

Bond Case Briefs

Municipal Finance Law Since 1971

Great Act Passes Out of Committee, Awaits Senate Vote.

NASACT has been monitoring the [Grant Reporting Efficiency and Agreements Transparency Act \(GREAT Act, or H.R. 4887\)](#) for potential impacts on state and local governments as it makes its way through the legislative process. The GREAT Act is a continuation of the vision enmeshed in the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act), which required the federal government to utilize data standards for spending information. The GREAT Act essentially directs the executive branch to adopt a standardized data structure for the information grantees must report to agencies.

The companion measure ([S. 3484](#)) was introduced in the Senate on September 24 by Senators James Lankford (R-OK) and Michael Enzi (R-WY). On September 26, the bill moved out of the Homeland and Governmental Affairs Committee and now awaits a vote by the full Senate.

The bill's requirements align nicely with the efforts already underway to streamline grant reporting under the [President's Management Agenda](#). The eventual impact on state and local governments is unclear as the legislation directs the Office of Management and Budget to implement the requirements in consultation with stakeholders including state and local governments.

SUMMARY

The GREAT Act directs the executive branch to adopt a standardized data structure for the information grantees must report to agencies by:

- Requiring the creation of a comprehensive and standardized data structure, or "taxonomy," covering all data elements reported by recipients of federal awards, including both grant and cooperative agreements.
- Tasking the director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget to designate a standard setting agency with implementation.
 1. Within one year: Establish government-wide data standards for information related to federal awards reported by recipients of federal awards.
 2. Within two years: Issue guidance to grantmaking agencies on how to leverage new technologies and implement the new data standards into existing reporting practices with minimum disruption.
- Requiring the adoption of unique and non-proprietary identifiers for federal awards and entities receiving federal awards.
- Amending the Single Audit Act to provide for grantee audits to be reported in an electronic format consistent with the data standards.
- Requiring the data standards to:
 1. Render grant reports fully searchable, machine readable and non-proprietary.
 2. Align with standards maintained by voluntary consensus bodies.

3. Be consistent with applicable accounting principles.
4. Incorporate the data standards already established for federal spending information under the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (P.L. 101-133).

- Publish grant reporting information, once transformed into open data, on a government-wide website, such as the existing grants.gov portal.
- Providing exceptions and restrictions:
 1. No personally-identifiable or otherwise sensitive information will be published.
 2. Information not subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (Title 5, Section 552) will not be publicly disclosed.
 3. The OMB director to permit exceptions on a case-by-case basis.
- Requiring each grantmaking agency to begin collecting grant reports using the new data standards within three years.”

Should you have any questions or comments on this legislation, please feel free to contact NASACT's Washington office at (202) 624-5351 or email Cornelia Chebinou.