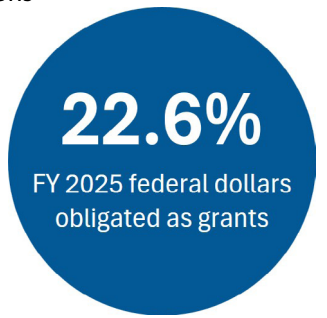


Measuring Grant Performance: Understanding and Communicating Program Outcomes

Opportunities to Operationalize Improved Grants Performance

Federal grants support nearly every aspect of public life, from housing to broadband access, education, infrastructure, disaster recovery and more. In FY 2025, grants represented 22.6 % of all federal obligations (\$1.2T of \$5.3T). Despite this scale, federal awarding agencies struggle to measure performance and communicate the outcomes of programs funded by grants. With increasing scrutiny from the Administration, Congress, oversight bodies, and the media, performance measurement is essential.

At the [2026 AGA Performance Counts Summit](#) (Summit), a panel of federal and state leaders in grants management shared their experience and perspectives on grants performance measurement. Three themes emerged as opportunities for how grant-making agencies can strengthen performance measurement: 1) Data quality and standardization; 2) System infrastructure and capacity; and 3) Program design. Each theme presents practical opportunities to enhance performance measurement to communicate program outcomes and to better support mission objectives.

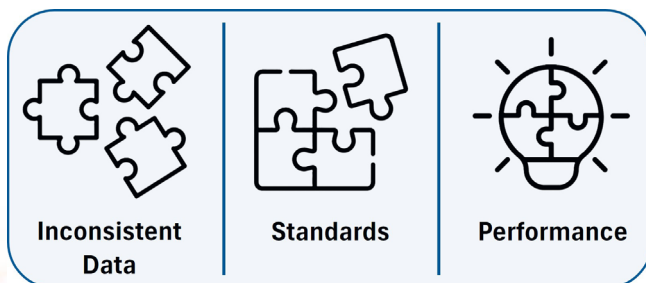


1. Data Quality and Standardization

Challenge: Programs that address similar missions often use different data elements and definitions. These inconsistencies limit the ability to compare outcomes, assess impact, and communicate results across agencies.

Opportunity: Federal momentum for standardization is increasing as various initiatives promote transparency and reduce burden. Examples include the:

- [Grant Reporting Efficiency and Agreements Transparency Act of 2019 \(GREAT Act\)](#): Law intended to further modernize federal grant reporting by requiring the establishment of government-wide grant data standards
- [Grants Data Standards](#): Consistent with the GREAT Act, HHS released v. 2.1 of the grants data standards with 339 common data elements in August 2025
- [OMB Federal Program Inventory \(FPI\)](#): The goal of the FPI is to create a mechanism for the federal government to better link spending and performance data across programs and agencies



Action: Adopt and continue to expand data standards and definitions. This supports effective performance measurement and integration of comparable data into modern, interoperable grants systems. Grant systems such as FI Consulting's [Program Investment Manager \(PIM\)](#) is designed to seamlessly incorporate data and support analytics, dashboards, and AI-enabled insights.

2. System Infrastructure and Capacity

Challenge: Many agencies rely on fragmented systems that cannot easily incorporate new data standards or evaluate data across programs. Some offices still depend on manual tools such as Excel, which create data silos, limits visibility, and makes data analytics more challenging.

Opportunity: Federal IT modernization efforts are expanding. The [Grants Quality Service Management Office \(QSMO\)](#) provides a marketplace of vetted grants management solutions that help accelerate modernization. These solutions align with the governmentwide grant management framework and are agile enabling them to integrate new data standards.

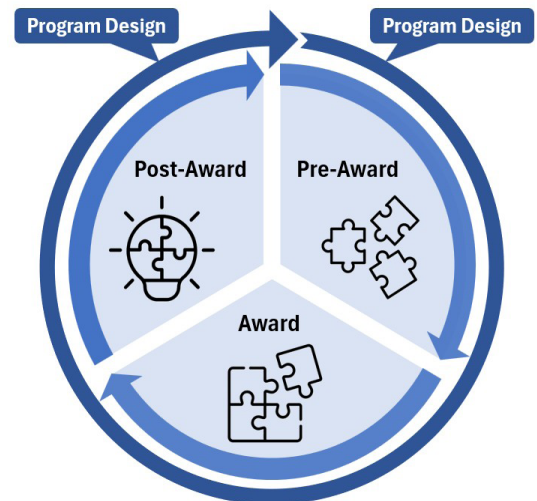
Action: Deploy cohesive grant management solutions. QSMO-recommended solutions such as [PIM](#) are aligned with standards which help expedite data integration, strengthen data analytics capabilities, and support cross-program analysis. These capabilities reduce administrative burden and strengthen the ability to measure performance.

3. Program Design

Challenge: Programs often do not perform comprehensive program design that identifies data requirements and performance measures during the pre-award phase of the grants management lifecycle. This is the case for new programs as well as recurring programs that do not apply lessons learned to improve program design and better measure performance for the next award cycle.

Opportunity: Beginning with the 2020 revisions to the federal grant regulations, as well as subsequent updates, OMB requires agencies to conduct program design activities that define program goals, objectives, and performance measures during the pre-award phase before launching a program. OMB also published additional resources to assist agencies to develop performance measures.

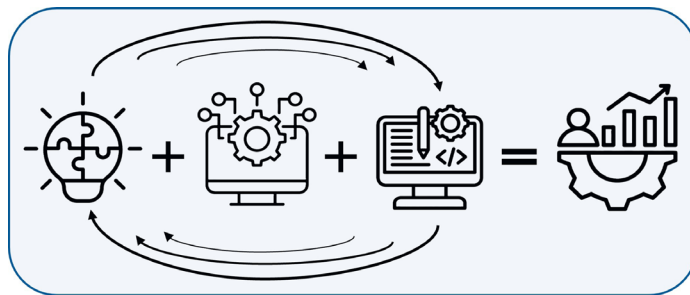
Action: Identify data requirements and performance measures during pre-award, and use each award cycle as an opportunity to evaluate and refine program design. Program design and performance measurement are iterative by virtue of the grants management lifecycle and regulatory revisions. Agencies can also identify and learn about performance measures from similar programs by consulting the [Federal Program Inventory](#).



Bringing It All Together

Aligning data standards, modernized systems, and intentional program design helps create a foundation for meaningful performance measurement and the ability to communicate outcomes. Continually evaluating and improving upon program design is essential to both measuring and enhancing program performance.

For example, during the Summit panel participants discussed challenges measuring job creation. Some programs track Full-Time Employees, while others track Full-Time Equivalent employees. Both measures are valid; however, they produce incomparable data. Without data standards and standardized definitions the government cannot easily intake data into systems for analysis to evaluate program performance. Thoughtful consideration of data standards and definitions for job creation during program design, as well as before a new award cycle, provides the opportunity to calibrate data and performance measures, as well as how they are collected, to better communicate program outcomes.



About FI Consulting

FI Consulting helps agencies operationalize these opportunities to better measure performance by:

- Integrating grants data standards into system business requirements
- Modernizing grants management systems technology through PIM
- Building analytics and dashboards into systems that clearly communicate outcomes
- Applying AI and automation to reduce burden and enhance insight
- Supporting agencies with designing programs with measurable, outcome-focused performance frameworks



Author: Brette Fishman

Brette Fishman is the Director of Grants Management Solutions at FI Consulting and leads the firm's support for clients that manage grants and financial assistance programs. From grantee to grantor, pre-award to audits and post-award adjustments, and everything in between, Brette brings over 20 years of experience leading and enhancing financial assistance programs. She specializes in project and program management, continuous process improvement, systems modernization, and change management.

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