



# The IAE Digest

News and Program Updates from  
the Integrated Award Environment



Volume 4, Issue 3  
3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter FY17

## From the Deputy Assistant Commissioner

The third quarter of 2017 has been the most notable for me since I came to The Integrated Award Environment. To borrow from sports terminology, this quarter was the final “preseason game” for us in the IAE regarding the new environment we’ve been building. By the time you read the next issue of *the IAE Digest*, beta.SAM.gov will have been released and you will have had the opportunity to see the initial results of our work. While I can’t stress enough that at the time of release, beta.SAM.gov will very much be a “beta” site and it will be an evolving, growing work-in-progress, it’s nevertheless a very exciting time to be involved in this project. Migrating the critical functionalities of all 10 of the IAE systems into one comprehensive, easy-to-use, centralized site is a concept that has been many years in the making. Everyone on the team is anxious to finally “get it out there” for the world to see.



The benefits of the new beta.SAM.gov will be many and will undoubtedly help reduce the burden on our users. Among them, beta.SAM.gov will be easier to use with centralized administration (single sign-on), one search page, and one reporting tool. Also, beta.SAM.gov will provide a single data warehouse for expanded business intelligence as well as increased data quality and harmonization.

At launch, users will experience a unified homepage, global search and display, and single sign-up and sign-in.

Further down in this issue of *the IAE Digest*, you’ll see our proposed roadmap for when the functionalities of the current systems will transition into beta.SAM.gov. It will be an ongoing process, and once all testing is complete, the current systems will become obsolete (sunset); in other words, our current 10 systems aren’t going away anytime soon. Again, beta.SAM.gov is only a beta site. When it’s time to make the full switch over, we’ll be sure to let you know with plenty of advanced notice.

In the meantime, as always, we continue to make improvements to the systems that exist today to ensure they operate as you have told us you need them to. We’re excited to very soon show you the new, but we always keep our eyes on the systems you use now so that you can achieve your goals.

In the fourth quarter, I’ll report to you on how the launch of beta.SAM.gov occurred and on what progress we continue to make. Now, maybe more than ever, I urge you to continue to communicate with us through our various IAE channels, including on Interact and through email at [IAEOutreach@gsa.gov](mailto:IAEOutreach@gsa.gov). Let me know what you think about our work.

### In this issue:

- Making the Rounds
- Modernization Update
- Quarterly System Updates
- Security Process
- Industry Day
- Staff Spotlight



## Modernization Update: What Users Want

The Integrated Award Environment continues its modernization effort to combine all 10 IAE systems into a single website that will be released as a beta site for user testing. The modernized website, beta.SAM.gov, will have one homepage with a single sign on, one powerful search tool, one robust reporting tool, and one workspace where users can access the information and tools they need to make, receive, and manage federal awards. The functionality from each of the 10 legacy award systems is being moved incrementally to the beta site. The legacy systems will run in parallel with the new site during the transitions, and they will remain the authoritative sources until we retire them.

Based on users' feedback, beta.SAM.gov will improve both the way users search and view information. Our newly robust search tool is the first of many new features we are adding to beta.SAM.gov. The initial delivery of beta.SAM.gov will be open to the public for their feedback, but it will not replace any existing applications at this time. The beta site will not take the place of legacy sites at first. Users should continue to use legacy websites to find official information, run reports, and enter required data.

### WHAT TO EXPECT IN BETA.SAM.GOV

- A unified home page with alerts, feedback tool
- One powerful search tool to simplify daily tasks and increase business knowledge
- User sign-up and single sign-on for all of beta.SAM.gov
- Online help center for users getting started with beta.SAM.gov

Assistance Listings
Contract Opportunities
Contract Data
Entity Registrations
Entity Exclusions
Wage Determinations
Federal Hierarchy

### User Based Improvements

Our user community asked for a simple, more effective keyword search and that is what we are delivering. The new search tool is the primary functionality on the beta site. You'll be able to search and view detailed records for data from CFDA, FBO, FPDS, SAM, and WDOL. This data will have new names in beta.SAM.gov. For example, you'll be searching for "Contract Opportunities" rather than "FBO" on the new site, as shown below.

### One Website Means... Naming Conventions are Changing

Different types of award data, or "domains," make up the heart of SAM. You can either search across all domains or choose a specific domain to search within a specific data set.

All new users, regardless of whether or not they have accounts in the legacy websites, will need to create new accounts in beta.SAM.gov. Users will be asked to migrate their existing roles to beta.SAM.gov through a simple process with their legacy username and password which allows for only one user account and one sign-in to access all functionality.

- CFDA → Assistance Listings
- FBO → Contract Opportunities
- FPDS → Contract Data
- SAM → Entity Information
  - Registrations
  - Exclusions
- WDOL → Wage Determinations

Keep in mind that creating an account is different from registering as an entity. Entity registration is a future functionality on the beta site.

We're also excited to share that we've developed our new Help Center for you. The Help Center will be your one-stop shop for learning about beta.SAM.gov and the entire federal awards process.

Stay tuned for more updates as we continue to move forward with the modernization efforts.

## Quarterly System Updates

### System for Award Management

During the third quarter of 2017, we made the following updates to SAM.gov:

- Added the ability for entity administrators and entity registration representatives to download an XML file of their expired SAM registration data. This helps users who manage multiple registrations review and keep track of their entity information.
- Changed the "Delinquent Federal Debt" data element label to "Debt Subject to Offset" throughout the application to more clearly describe the indicator received from Treasury's Debt Management Service for entities with debt subject to collection under the Treasury Offset Program.
- Added the SAM Status Tracker to the main navigation menu and page footer for authenticated users so that they are able to quickly check a registrant's status from within the application increasing usability.
- Added the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) validated taxpayer name for entities that provided consent to disclosure of tax information after the February release, to a new version of both the sensitive entity management web service response schema and sensitive extract improving agencies' ability to validate vendor payment data.
- Implemented CAGE Code lookup functionality during the exclusion record create/update process in order to improve data quality.
  - For "firm" exclusion records that do not have a corresponding entity registration, agency exclusion administrators/representatives can now look up/verify the legal business name and physical address associated with a CAGE Code before adding it to the exclusion record.
- Updated content, titles, and description text on external resource pages to improve usability.
  - Included a link to <http://www.aptac-us.org/> to help users find their local Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), an official resource for government contracting assistance and which also provides free help to small businesses in completing their SAM registration.
- Incorporated several provision dates and minor language changes to the Representations and Certifications module from the Technical Amendments made in Federal Acquisition Circular (FAC) 2005-92, FAC 2005-94, and FAC 2005-95.

You can find all software release notes for SAM.gov at SAM.gov > About > News > Release Notes.



### Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS)

With each software release, we work to improve the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) and Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) user experience by improving the quality of information available. We do this through a combination of minor enhancements and fixing known issues. This list summarizes the customer-facing changes that were made to the CPARS/FAPIIS application in version 5.0.6 in April:

- We added new functionality called "Ad Hoc Reports" that allows the Department Point of Contact (DPOC) to query their CPARS data.
- We conducted a dashboard update that allows contract award dates with the year "9999."
- We created an Administrative Module of CPARS improved functionality of the Contract Awards Update option.

You can find all software release notes for CPARS under Release History at CPARS.gov.

## Making the Rounds: Conferences and Presentations

During the third quarter of 2017, the Integrated Award Environment (IAE) team was busy speaking in-person to stakeholder groups about the current and future state of our systems. We spent time discussing and showcasing (for the first time) our progress in the modernization effort, and we shared with our colleagues from around the world, best practices for our online award management capabilities. IAE staff represented our work at three key events: the World Codification Forum, the Government Procurement Conference, and the 2017 Procure-to-Pay Training Symposium.

### World Codification Forum

In May, Meredith Whitehead, current operations lead in the IAE business operations division, was in Melbourne, Australia, at the invitation of the NATO Group of National Directors of Codification (Allied Committee 135). She was invited to speak at the World Codification Forum, where she presented a case study about the current System for Award Management (SAM). The goal of the Forum was to establish an operational foundation with the U.S. National Codification Bureau (NCB) and NATO Support & Procurement Agency (NSPA) for future coordination.

Roughly four percent of those registered in SAM come from the international community. Oftentimes, international registrants have difficulty registering and interacting with SAM. During her presentation, Whitehead gave an overview about how to get started in SAM. She also provided a snapshot of the international registrants who are currently registered in SAM today, and she discussed reported challenges faced by international entities registering to do business with the U.S. government.

Her presentation and time spent in Melbourne helped facilitate valuable conversation with key international representatives. That two-way dialogue sparked several ideas to improve the user experience for the international community in both the current SAM and in the modernization effort known as beta.SAM.gov. These ideas are being refined and presented to the IAE Change Control Board (CCB) for consideration in accordance with IAE's governance structure.

### Government Procurement Conference

In April, Christy Hermansen, IAE's design lead, and Katherine Rollins, an IAE product owner for beta.SAM.gov, gave a presentation at the Government Procurement Conference (GPC) in Washington, D.C. about GSA's progress on beta.SAM.gov. The GPC is a national conference that develops business partnerships between the federal government, its prime contractors, and small, minority, veteran-owned, and women-

owned businesses.

They updated attendees on the progress of the modernization effort and they discussed plans for the product rollout and migration.

Hermansen and Rollins updated attendees on the progress of the modernization effort and they discussed plans for the product rollout and migration. During their presentation, they announced publicly for the first time that the new site, while in beta, will be called "beta.SAM.gov." They spoke about IAE's goal to reduce burdens on contractors and federal agency officials (two primary user groups of the current 10 sites) and our efforts to, make it easier for stakeholders to do business with the federal government. They also shared progress in creating a single place to access the range of data GSA collects, including contractor registration information, award data for prime and subcontractors, and information about companies excluded from government work.

### 2017 Procure-To-Pay Training Symposium

IAE's Deputy Assistant Commissioner Vicky Niblett, Operations Lead Memi Whitehead, and Design Lead Christy Hermansen all presented at the Procure-to-Pay symposium in Orlando, Florida. The symposium was designed to provide the contracting community, partner logistics, comptroller communities, and our industry partners with a better understanding of requirements for standard data and processes. Niblett discussed IAE's strategic value, the modernization efforts, and the roadmap ahead.

The P2P Training Symposium increases awareness of current contracting trends, processes, changing procedures and policies, and it provides an opportunity for the contracting community to come together and share problems and solutions. The technology landscape is still changing fast enough that platform options, federal security requirements, and user experience expectations likewise have changed significantly since some of our current systems were built.

When speaking about the modernization of the new site, Niblett said, *"This allows us to centralize administration, including single sign-on, centralized access (role) management, a centralized user directory, and a single federal hierarchy. We are providing a single help center that provides information that*

## IAE By the Numbers

*Rather than learning about the individual tools provided by separate IAE systems, our goal is to provide information on the federal awards eco-system, where beta.SAM.gov fits, and how you can be more effective throughout the awards lifecycle.”*

### Modernization Overview



**One website for people who make, receive, and manage federal awards**

- One Home Page
- Single Sign-On
- Search
- Reports
- Workspace
- Administration
- Help Center

Over 200 federal users are testing the search and display functions of beta.SAM.gov in our test environment. We will continue to deploy new functionality in the alpha testing environment until we launch [beta.SAM.gov](https://beta.sam.gov) by the end of Q4 FY 2017.

### IAE By the Numbers

#### Federal Service Desk 3rd Quarter Fiscal Year 2017

- ❖ Call volume was at an average of 34,269 calls per month
- ❖ Average speed to answer was 40 seconds, compared to the industry standard of 60-90 seconds
- ❖ Average handle/talk time is approximately 13 minutes and 15 seconds, compared to the 13 minutes and 19 seconds in Q2
- ❖ First call resolution rate increased to 96 percent and continues to exceed the industry standard of 80 percent

#### System for Award Management 3rd Quarter Fiscal Year 2017

- ❖ Average number of registrations activated per month:
  - New registrations: 7,021
  - Updated registrations: 57,042
- ❖ Average cycle time in 3Q FY 2017 was 1.89 days
- ❖ Average number of site visits per month was 1,287,129

## Industry Day Success

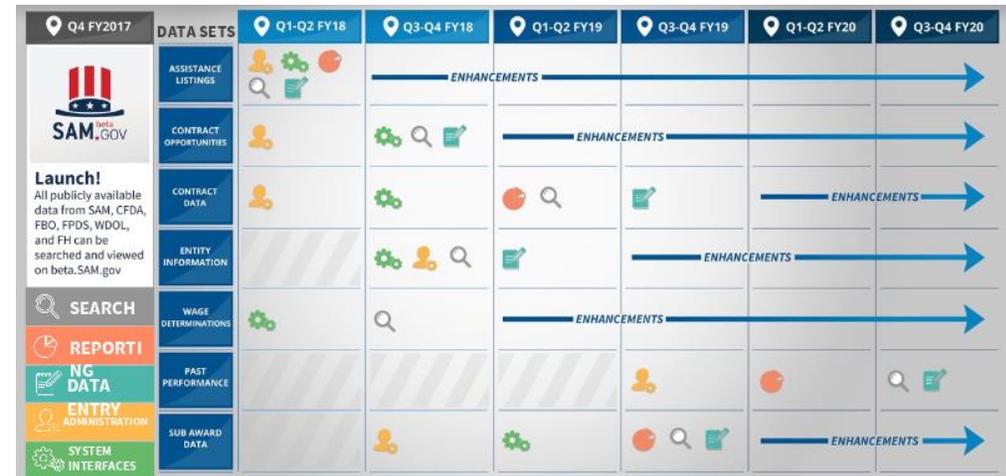
In June, IAE hosted another successful Industry Day engagement program. More than 125 attendees participated and heard Christy Hermansen, IAE design lead, present the beta.SAM.gov website, unveil the roadmap, and discuss upcoming focus group topics. There was also an exciting demo of the beta site shown to the audience.

When speaking about the modernization of the new site, Hermansen said, *“Our number one goal is to make it easier for our users who make, receive, and manage federal awards. The modernized system will have one homepage with a single sign-on, one powerful search tool, one robust reporting tool, and one workspace where users can access the information and tools they need to make, receive, and manage federal awards.”*

The key takeaways from Hermansen’s presentation included the following:

- beta.SAM.gov will launch in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2017 as a test site. Hermansen encouraged attendees to visit the beta site when it launches, try out the new search tool, learn how to navigate the site, become familiar with the terminology, and provide feedback about their experience.
- All 10 legacy websites, including SAM.gov, will run in parallel to beta.SAM.gov and remain the authoritative sources until we decommission them one by one.
- beta.SAM.gov will eventually become SAM.gov. The future SAM.gov will include all of the features of our 10 current systems.
- We will center upcoming industry focus group topics around how to manage user accounts and permissions, migrate legacy permissions, and link together user information across all of the new site’s data sets.

Hermansen’s Industry Day presentation included a roadmap showing how each website’s functionality will transition into the modernized site. IAE is incrementally migrating each of the current websites into beta.SAM.gov using the “agile” methodology.



Did you miss Industry Day? You can find event materials and an archived recording for this and previous Industry Day presentations on the IAE Interact site. To receive information about our next event, please join IAE’s Interact Community here: <https://interact.gsa.gov/group/integrated-award-environment-iae-industry-community>.



## Why Is Security our Highest Priority?

Security is one of the biggest issues facing anybody online today. The Internet is full of hackers and scammers harming businesses and stealing personal identifying information (PII). Every day there are new cases of security and data breaches. Within the IAE, one of our most important job is to protect our users from these threats while making our website convenient and easy to use. Take a closer look into what we did to make security the highest priority for beta.SAM.gov.

### ***Agile Security Must Be Fundamental***

Our stakeholders understand by now that the beta.SAM.gov site design and creation relies on working in an agile way rather than the traditional waterfall method. A typical agile workflow includes daily scrums, release planning, scrum masters, product owners, epics, features and user stories, and perhaps kanban. However, none of that matters if security is not built in as you go. We strongly believe that security is fundamental to our site design. Weak security invites hackers, stolen data, privacy violations, and the compromising of the quality and integrity of the new system. Therefore, the Integrated Award Environment (IAE) works hard to ensure security is built in to every step of development by working directly with integrated agile development teams and leadership to meet the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)-generated federal and General Services Administration (GSA) security requirements. Security controls and action plans to continuously monitor the work are in place, so that when an Authority to Operate (ATO) approval is granted, ample documentation assures that security is intact.

### ***Planning Cycles***

We embed the security team into the planning cycles for the beta.SAM.gov site design. For the IAE, that means we include a security representative with the development teams as they work through backlog grooming, perform security reviews and code assessments, and participate in cross-team meetings. The security team plans their own stories, follows their own kanban board, and participates in scrums as well. This ensures visibility into the security innerworkings and allows the development teams to see where their input is necessary.

The goal of security oversight is to enable GSA to meet its mission and business objectives by implementing systems that reduce the IT-related risks to GSA, its partners, and customers. Our user community can be assured and confident that we take security seriously.

### **Did You Know?**

- ❖ The goal of the Federal Service Desk (FSD.gov) is to help visitors get the information and assistance they need for the websites that the FSD supports via live chat or over the telephone. There are NO fees associated with any FSD supported websites.

FSD Representatives are available by phone at 1-866-606-8220 or live chat at FSD.gov on Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 8 PM Eastern Time.

- ❖ GSA is looking for entity administrators and other IAE system account holders from both large and small businesses to participate in our focus groups scheduled in July. Focus group topics will be centered around how to represent your organization, manage your user accounts and permissions, migrate legacy permissions, and link together and manage your information across all of our datasets.

### **Follow IAE:**

- ✓ Join our [Interact community](#)
- ✓ [Follow us on Twitter @USGSA and @FAS\\_Outreach](#)
- ✓ [Email us at IAEOutreach@gsa.gov](mailto:IAEOutreach@gsa.gov)
- ✓ [Visit our website at GSA.gov/IAE](#)
- ✓ For technical support, please visit the Federal Service Desk at [FSD.gov](#)