



Washington Update



HOUSE CONDUCTS DATA ACT HEARING

The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee conducted a joint hearing between two subcommittees last week to examine efforts by the U.S. Treasury Department and the U.S. Office of Management and Budget to implement the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act). The Subcommittee on Information Technology and the Subcommittee on Government Operations held the hearing on Wednesday, where Comptroller General Gene Dodaro released the U.S. Government Accountability Office's report on the DATA Act status. The report, "Progress Made in Initial Implementation but Challenges Must be Addressed as Efforts Proceed," identified the following issues:

- **Continued attention is needed to ensure consistency, comparability, and completeness of data standards:** OMB and Treasury have proposed standardizing 57 data elements for reporting under the act. They released 15 elements in May 2015, a year after the passage of the act, and have since released 12 more.
- **Further guidance will be needed to ensure consistency and comparability of program-related data:** OMB and Treasury will need to build on the program activity structure and provide agencies with guidance if they are to meet the stated purpose of the DATA Act: to "link federal contract, loan, and grant spending information to federal programs to enable taxpayers and policy makers to track federal spending more effectively."
- **Continued collaboration and dialogue will be needed:** To ensure that interested parties' concerns are addressed as implementation efforts continue, GAO recommended that the director of OMB, in collaboration with the secretary of the Treasury, build on existing efforts and put into place policies and procedures to foster ongoing and effective two-way dialogue with stakeholders, including timely and substantive responses to feedback received on the Federal Spending Transparency GitHub website.

Hearing video, the GAO report, and testimony from all panelists can be found at <https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/data-act-implementation/>.



NEXT ROUND OF DATA ELEMENT FEEDBACK CLOSES AUGUST 17

A series of new DATA elements are out for comment as part of the implementation effort. Although there are no new reporting requirements for recipients, the data elements that are approved could impact audits and oversight of federal awards. The definition of obligation/funding could have an impact on the way states do business, so feedback is encouraged.

The feedback period for the following data elements closes on August 17:

- Funding Action Obligation
- Non-Federal Funding Amount
- Funding Obligation Amount on Award
- Current Total Value of Award
- Potential Total Value of Award
- Award Type
- Action Type
- Record Type
- Business Type
- Action Date
- Period of Performance Start Date
- Period of Performance Current End Date
- Period of Performance Potential End Date
- Ordering Period End Date

To find more information about these elements and instructions on providing feedback, visit <http://fedspendingtransparency.github.io/>.

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE KEEPS SEC FUNDING AT CURRENT LEVEL, DEMANDS MORE SPENDING TRANSPARENCY

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved a bill last week that would keep funding for the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission at FY 2015 levels. Included in the bill is \$1.5 billion for the SEC. The bill also targets funding toward critical information technology initiatives and includes increased transparency and reporting

requirements on the SEC's spending habits. Specifically, the committee notes in the appropriations bill that:

- Despite significant increases in available funding for the SEC, the committee is concerned that the agency's elevated hiring rate is unsustainable and unsupported by its appropriation level. The SEC has a history of accounting weaknesses and Antideficiency Act violations, and the committee will continue to closely monitor the agency's hiring rate, target FTE level, and unobligated balances to ensure it is appropriately and effectively utilizing available resources.
- The committee directs the SEC to submit a detailed spending plan for the allocation of appropriated funds displayed by discrete program, project, and activity, including staffing projections, specifying both FTEs and contractors, and planned investments in information technology.
- The committee is concerned with a lack of transparency about agency projections for funding that will be unobligated at year end and carried forward into the following fiscal year. At the end of each quarter, the SEC is directed to report to the committee on its current unobligated balances and its estimate of unobligated balances that will remain available at the end of the fiscal year.

The bill now moves to the Senate floor, although no timetable for a vote has been set as of yet.

THE WEEKS AHEAD: SUMMER RECESS

Congress has entered its summer recess and will return to work on Tuesday September 8. The next *Washington Update* will be on Monday, September 14.

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