

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

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Opening Statement of Chairman Gerald E. Connolly Hearing on “FITARA 14.0” July 28, 2022

Since the enactment of the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act in 2014, this Subcommittee has maintained steady and bipartisan oversight of its implementation. **Congress enacted FITARA to establish a long-term framework through which federal IT investments could be tracked, assessed, and managed. Since the Scorecard’s inception, agencies have significantly reduced wasteful spending and improved project outcomes, saving taxpayers nearly \$24 billion.**

The table you see provides an overview of how the federal government performed for both the 13.0 and 14.0 Scorecards.

Compared to overall grades reported in the 13.0 Scorecard, FITARA 14.0 has one fewer “A” grade, three fewer “B” grades, two more “C” grades, and two more “D” grades. While no agency has received an “F” since May 2018, an “A” grade remains unusual—with two in the last Scorecard and one this Scorecard. The United States Agency for International Development’s grade remains the lone “A.” On an individual agency level, one grade improved, eight fell, and 15 stayed the same. In addition, of the three testifying agencies, the Department of Defense overall grade has declined from “C+” in 2021 to “D+” in 2022; the Environmental Protection Agency has declined from “B+” to “C+”; and GSA has maintained a “B+” grade.

FITARA is a biannual snapshot that allows Congress and the public to hold agencies accountable for improving their IT postures. As I have said before, grades are not scarlet letters. This scorecard is a tool to promote better cybersecurity, enhance IT performance, and improve customer service across the federal government. These hearings offer Congress and the public a better understanding of the immense effort agencies—and specifically federal chief information officers—dedicate to improving federal IT. These hearings provide CIOs a forum to explore the stories behind these grades.

As discussed during the January 2022 FITARA hearing, a variety of factors including changing data availability, agency resolve, and an advancing IT landscape catalyzed the Subcommittee to once more evolve the Scorecard. Since then, the Subcommittee engaged a multitude of stakeholders and the Government Accountability Office to explore potential improvements to the Scorecard’s data and methodology. These conversations have resulted in our latest effort to use the Scorecard to incentivize agencies to advance their IT and acquisition priorities. As part of our efforts to enhance the Scorecard, the Subcommittee sent a series of oversight letters to the Office of Management and Budget inquiring about its fiscal year (FY) 2023 changes to IT data collection and reporting. We aim to work with OMB and all FITARA agencies to employ the publicly-available data best suited to improve how agencies use technology to achieve their missions. As technology and policy evolve, so must the FITARA Scorecard. It is with these goals in mind that we unveil Scorecard 14.0 and provide a high-level vision of our intentions to use the Scorecard to drive agencies to higher IT echelons.

This Scorecard is a combination of short-term, immediate changes and longer-term goals. Let me start with some of the immediate changes.

FITARA requires CIOs to certify they are adequately implementing Incremental Development to modernize their IT investments, rather than pursuing the historically poor performing “big-bang” approach. In the past year, OMB released more granular data on incremental development. As a result, we updated the Scorecard methodology to focus specifically on agency progress with software development projects — projects in greater need of incremental development.

I also want to acknowledge agencies’ straight “A”s in the Federal Data Center Optimization Initiative category for Scorecard 13.0. It is time to shift this metric to make it more focused and relevant. As promised, the previous methodology is sunset in FITARA 14.0.

Finally, in addition to the closure of data centers, this Scorecard amended the calculation used to examine federal cybersecurity postures. I want to be clear. The Scorecard’s biannual publication is not new. This is 14.0. The Federal Information Security Management Act category is not new. The use of annually-required Inspector General FISMA assessments to grade agencies’ cybersecurity postures is not new. And the fact that this Administration stopped publishing cybersecurity Cross-Agency Priority goal metrics is not new. What is new and must be dealt with is the lack of data transparency for agency cybersecurity performance. The Administration has only itself to blame for the grades you see on this metric. The Subcommittee looks forward to working with all stakeholders to populate this category with more robust data that captures federal agencies’ cybersecurity posture.

And now for where we hope to drive the Scorecard into the future.

While all agencies achieved their self-determined Federal Data Center closures, a small handful of agencies have yet to complete their planned closures—even though we are rapidly closing in on the already twice extended consolidation reporting requirement date. Earlier this month, agency CIOs received a letter from the Subcommittee asking them to justify the need for their remaining, respective data centers. The Subcommittee plans to use these answers as a part of a new methodology. The goal is to ensure agencies think strategically about their costly data center use, incentivize the closure of underutilized data centers, and save taxpayer dollars. It is our hope that focus on this category will enhance federal government’s movement to the cloud.

Turning to the future of Cyber, this Subcommittee eagerly awaits the new and improved data behind the Biden Administration’s priority goals detailed on Performance.gov. I, and many others, look forward to hearing from OMB about the Administration’s new cyber strategy, which will help agencies remain resilient and adapt in the ever-changing cyber landscape.

Lastly, when the Subcommittee first added the CIO Reporting Structure metric to Scorecard 3.0, 12 CIOs had no reporting relationships to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary of their agency. Today, 16 CIOs have direct reporting relationships, six have partial direct reporting relationships, leaving only two CIOs with no direct reporting relationships. This evolution marks a rise from 50% to more than 90% of CIOs now reporting to the agency head. I am pleased to claim a very successful victory for the IT community elevating CIOs to their rightful place at the helm of agencies’ decision-making tables. As the pandemic taught us, policy falls flat without the technology to implement it. CIOs must remain integral components of agency C-suite officials. For Scorecard 15.0, the Subcommittee will consider sunsetting this category if agencies demonstrate a clear and reasonable plan to elevate their CIO to a sufficient and necessary authority.

During this year’s January Scorecard 13.0’s hearing we spoke to industry. Today we hear from CIOs. In September, we will hear the Federal CIO’s ideas on evolving the Scorecard and an update on the data they are collecting to measure cybersecurity and cloud activity. We need input from all corners to make sure we get this right – and that we build a tool that gives CIOs the authorities they need to drive transformational technology improvements at their agencies. As we evolve the Scorecard to keep pace with the IT landscape’s ever-changing innovations and threats, we remain focused on continuity and clarity.

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