January 14, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, House Minority Leader

Subject: Support the Grant Reporting Efficiency and Agreements Transparency (GREAT) Act of 2019 (H.R. 150)

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We write to express our strong support for the bipartisan Grant Reporting Efficiency and Agreements Transparency (GREAT) Act of 2019 (H.R. 150). This bill would facilitate the modernization of federal grant recipient reporting and improve agency grant management across the government. This will ultimately improve program administration in grant making agencies and reduce compliance burdens for recipients of federal grants. The GREAT Act unanimously passed the House of Representatives as H.R. 4887 in the 115th Congress, and we are eager to see similar support in the 116th Congress.

In 2017 more than thirty-five federal agencies awarded $662.7 billion in grant funding to 40,000 grant recipients through 1,800 unique programs. Recipients of federal awards are required to report on their use and management of these funds. Post-award grant reporting is a cumbersome document-based process where recipients fill out disintegrated forms across multiple agency reporting systems. Administrators of agency grant programs rely on recipient reported award management and performance information, but struggle to efficiently conduct program evaluations and programmatic comparability studies. The problems are even more challenging for government-wide and Congressional oversight work.

The 2014 Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act) (P.L. 113-101) conducted a two-year grant reporting pilot study, which aimed to reduce burdensome reporting requirements for grant recipients and provide grant making agencies with comprehensive, interoperable post-award grant information. The pilot discovered over 440 unique federal grant reporting forms containing similar data collection requirements while using differently titled data elements (e.g., "Street Address" versus "Address 1" versus "Street Address Line 1"). Such variance in data definitions confuses recipients and prevents interoperable agency information technology systems. The pilot program analyzed each data element to recommend 35,000 harmonized data element definitions as openly defined in the [Common Data Element Repository (CDER) Library](#), and provided a robust proof of concept.

In 2017 the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) reported the results of the DATA Act's pilot project to Congress and recommended that "a comprehensive taxonomy of standard definitions for core data elements" be developed across all federal grant reporting (see: "[Report to Congress: DATA Act Pilot Program](#)"). The GREAT Act will codify the results of this successful DATA Act pilot project to simplify and harmonize federal grant recipient reporting obligations.

OMB is currently developing draft grant reporting data standards under the "Results-Oriented Accountability for Grants" Cross-Agency Priority Goal. The GREAT Act requires the OMB to work with a leading grant making agency and consult with the public, state and local governments, as well as industry and privacy experts. The bill will establish searchable and machine-readable data standards that leverage both existing accounting standards and the established USAspending.gov government-wide DATA Act Information Model Schema.

Ultimately, the development and government-wide use of harmonized data standards will allow modern accounting and project management software to simplify recipient reporting obligations. Organizations are awarded federal funding to produce mission value in an efficient and effective manner. Not spend copious amounts time on convoluted, costly compliance exercises.

We urge the 116th Congress to support this important legislation so that all federal grant recipients and agency programs may benefit in the future.

Sincerely,

American Association of Law Libraries (AALL)
American Library Association (ALA)
Association of Government Accountants (AGA)
Association of Research Libraries (ARL)
Data Coalition
Demand Progress
Government Accountability Project (GAP)
Government Information Watch
Grant Professionals Association (GPA)
National Grants Management Association (NGMA)
National Taxpayers Union (NTU)
Native American Finance Officers Association (NAFOA)
Project On Government Oversight (POGO)
R Street Institute
Senior Executives Association (SEA)
Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC)