

The DATA Act

an overview

The Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act) is the first U.S. open data law. Its goal is to transform all federal spending information from disconnected documents into standardized, machine-readable data.

The DATA Act mandates two basic steps: first, **standardize** the data elements and format of the federal government's existing spending reports. Second, **publish** all that information as standardized, machine-readable data.

The DATA Act does not change the content of the existing reports, nor does it change who sends or receives the existing reports. It just imposes a common format and common data fields.

Transforming federal spending from documents into data

TIMELINE

Important dates for open data in federal spending

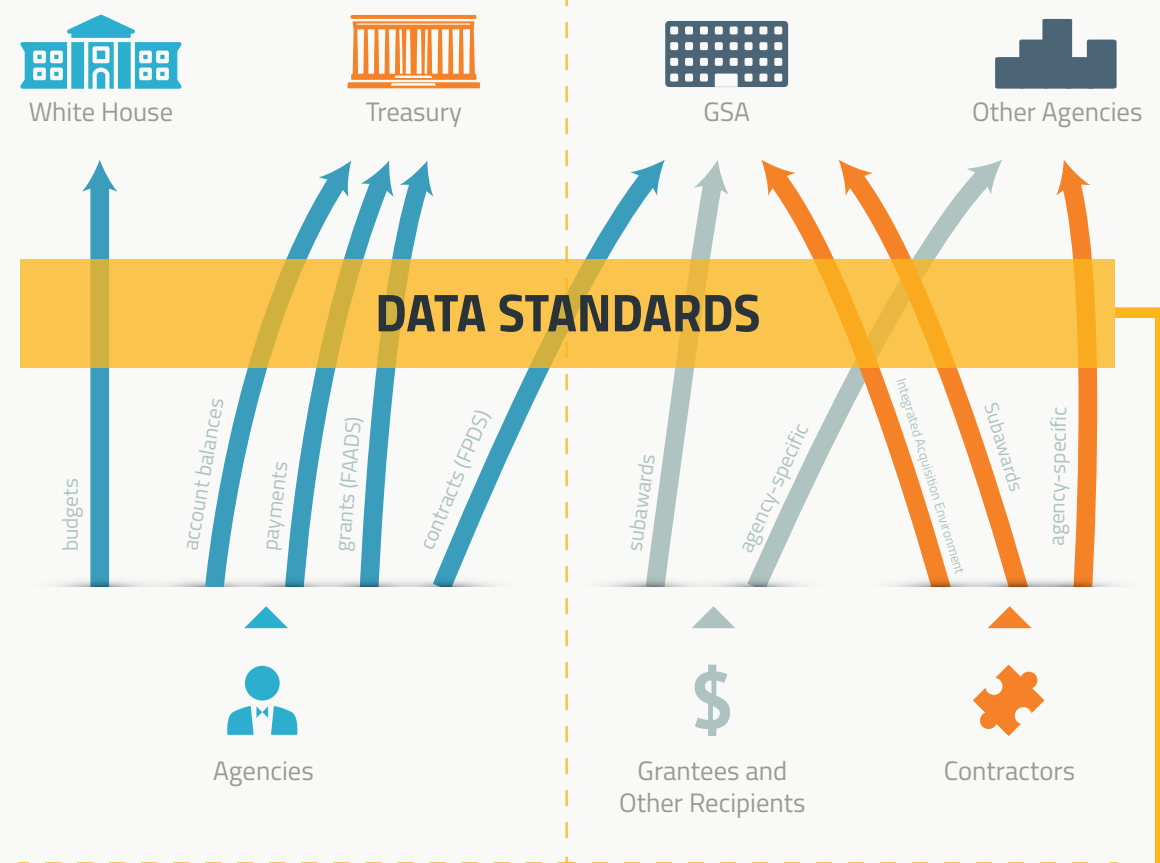
On May 9, 2014, President Barack Obama signed the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act), Public Law No. 113-101, which had been passed unanimously by both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The DATA Act is part of the U.S. government's long journey toward open data for federal spending.



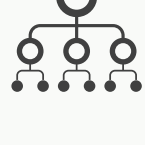
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STEP 1: STANDARDIZATION

The DATA Act directs OMB and Treasury to standardize the wide variety of existing reports related to spending. This includes both reports by the agencies and reports by recipients of federal grants and contracts.



Data Standards



Common Data Elements

Treasury and OMB will establish consistent ways of expressing core concepts like agency, grantee/contractor, time, and location.



Common Data Format

Treasury and OMB will establish a common data format, such as XML or XBRL, for all existing spending reports.

STEP 2: PUBLICATION

Once government-wide data standards are imposed on all existing federal spending reports, OMB and Treasury must publish all that information on an expanded version of the USASpending.gov website. Publishing this standardized data will create better accountability for taxpayers and citizens; improve federal management by illuminating waste and fraud; and reduce compliance costs by automating the creation of reports by grantees and contractors.



Benefits



Better Accountability

Citizens, watchdogs, and media will be able to view federal spending information in greater detail and trace its full life cycle from appropriations votes in Congress to final disbursement.



Better Management

Government managers will be able to use Big Data analytics to find waste and fraud and make data-driven decisions.



Automated Compliance

Grantees and contractors will be able to use software to automatically report to federal agencies on how they use federal funds - replacing today's costly manual compliance.



Tech Business Opportunities

New software tools and platforms will be needed to republish, analyze, and automate federal spending information once it is transformed from disconnected documents into open, machine-readable data. The DATA Act will launch business opportunities for established tech companies and ambitious startups.

DATA
TRANSPARENCY
COALITION

The Data Transparency Coalition is the nation's only open data trade association. Representing the private sector and the public interest, we support the publication of government information as standardized, machine-readable data. Join us at datacoalition.org

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