



The IAE Digest

*News and Program Updates from the
Integrated Award Environment*

GSA

Volume 4, Issue 1
1st Quarter FY17

From the Deputy Assistant Commissioner



As we welcome everyone back from the holiday season, allow me to be the most recent to wish you all a healthy and prosperous 2017. At the Integrated Award Environment, we are excited for the significant progress coming in 2017. We greet the new year with renewed invigoration and anticipation for what we are poised to produce this year. The results made in the new environment will be something to watch! And as we move forward, we'll be relying on our users more than ever to provide valuable feedback; as always, you're a critical part of our success.

First up in fiscal year 2017 was the planning for and beginning to work on Release 8. Starting in the first quarter, Release 8 will reduce the burden of doing business with the federal government (it will “make things easier”) and will improve user experience. You’ll read more about Release 8 further on in this edition of The IAE Digest.

You’ll also read about user testing that began in the first quarter. This is the essential feedback I mentioned a moment ago. It’s beyond exciting to have functionalities to test and an environment to work within. There will be significantly more testing to come in calendar year 2017. Stay tuned!

As I’ve written many times in this space in the past, change is the one constant that surrounds us at IAE. There have been many changes within the IAE program. We’ve added crucial key positions and have reassigned staff to roles that better suit their skills and the program, and in turn, will enable us to deliver a more robust finished product.

The current 10 systems we manage within the IAE all are working as appropriate, and our dedicated system owners and staff work every day to maintain them while we move toward the new environment.

The Federal Service Desk stands ready to assist our system users, and calls and response times remain steady.

2017 is going to be a banner year for the IAE program and for our users as they begin to interact with the new environment. We’re confident our efforts will pay off and you will enjoy a better user experience with all of our systems, current and future.

As always, I continue to urge you to interact with the IAE through our various channels, including the IAE section on GSA Interact, through GSA’s Twitter account at @USGSA, or through our industry engagement programs.

You can also reach me directly with any questions, suggestions, or concerns at IAEOutreach@gsa.gov.

In this issue:

- User Testing
- IAE Design Lead
- Dun and Bradstreet
- The beta.SAM.gov Product Vision
- Industry Day
- Release 8 Planning

The IAE Digest

Volume 4, Issue 1
1st Quarter FY2017



IAE Design Lead: Christy Hermansen



Every great technology solution needs a great design lead; and the IAE has one! Please join us in welcoming Christy Hermansen to her new role as design lead for the new environment. Although Christy has been working with IAE and on the new environment for some time, this is a role she was tailor-made for. Christy has more than 20 years of experience working in IT within the government sector. She brings a stellar background in design and UX UI experience to her new role. We recently sat with her to chat about the future of IAE.

IAE: How did you get started in the Tech Industry?

Christy: The first time I wrote a program was around 1987 while I was an Illustrator in the Army, but I didn't get serious about programming until after I was in college. In college, I worked for a screen printing shop, creating t-shirt graphics using an old MS-DOS program. I wanted to know more about how the program worked. I took a programming class and was hooked. I changed my major from Marketing to Computer Science and never looked back.

IAE: What do you like about working at IAE?

Christy: That's easy - the team I work with in IAE. Maybe that sounds cliché, but it's a big deal to me to work with a team that I like and believe in; and a team that has a mission I get excited about.

IAE: What are your plans for the modernization of the new environment?

Christy: Right now, we are moving all of our help online and making it easier to find the help you need when you need it. And we have a big effort underway to centralize role management, making it easier to understand and manage user permissions across an organization and across all of the modernized SAM.gov features. (cont.)

We also have on-going efforts that will continue in 2017. For example, with each capability we add, we simplify and streamline design. We are bringing 10 systems together. Creating a consistent experience is an iterative process, especially since we have to also respect the unique requirements of the different systems.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

- Margaret Mead

User Testing

In the first quarter of 2017, The IAE made user testing available for the new environment that we're building (currently known as beta.SAM.gov). IAE began allowing testers to explore a few new features within the new environment including search capabilities, data entry, and reporting. Testing will remain open ended with new features being added each month. IAE hosted a kickoff meeting on December 7th via Adobe Connect, during which we set expectations, distributed welcome packages, demonstrated available features, and explained the feedback process.

The initial testing phase was for government users only who were nominated by IAE's governance bodies or the Federal Service Desk (FSD). Testers explored (and continue to explore) new features in a production-like environment on our Common Services Platform, using three distinct URLs. The first iteration of testing consisted of search, federal hierarchy, and FPDS reports (Login).

Each testing session will be followed by monthly meetings via Adobe Connect or in-person to introduce new functionality and gather and address feedback.

For any questions about or suggestions for new functionality and system maintenance, please email NewSAMTesting@gsa.gov.

The IAE Digest

Volume 4, Issue 1
1st Quarter FY2017



Dun and Bradstreet

In the first quarter of 2017, GSA made changes to our long-standing relationship with Dun & Bradstreet. Currently, all contracts, grants, loans and other spending activity reported in GSA's Integrated Award Environment (IAE) are tied to Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) information. GSA has partnered with D&B since the 1970s, and this longstanding relationship for data collection has supported responsible award decisions using taxpayer dollars and it has provided insights into federal government spending.

GSA and D&B recently renegotiated our contract to incorporate an important change to the way the federal government can use the proprietary D&B data obtained through the IAE systems.

What are the key contractual changes?

Expanded Use for Federal Government: This change eliminates barriers of use within government for D&B-sourced data distributed by the IAE, opening up data use to any federal agency for their business analysis purposes.

Perpetual Retention: This change eliminates the requirement to remove D&B-sourced content from government systems if another party takes over D&B's support role, eliminating a potentially enormous costly and burdensome transitional challenge.

Commercial Re-use: This change allows third parties to access and use a subset of D&B data for commercial use.

In addition, GSA, DoD, and NASA published a regulatory rule removing proprietary D&B references in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR). By removing references to specific identifiers, the FAR change removes any policy requirements regarding who can provide key services to the federal government.

Together, these actions lay the foundation for the next steps in analyzing alternatives to support the continued integrity of the federal procurement process, increase transparency, and open competition.

Update

IAE by the Numbers

Federal Service Desk

1st Quarter FY2017

- Call Volume per month for Q1. - (average Call Volume per month - 29,031)
- First call resolution Average. - 94.48%
- Average speed to answer Average - 30 seconds
- Average handle time Average - 14.12 minutes

System for Award Management

1st Quarter FY2017

- Number of Registrations Activated (new) October 1st - December 31st - 6,023
- Number of Registrations Activated (update) October 1st - December 31st - 44,032
- Average Cycle Time (Days) (current month & current quarter) October 1st - December 31st - 2.10
- Average Number of Visits (current month & current quarter) October 1st - December 31st - 966,871
- Average Number of Searches Performed (current month & current quarter) October 1st - December 31st - 4,489,432

The IAE Digest

Volume 4, Issue 1
1st Quarter FY2017



The beta.SAM.gov Product Vision

As we continue down the path of creating the new environment (beta.SAM.gov), it's always good to take a step back and consider what we're building and how it will affect our users. As we build the technology solution that results from the merging of 10 disparate federal IT systems, we're always mindful that our end users are critically important in everything we do.

As we merge the systems that are used today (including FBO.gov, FPDS.gov, and the current beta.SAM.gov) to research, manage, administer, and report on federal awards, we do so with the following vision in mind:

Trusted— the new environment will be regarded as a trustworthy source for all things related to federal awards. The secure platform will provide consistent and dependable access to reliable, accurate and timely data and business intelligence. Presented in a transparent manner, the new environment will serve as a credible source for insight into award opportunities and expenditures

Essential— the new environment will serve as the official site for all stakeholders participating in the federal awards process. A modern and leading-edge technology tool user can't live without, the new environment will offer a comprehensive suite of capabilities enabling users to accomplish their required task when they need to, in the way they want to, and in collaboration with the people they need to work with.

Seamless —the new environment will be simple, straightforward, and easy to use and maintain. It will eliminate task redundancy and reduce barriers to participating in federal awards processes. Constructed with users in mind, the new environment strives to model the TurboTax® experience, allowing users to be up and running quickly with minimal training or experience, while offering extensive user resources to help when needed.

Connecting to the Business of Government—We define the “business of government” as transactions, exchanges, or interactions made internally within the federal government and externally with other organizations.

The new environment will be the singular entry point that joins up anyone seeking to do business with, or on behalf of, the federal government. At IAE we are working together to build a technology solution that meets the criteria expressed in our product vision.

The modernization efforts for environment is introduced to our customers and stakeholders through the beta.SAM.gov site. We hope you'll begin to see this product vision unfold.



The IAE Digest

Volume 4, Issue 1
1st Quarter FY2017



10 Legacy Systems

GSA's Integrated Award Environment is currently managing 10 disparate systems that together enable a wide range of user to participate in the federal award and acquisition process. Those 10 systems are:

- ❖ Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA)
- ❖ Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS)
- ❖ Electronic Subcontractor Reporting System (eSRS)
- ❖ Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)
- ❖ Federal Business Opportunities (FBO)
- ❖ Federal Funding and Accountability Transparency Act Sub-award Reporting System (FPRS)
- ❖ Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS)
- ❖ Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS)
- ❖ Wage Determination Online (WDOL)
- ❖ System for Award Management (SAM)

The IAE program office is in the process of integrating the functionality of these 10 systems into one technology environment.

Industry Day 11

IAE held another Industry Day program on November 15, 2016. There were 238 stakeholder participants. In case you missed it, please access the recording of the Industry Day by clicking the following link: <https://meet.gsa.gov/p1ls4qklmr6/>

The recent Industry Day featured IAE's Design Lead, Christy Hermansen, who presented proof-of-concept wire frames illustrating our vision for the new environment. Participants saw a unified website with one search function across all award data; a single workspace for entering award data; a single reporting center; and centralized administration of users and organizations. They also saw power views showing how we are making it easy to find all of the related information for an object (for example, an entity, an agency, or an award). Finally, the presentation illustrated how the legacy systems would map into IAE's new vision.

Event materials and an archived recording (for this and previous Industry Day presentations) can be accessed are housed on the IAE Interact site: <https://interact.gsa.gov/event/industry-day-11-fy17-q1>

The next Industry Day event will be held in the second quarter of 2017.

The IAE Digest

Volume 4, Issue 1
1st Quarter FY2017



Release 8 Planning

2017's first quarter brought us to Release 8 planning for the new environment. The purpose of Release 8 Planning was to improve the user's experience and reduce the burden of doing business with the federal government. The vision for the new environment is to be the trusted, essential place to seamlessly connect to the business of government.

On November 11, 2016, there were several customer-facing changes that were made to the SAM application and database in the development window culminating in the build to production.

- A redesign to the "Purpose of Registration" page to improve accessibility and user experience. This also led to IAE to deploy a batch upload tool for Service Contract Reporting to allow contractors with multiple service contracts a more efficient way to report.
- A replacement of the "Information Opt Out" as well as a redesigned "SAM Search Authorization" page to encourage inclusion in SAM public search and better explain why an entity would opt out of the public search.
- While in the past some of the software releases have had minor enhancements and fixing issues, Release 8 will see a major overhaul in updates.

Release 8 will achieve the following:

- Enable users to access publicly available information, except reported awards, through Search and Display.
- Enable users with the capability to view details on publicly available information, except reported awards, derived from search results.
- Redesign the new beta.SAM.gov Homepage to assist the end user to navigate beta.SAM.gov. There will be a complete inventory of data entry fields from existing systems (with validation rules) to identify required fields for new beta.SAM.gov with data views supported by the well-designed backend data structure. Inventory existing interfaces and identify/prioritize those interfaces that will be required for beta.SAM.gov.

For the latest updates on Release 8 planning and other software releases visit the IAE page on Interact or contact us at IAEOutreach@gsa.gov.

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