

Testimony of Suzette Kent
Before the Subcommittee on Government Operations of the
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
January 20, 2022

Chairman Connelly, Ranking Member Hice, Honorable members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to be part of the discussion today on evolving the scorecard for the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act. I last appeared before the Committee when serving as the Federal CIO. Today, I speak to you as a technology and transformation business executive working with public and private sector companies around the world. I am here with enthusiasm because it is important when Congressional leaders dedicate their time and attention to improving the ways Federal technology serves citizens and delivers on agency mission.

My comments today will center on two areas – evolving what is measured and innovating how those things might be measured. As I stated when I appeared before this committee as Federal CIO, I support a scorecard that brings visibility to results achieved, signals priorities and coalesces the focus between the people doing the work and the people who approve funding. A scorecard also provides pathways of accountability for results delivered. Like this Committee, I also endeavor for the scorecard to be something that matters to Agency leaders and is helpful to the CIO and agency teams.

It is a great achievement when the majority of Agencies meet the targeted goals, success is celebrated, and a category is removed. It also presents an opportunity to replace goals met with new metrics reflective of future state expectations. In this way, the FITARA scorecard continues to drive focus on the forward progress your constituents expect.

Although the FITARA scorecard has served as a mechanism to drive continuous improvement, we have now entered a new era. Federal technology is the engine for remote work for the majority of our federal workforce. Digital and mobile channels are now the platform of primary engagement with Americans for many of our most critical government functions.

Because of this new era, our technology metrics and measures should evolve to be more nimble and more aligned with the world outside government. Inside government, we have important goals reflected in law and Administration policy. Laws, like 21st Century Idea Act and Evidence Based Policy Making. We have Executive Orders on Cybersecurity, Customer Experience, and AI. And we have PMA themes and the Federal Data Strategy that span administrations; and the objectives defined in none of these are reflected in the current scorecard.

To maintain the impact of the FITARA process, there are four areas I would humbly submit to this committee for future consideration:

Cybersecurity: Last week’s FISMA discussion covered many of the key points, but future score cards should examine

- Making cyber metrics more timely and reflective of current threat environment; and
- Recognizing the risks in our changing operating environments and including greater focus on automation, “as a service” solutions and advancing identity protocols.

Modernization: Modernization never stops, so evolution of legacy technology, disciplines around data capabilities and expanded use of automated technologies are critical. There are available metrics to bring more visibility to agency modernization activities. Many of these, such a key mission projects, legacy initiatives and technical debt are measured in other processes; but could be incorporated in the FITARA process. Continuous modernization also demands that the rigid funding and procurement processes be reassessed to better align with multi-year initiatives and industry best practices for modern technology service deployment or consumption.

Digital: Although digital is part of modernization, it deserves specific attention because your constituents are digital dependent. Now is the time to take action on metrics that highlight progress towards digital and mobile native platforms, quality customer experiences and evaluating federal digital performances on par with performance characteristics expected across every other industry.

We have many metrics that might suit in this area and both law and EOs that define targets which could be incorporated into a future scorecard.

Workforce: We also have opportunity to signal priority and investment in our most precious resource in Federal IT - the people. Metrics to ensure that priority is given to continuous skills development and workforce performance should be considered. As we evolve the technology ecosystem, we cannot underinvest in the Federal workforce.

Now for the “how” we measure - As I have returned to the private sector, I often see that citizens judge their experiences with government using the same lens as they do for private sector businesses, only they cannot take their business elsewhere. In the past, we have restricted our scorecard measures to things for which we have widely available, public, federal data. Is it time to consider leveraging external metrics which are widely accepted across every other industry? There are CX metrics, cyber scorecards and even people measures which could help those inside government more objectively see how their performance is perceived, and potentially accelerate improvement.

I highlight these three because they are areas where Government and private sector have direct similarities. We are serving the same population; the hackers are looking for the softest target and we are trying to attract and retain much of the same talent for our workforce.

The discipline with which the scorecard grades are derived is a proven process, but might we have additional avenues that augment the scorecard to show progress forward?

Government may never be as leading edge as a private sector entity, but we can show meaningful year over year progress toward what citizens expect. From a cyber perspective, government should be one of the most secure. I also know this committee keenly understands the importance of supporting the federal workforce. When metrics are widely understood and meaningful to citizens and agency mission leaders—The scorecard becomes an even more important part of the strategic dialogue.

I applaud the Committee's attention to federal technology matters and appreciate your focus on ways to leverage the FITARA scorecard to continue to drive improved outcomes. Thank you for including Mr. Powner, Mr. Spires and I in this dialogue and I look forward to answering your questions.