

DATA ANALYTICS FOR OVERSIGHT & LAW ENFORCEMENT

CONVENED BY THE

Government Accountability Office

Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency

Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board

Why This Forum Was Convened

Oversight and law enforcement agencies play an important role in eliminating fraud, waste, and abuse. Sharing data, knowledge, and analytic tools can assist government agencies in this effort. However, while there is a tremendous amount of information the government can use in preventing and detecting fraud, waste, and abuse, using and leveraging these data can be challenging.

In January 2013, GAO, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board convened a forum with the purpose of exploring ways in which oversight and law enforcement agencies use data analytics to assist in the prevention and detection of fraud, waste, and abuse, as well as identifying the most-significant challenges to realizing the potential of data analytics and actions that the government can take to address these challenges.

This report summarizes the key themes that emerged from the discussion in the forum. Specifically, the report discusses the challenges and opportunities in (1) accessing and using data and (2) sharing data. In addition, participants identified next steps to address these challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

Forum participants included representatives from federal, state, and local government agencies as well as the private sector.

View [GAO-13-680SP](#). For more information, contact Steve M. Lord at (202) 512-4379 or lords@gao.gov.

What Participants Said

Participants identified a range of challenges and opportunities associated with data analytics—which involve a variety of techniques to analyze and interpret data to facilitate decision making—as discussed below.

Challenges and opportunities in accessing and using available data

Challenges participants cited include, among other issues, oversight and law enforcement entities not always being aware of all the data that may be available to assist them in their duties, and a lack of incentives for program offices to develop information-technology systems to support data analysis by oversight and law enforcement entities. Participants also noted other issues related to managing and using data such as challenges in developing a strategy to prioritize limited resources and the difficulty oversight entities face in measuring the success of fraud-prevention efforts.

Participants also identified opportunities to enhance data-analytics efforts, such as consolidating data and analytics operations in one location to increase efficiencies by enabling the pooling of resources as well as accessing and sharing of the data. Participants further identified strategies to garner organizational support for data-analytics programs, such as short-turnaround projects that produce quick, valuable successes to highlight the value of data analytics.

Challenges and opportunities in sharing data

Challenges participants cited include, among other issues, certain statutory requirements that place procedural hurdles on agencies wishing to perform data matching to detect fraud, waste, and abuse, and technical obstacles—such as the lack of uniform data standards across agencies—which make it more difficult for oversight and law enforcement entities to share available data. Participants also noted challenges in sharing data across federal, state, and local government agencies due to a variety of factors including actual and perceived legislative barriers.

Participants also discussed opportunities that could be realized if the government utilized and shared interoperable, open-source analytical tools and techniques, which could lessen the challenge of developing licensing agreements for proprietary software tools, be utilized at a low cost, and be tailored to meet the needs of individual agencies.

Next steps

Participants identified several next steps that the three sponsoring organizations agreed to implement, including: compiling a consolidated directory of data sources to increase awareness; compiling a library of available open-source data analytics, modules, and tools; developing an ongoing community of practice focused on data-sharing challenges; and examining the existing statutory framework to determine whether changes related to challenges and barriers for data analytics would be useful to oversight and law enforcement agencies in carrying out their missions.