Federal Shared Services Marketplace Goes Public

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Since the spring of 2013, government agencies have been able to find and buy shared service offerings through an online database called Uncle Sam's List. The site was launched by the Chief Information Officers Council as part of a strategy to promote use of shared services. By August 2013, over 100 shared services were listed, and the total number was still growing. Now, those shared service listings are being made public to improve government-industry collaboration.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued its Shared Services Strategy in 2012. The plan outlined steps for agencies to take toward reducing over $46 billion in duplicative IT investments, focusing on commodity IT purchases as well as government-wide and intra-agency shared services. In the four months following the strategy release, agencies faced a series of deadlines to advance enterprise planning and the Shared-First approach. Since the initiative launched, agency adoption of shared services through Uncle Sam's List has simplified acquisition and delivered cost savings. For example, by consolidating computer buying contracts, the Department of Commerce was able to cut its spending on desktop computers by 35 percent and achieve over $200 million annually in administrative costs.

The information-gathering phase of promoting shared services involved collecting data about what agencies are paying for different products and services. Gathering that data proved valuable early on by highlighting the broad range in prices the government has paid for the same capability. Different agencies were paying anywhere from $21 to $98 per month for identical cellphone plans. That knowledge allows agencies to identify the lower end of the spectrum and target moving toward that price point. To date, Uncle Sam's List has been maintained within the MAX.gov internal government collaboration site. Initially, the community was entirely maintained by the CIO Council's Shared Services subcommittee, who determined which service areas, providers, and contracts got listed. That, however, is about to change.

On September 16, 2014, *Federal Computer Week* **reported** that **Uncle Sam's List** will be going public. Over the next weeks, version 1.2 of Uncle Sam's List will get updated with an XML feed. Once the database is public, federal and commercial providers will be able to feed into the list. Building on interview comments from the co-chairman of the CIO Council's Shared Services Task Force, the article suggests that the move is expected to encourage "a balanced and competitive environment."

Vendor Implications

Easier access to data about federal and commercial commodity IT and service offerings will undoubtedly impact market competition. The ability for industry to access and add to the database will create new opportunities for vendors to provide IT services to agencies targeting agile delivery. The move could also provide vendors with greater visibility into competition within the federal commodity IT and service marketplace. The clearinghouse of services could allow greater insight into the business opportunities around shared services and reframe how vendors characterize markets for their products and services, raising vendor profiles as well as making it easier to identify common requirements being met through shared services.

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