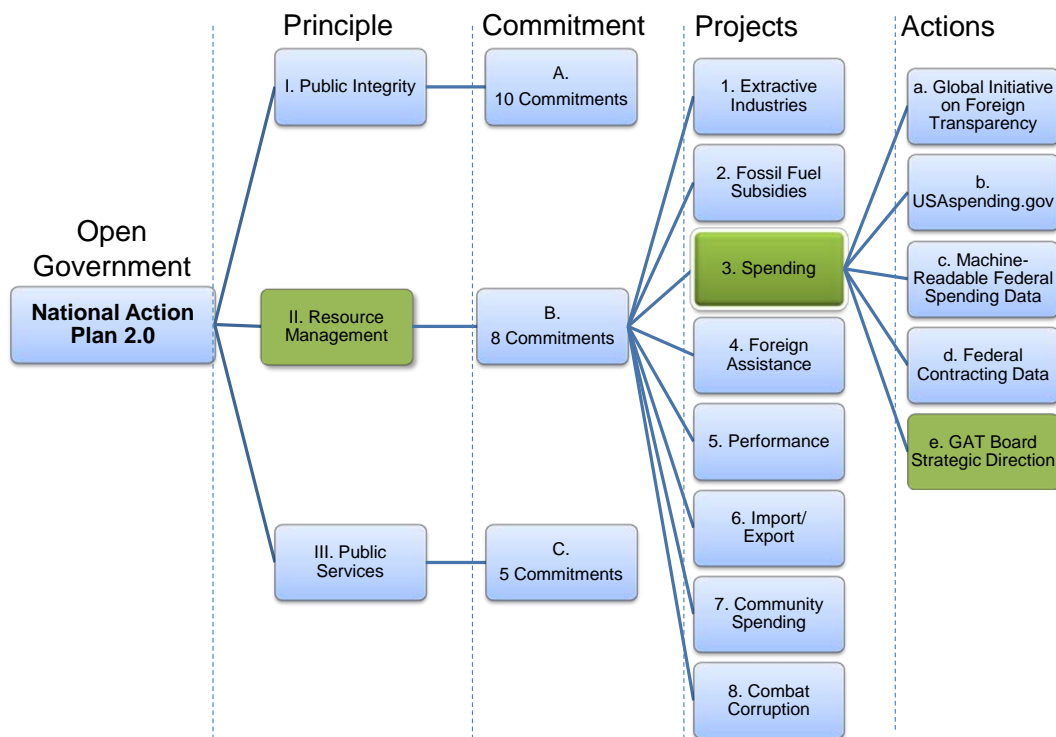

Exhibit 1. GAT Board's Resource Management Role in the
Open Government National Action Plan 2.0, Covering 2014-2016

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[1] http://www.whitehouse.gov/open

[2] http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/us_national_action_plan_final_2.pdf

[3] http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/us_national_action_plan_6p.pdf

The 2013 NAP states that the GAT Board will provide strategic direction for enhancing spending transparency:

> *The Administration, through the work of the Government Accountability and Transparency Board (GATB), will continue to provide strategic direction to the Federal Government on ways to increase Federal spending transparency and to detect waste, fraud, or abuse. GATB will update its annual plan with 2013 accomplishments and 2014 objectives including issues of data analytics and data integrity and standardization for procurement and grants.*

Spending Transparency and Accountability

The GAT Board's focus is on transparency and accountability of federal spending via procurement contracts and grants. Federal contracts and grants spending is a subset of overall federal government funds expenditures, as shown in Exhibit 2:
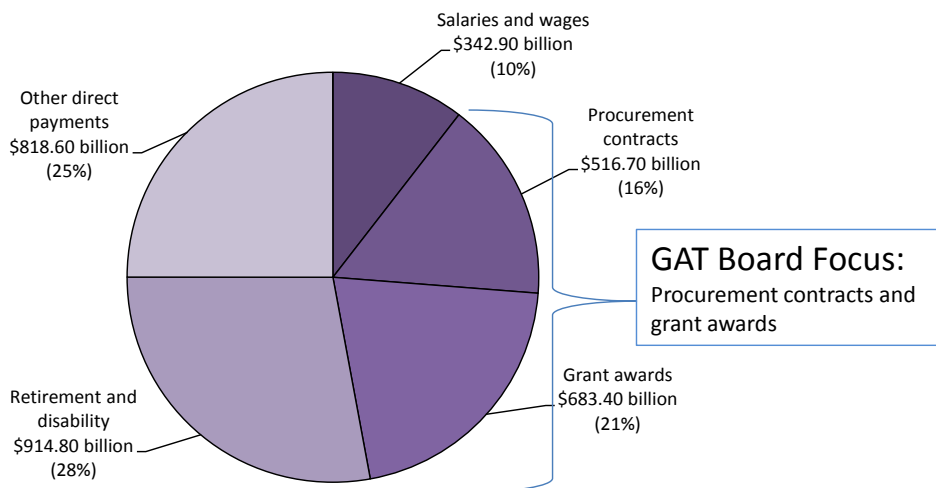

Exhibit 2. Federal Government Expenditure,
Amounts and Percentages by Major Object Category: Fiscal Year 2010[4]

The GAT Board is one of five Administration actions in the NAP focused on spending of federal tax dollars. The Board's efforts to date impact the domestic spending initiatives in the NAP:

- USAspending.gov (See Exhibit 1, NAP II.B.3.b). The GAT Board is providing strategic advice to improve the contract and grants information on the USAspending.gov website.
- Machine-readable (See Exhibit 1, NAP II.B.3.c). The GAT Board has supported existing efforts to make federal spending data available in open and machine-readable formats, such as on the USAspending.gov website.

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[4] The source of this graph is the U.S. Census Bureau, Consolidated Federal Funds Report for Fiscal Year 2010. www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/cffr-10.pdf
(Fiscal Year 10 is the most current published information; the CFFR ended with the termination of the Federal Financial Statistics Program; see http://www.census.gov/govs/cffr/.)

- Federal Contracting Data (See Exhibit 1, NAP II.B.3.d). The GAT Board is advising federal efforts to facilitate the publication of certain federal government contract information to increase transparency and accountability of the federal procurement system, consistent with federal rulemaking.

USAspending.gov

USAspending.gov was launched in December 2007 to implement the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) of 2006. The website provides the public with free centralized access to information on federal spending resulting from contracts, grants, and other financial assistance.[5] USAspending.gov features obligation data (amounts awarded for federally sponsored projects during a given budget period), not outlays or expenditures (actual cash disbursements made against each contract or grant). The GAT Board provides strategic advice regarding the contracts and grants information on that website. Effective February 2014, Treasury was designated as the program owner for USAspending.gov. Treasury will be responsible for implementing short- and long-term improvements to USAspending.gov. The GAT Board will receive periodic updates from Treasury on progress.

Strategic Plan

This document serves as the GAT Board strategic plan: it provides a blueprint for future GAT Board operations and maps to the overarching Open Government initiative. It has both long-term and near-term components.

Long-Term

The GAT Board has the advantages of being able to take a strategic view, across the business of government, and link together both federal operational and oversight. Federal-wide, many initiatives that impact transparency and accountability are underway. The GAT Board provides a forum to leverage collective knowledge.

The Board's vision is to enhance sound, meaningful, and accessible federal spending data. The Board will continue to provide strategic direction to the Federal Government on ways to increase Federal spending transparency and to detect waste, fraud, or abuse by focusing on the following areas:

1. Data reliability
2. Lifecycle traceability
3. Risks of fraud and waste.

Near-Term

The Board has defined the following strategy, objectives, and approach for 2014:

- **Strategy:** Ensure contract and grant data is sound, meaningful, and accessible. Provide the public with confidence in federal spending information—build a solid foundation through data reliability. Help federal agencies answer questions about federal expenditures—ensure lifecycle traceability. Help federal overseers protect spending

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[5] Per FFATA, financial assistance includes grants, subgrants, loans, awards, cooperatives agreements

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 of the President (through OMB), stakeholder, 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

Board Accomplishments and Objectives

2013 Accomplishments
The Board made steady progress in Calendar Year 2013. It began the year by establishing an annual plan (Calendar Year 2013 Way Forward document), which contains the Board's long-term strategy and the near-term focus of working groups to develop approaches to (a) standardize key data elements to improve procurement data integrity; (b) standardize key data elements to improve grants data integrity; (c) leverage existing data to help improve oversight; and (d) link data in financial management systems with related award systems.

As planned, the Board engaged three key audiences for spending transparency: (1) the American public, (2) federal agencies, and (3) federal overseers:

- The American public deserves to have information on federal spending. The Board held a public meeting to gather information on issues related to federal spending. The Board has made its meeting minutes and reports available on http://www.recovery.gov/gatb/Pages/default.aspx.
- Federal agencies spend money on contracts and grants to accomplish their missions. The Board leveraged existing interagency working groups to advance procurement and grants data standardization efforts as described below under working groups.
- Federal overseers protect against fraud, waste and abuse. The Board leveraged the interagency working group on data analytics to foster accountability. In addition, the Board benefitted from the recommendations made by the Government Accountability Office (GAO-13-758) related to enhancing transparency and accountability.

The Board provided strategic direction to working groups. Each group developed and presented its goals, objectives, tasks and timelines to the Board for discussion and improvement. The

Board also heard from OMB on initiatives such as its mandate to improve data quality for USAspending.gov.[6]

2013 Observations

The Board's observations from its 2013 activities include the following:

1. Federal-wide, many efforts are aimed at accountability and transparency—in terms of resource management generally and spending specifically. For example, in the resource management area alone, the NAP lays out eight different projects.
2. The term "federal spending" does not have a standard meaning across stakeholders. For example, the federal spending could mean grants and contract awards, obligations, expenditures, or the entire lifecycle of spending.
3. There are more than three key audiences for spending transparency. For example, in addition to the American public, federal agencies, and federal overseers, state and local stakeholders rely on federal spending data.

2014 Objectives

The Board will continue to provide strategic direction in 2014. Specifically, it will:

- Maintain its long-term plan and adapt its near-term actions based on 2013 observations and prior lessons learned.
- Continue to provide strategic direction for enhancing transparency of federal spending and for detecting waste, fraud, and abuse.
- Continue to leverage working groups on procurement data integrity and standardization, grants data integrity and standardization, financial management data transparency, and data analytics.
- Continue to gather information on federal-wide accountability and transparency initiatives.
- Increase stakeholder input with specific emphasis on public outreach.

With regard to stakeholder input, the Board will explore topics raised with stakeholders in 2013[7], including:

1. What questions are you trying to answer with federal spending information?
2. What federal spending information do you need to answer these questions?
3. Where do you find that federal spending information now?
4. Where does federal spending information need clearer instructions or explanations?
5. What suggestions do you have for prioritizing federal spending information enhancements?

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[6] OMB Memorandum for Agency Chief Financial Officers, "Improving Data Quality for USAspending.gov" (June 12, 2013). http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/financial/memos/improving-data-quality-for-usaspending-gov.pdf
[7] 78 Federal Register 77132 (December 20, 2013). http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/FR-2013-12-20/2013-30283

2014 Agenda

The Board will convene on a monthly basis, as shown in Exhibit 3 below. As with 2013, the Board will provide strategic direction to working groups. It will ensure that the four working groups are synchronizing their efforts. The Board's strategic guidance is expected to cover the priorities, actions, and speed of the efforts featured during its monthly meetings. In 2014, on an ad hoc basis, the Board meetings also will feature information on federal-wide accountability and transparency initiatives, such as other Open Government initiatives.

| Month | Calendar Year 2013 | | Calendar Year 2014 | |
	Topic	Date	Topic	Date
January	Strategic Direction	N/A (independent review of "Way Forward" document)	Stakeholder Engagement (Public Meeting)	F 2/7/2014 (originally 1/22/2014; postponed due to weather)
February	Strategic Direction	M 2/25/2013	Strategic Direction ("Way Forward" document)	W 2/26/2014
March	Procurement	W 3/27/2013	Grants	W 3/26/2014
April	Data Analytics	W 4/24/2013	Procurement	W 4/30/2014
May	Financial Management	W 5/23/2013	Financial Management	W 5/28/2014
June	Grants	W 6/26/2013	Data Analytics	W 6/25/2014
July	Procurement	W 7/31/2013	Stakeholder Engagement	W 7/30/2014
August	Data Analytics	W 8/28/2013	Grants	W 8/27/2014
September	Stakeholder Engagement	Th 9/12/2013	Procurement	W 9/24/2014
October	Stakeholder Engagement	W 10/30/2013	Financial Management	W 10/29/2014
November	Financial Management	W 11/20/2013	Data Analytics	W 11/19/2014
December	No meeting	N/A	No meeting	N/A

Exhibit 3. GAT Board's Continued Strategic Direction to Working Groups

Working Group Accomplishments and Objectives

In 2013, the Board provided strategic oversight to four working groups. At most of the Board's monthly meetings, a working group reported progress and planned activities. The Board will continue to rely on the working groups in 2014. This section describes accomplishments of each working group and outlines plans for 2014.

| Topic | Sponsoring GAT Board Member | Working Group Lead | Interagency Working Group | Progress Report | |
				2013 Actual	2014 Planned
Procurement Data Integrity and Standardization	DoD, as representative of Procurement Operational Community	DoD, with OFPP	Chief Acquisition Officers Council (COAC)	3/27/13 7/31/13	4/30/14 9/24/14
Grants Data Integrity and Standardization	HHS, as representative of Grants Operational Community	HHS, with OFFM	Council on Financial Assistance Reform (COFAR)	6/26/13	3/26/14 8/27/14
Financial Management (FM) Data Transparency[a]	Treasury, as representative of the Financial Management Community and as the program owner for USAspending.gov	Treasury, with OFFM	Chief Financial Officers Council and Federal Shared Service Providers	5/23/13 11/20/13	5/28/14 10/29/14

Topic	Sponsoring GAT Board Member	Working Group Lead	Interagency Working Group	Progress Report	
				2013 Actual	2014 Planned
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 the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE)	4/24/13 8/28/13	6/25/14 11/19/14

ᵃ Originally "FM Integration & Data Display" in CY 2013; revised in CY 2014 to more accurately reflect working group focus.

Procurement Data Integrity

The procurement data integrity working group is led by DoD and engages in collaborative, government-wide, cross-functional efforts that leverage existing federal-wide working groups, such as the Chief Acquisition Officer's Council (COAC). The goal is to ensure that key data standards, standard electronic transactions, and processes are identified and established in regulation to enable the financial community to uniquely trace electronic transactions from purchase request to payment for procurement contract actions. This will strengthen procurement and financial management operations while ensuring efficient and effective outcomes that enable transparency.

2013 Major Accomplishments

The procurement data integrity and standardization working group focused on transparency. This year, the group made significant progress improving operational efficiencies, and in turn, enabled greater transparency and traceability in Federal procurement. For example, the group recommended processes for uniform use of line items in Federal contracting. Additionally, the group also explored the RATB's goal of creating a universal award ID and sought information and strategies related to maturing procurement unique IDs to uniform IDs of procurement actions. This research resulted in several proposed regulation changes.

2014 Objectives

This upcoming year, the group will continue efforts to improve operational efficiencies that necessarily create greater transparency. They also will continue to support the regulatory process that is considering uniform procurement ID and uniform use of contract line items.

Cross collaboration will also be a focus this year as the group plans to provide input to an overarching spending accountability framework through development of standards for contract writing systems, invoices, receiving reports, and procurement requests. They will also engage the financial management group and larger financial community to develop procedures for tracing budget from funding to order then receipt and payment.

In addition to furthering their efforts to create a universal award ID and drive other operational efficiencies, the group plans to devote significant energy to improving spending data collection and display methods. This year, the group will provide strategic advice and recommendations to facilitate improved display of Federal procurement data available through USAspending.gov. They will engage key stakeholders of this data to determine priorities.

Grants Data Integrity and Standardization

The overarching goal of the grants working group, led by HHS, facilitates accurate and useful grant information across the federal government by establishing standardized grants data elements.

2013 Major Accomplishments:
Data standards provide the necessary foundation to build reliable and useful grants data. Therefore, the grants working group focused on data standards in 2013. It analyzed over 1100 data elements and definitions for the federal grants lifecycle from 17 different data sources, and made associated recommendations on key data elements. This research facilitated incorporation of 99 key data elements and associated definitions into the new OMB Grants Reform Guidance (released 12/26/13)[8]. The Group also provided input on grants data standardization governance to OMB and began to develop a prototype for possible information repositories capturing standardized grants data elements.

2014 Objectives
The grants working group will continue to focus on data standards. First, the working group will establish a Grants Data Standards Governance structure. This will ensure delineation of roles and responsibilities in determining how and who will govern grants data standards. The group will also conduct a Grants Data Standards Assessment and Verification, aimed at validating the initial findings and recommendations from the 2013 efforts and identifying Grants Data Standardization priorities for the future. Next, the working group will collaborate with the procurement community on the key FFATA data elements, with goals to: (1) agree to common terms and attributes across acquisitions and grants portfolios for FFATA specific data elements, (2) increase data element definition consistency across communities, and (3) increase accuracy, data quality, and transparency on USASpending.gov. Finally, the team will develop a Proof of Concept for a Grants Data Elements and Information Collection Request Management Tool, which—if proven—will: (1) streamline processes and the governance approach to document and enforce the use of established data standards, (2) reduce agency burden on developing Information Collection Requests (ICRs) and the burden on Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in reviewing ICRs, and (3) reduce duplication and increase reuse of existing data standards.

Financial Management Data Transparency
The purpose of the financial management data transparency working group is to identify options to initially improve the financial data quality on USAspending.gov while developing the long-term strategy in bringing together financial, procurement, and grant information so that federal spending can be traced through its life cycle from appropriation through payment, and to display the linked data in a meaningful way.

The working group is led by Treasury and is leveraging Treasury initiatives to improve financial management data. Additionally, the FY2014 budget transferred responsibility for the USAspending.gov web site from the General Services Administration to Treasury, effective

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[8] https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/12/26/2013-30465/uniform-administrative-requirements-cost-principles-and-audit-requirements-for-federal-awards

February 2014. Since USAspending.gov is the primary web site for providing federal spending data to the public, improvements to it remain a component of the transparency and accountability strategy.

2013 Accomplishments

The financial management integration working group focused on transparency and usability. Treasury identified three areas for improvement in USAspending.gov: data quality, consumability, and user experience. Treasury developed an approach to using structured data, leveraging tagging technology, to bring together data from its source systems. Currently USAspending.gov is populated with data from procurement and grant systems. Treasury is investigating the long term possibility of using payment data from financial systems as the primary source, linked to data from procurement and grant systems.

Treasury conducted a feasibility study to see if the award identifier (award ID) could be used to link contract data such as the award date and location, with financial data such as the object class and the Treasury account, which in turn corresponds to the programs authorized by Congress. Four federal financial management shared service providers participated in the study and determined that an award ID could be used. Additional time and resources would be required to build the capability.

2014 Objectives

Treasury's working group will provide GATB regular updates on the following efforts in 2014:

Data Quality

- Emerging methods for validating USAspending.gov data.
- Continued efforts to link procurement and financial data through the federal financial management shared service provider initiative.
- Additional feasibility studies to include additional agencies and grant data, to ensure the ability to link financial data with procurement and grant data is viable.
- Help develop—in concert with the efforts of the Procurement Data Integrity and Grants Data Integrity working groups—data standards for elements that are common across procurement, grants, and financial management. This includes agency identifiers, non-federal entity identifiers, and programs.
- Continue to explore and refine financial data that agencies could upload and display on USAspending.gov.

User Experience

- Continue to implement USAspending.gov improvements to address an easier-to-navigate site with an improved search engine, based on comments from the GATB public meeting and other agency feedback.

Data Analytics

The purpose of the data analytics working group is to develop a model for data to be made available for analysis, and identify tools and techniques for analyzing it to detect patterns.

2013 Accomplishments

The working group developed a proposal for a shared data analytics platform, which would be available to Inspectors General, program managers, and the general public.

The platform would consist of a data foundation layer (source data) consisting of links to USAspending.gov and Grants.gov. The second layer would consist of access to investigative databases. The top layer would contain the combined data analytic tools currently in use across government. As new tools are created they will appear for use on the platform. A logic library and workbench will be available for users to create new tools and access existing tools. That layer will also have a presentation gallery to display findings that will enable action and will permit the findings to be referred to action officials.

The proposal was referred to CIGIE, which referred it to the CIGIE IT Committee for review and evaluation.

2014 Objectives

As part of the imminent passage of the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA), the Department of the Treasury will be authorized to establish a data analysis center, or expand an existing service, to support the prevention and reduction of improper payments and to improve the efficiency and transparency of federal spending. The Act also will allow the Department of the Treasury to provide data that would assist in the identification and prevention of waste, fraud, and abuse in federal spending. The Department of the Treasury also will be assuming responsibility for all assets as identified by the Department of the Treasury related to the Recovery Operations Center (ROC) of the RATB on or before the date the RATB terminates.

Concurrently, IGs individually and together are moving to adopt the 2014 GATB proposal for an information sharing platform. This platform would include:

- Forensic Services – A space to offer specialized services.
- Data Analytics – A space to describe and link to existing data analytics tools across government, as well as to provide links to existing government, law enforcement, and commercial databases.
- Library – A space to store reports, testimony, articles, and other general reference materials.
- Professional Development Centers – A space to store reports, hold discussions, and upload resource documents related to particular areas of interest.
- Talent Services – A contact list of experts and experienced former investigators and auditors who are available to assist OIGs as needed.

This platform will allow users throughout the OIG community to share information and analytical tools in a secure, private environment. The proposed target date for the platform's standup is the summer of 2014, at which time OIG users can begin voluntarily sharing data and tools and requesting support services. As Treasury assumes its new responsibilities related to

data transparency legislation, information and technology used on this site will be shared or transferred as appropriate.

In addition to this effort, CIGIE, through the IT Committee's Data Analytic Working Group (DAWG), is working on a library of data sources and data analytics tools that could be shared within the IG community as a follow up to last year's GAO/CIGIE/RATB Data Analytics Forum and the report that was issued. This effort is expected to be launched this summer.