"A Synergy to benefit the American people— for increased government accountability, optimized performance, reduced waste and overhead, thereby freeing up more tax dollars for the purpose"

The Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014, now known commonly as the DATA Act, was enacted on May 9, 2014. The DATA Act represents the first of-its-kind legislation that seeks to operationalize the concept of transparency. More specifically, the law seeks to make critical data public across many lines of business throughout the federal sector. In addition to making the data public, the Act seeks to define government-wide data elements provided and make it available in standard formats that can be easily processed by government representatives, citizens, the media, and business partners – a bold step for digital government, grants management and the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA).
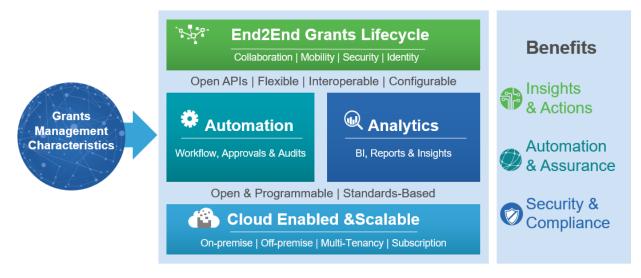
Though the Act makes a historical step toward increased government transparency, many challenges stand in the way of full implementation. At the very core of these challenges lie the many disconnected systems that may collect data from the public or provide funding or distribute resources to the public. These systems include contracts and acquisition systems, accounting systems, social service delivery systems, among others. Many of these systems are legacy in terms of their technology and business processing methods. Successful implementation of the DATA Act will depend fully on the modernization and improvement of these systems.   Many of these systems contain inaccurate data, inadequate security and are incapable of offering a standard format for consuming and producing timely reports. Inability to report or providing inaccurate data to the public hurts transparency and is counter to supporting the vision and intent upon which the Act is based.

One line of business that is taking the lead for transformation and driving growth in creative solutions is Federal Grants Management.   The federal government currently disburses $675 billion annually in federal funding. The amount of useful information resulting from this massive amount of spending, in administering, accounting and managing such federal funding, is staggering. The public deserves to know where these funds are going, who is receiving these funds and what they are doing with the grant dollars. More importantly, taxpayers deserve to know if the federal funds are achieving the citizen-centric results intended by the government and to which the Grantee committed.   Building and maintaining powerful systems for end-to-end grants management lifecycle (pre-award, award, post-award and close-out) is paramount to the future success of the DATA Act. Additionally, these improvements will support the achievement of the much-publicized goal of more transparent and accountable grants management systems. Thought leadership, vision and architectural elements and attributes of such systems are necessary to enable full transparency.

So, what are the attributes of a powerful grants management system? Consider the following:

- Contemporary grants management systems must be lean in terms of the technology platform on which they reside.
- Systems must use open source tools with unified security management capabilities wherever possible in order to make it affordable for all grants recipients.
- Systems must provide robust application program interface (API) for easy information exchange, and to easily interface with other subsidiary and support systems (such as accounting, financial management, personnel allocation, for example).
- These systems must have built-in reporting and business intelligence capabilities.
- These systems should utilize the power of the Cloud to provide multiple delivery options and offer economies of scale.
- These systems must provide functionality for both the Grantee and the Grantor, and provide end-to-end grants management lifecycle capabilities These systems must offer ala carte type capabilities, allowing users to pick and choose the modules that map most closely to their needs, resulting in affordability and scalability.

The thinking behind transforming grants management systems is often coming from small innovative companies that are tailoring systems for the specific needs of grants management. Zenius Corporation is one such company answering the call on this industry-wide need. Zenius engineers have been involved in this transition for several years already, having been engaged in developing grants management shared services, working closely with the Grants Consortium. In developing its new GrantsForce™ tailored-for-purpose end-to-end grants management solution, Zenius developed and seeks to field a powerful configuration-driven, plug and play modular platform which is applicable for federal agencies that administer grants as well as State and Higher ED institutions who are recipients of federal grant dollars. The application exists within an open standards based architecture that is itself based on open source tools and unified cybersecurity and access controls. Figure below provides a high-level diagram of the Zenius GrantsForce™ Architecture.

In summary, agencies and grantees are feeling pressure to prepare for full compliance of numerous pieces of legislation, the most comprehensive of which is the DATA Act. Transparency and accountability could not

be more important especially when distributing taxpayers' money directly toward funding citizen-directed projects. It requires a methodical approach and proven architecture to ensure data is not lost and the goal toward a more transparent grants management is met. Zenius is committed to delivering grants management tools that empower grantors and grantees with lean, feature-rich capabilities. These capabilities are based on an open standards platform that will ensure efficient processing, clean data, and full compliance. To learn more about the Zenius solutions, visit www.zeniuscorp.com

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