



# The Washington Connection



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## Winter Events

### Thank you!

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**October 13th - 2021 Virtual Luncheon:** The DC Chapter offers a special thank you to guest speaker Michael Bingham, Senior Auditor, Financial Management & Assurance, GAO. Topic: “GAO Standards Update.”

**October 21st, 11:30am-1pm, (In-Person Sponsors Only event)** - The DC Chapter offers a big thank you to Jay Hoffman, Chief Financial Officer, United States Patent & Trademark Office for being the guest speaker of this VIP event.

**December 7th - 2021 Hybrid Luncheon:** The DC Chapter offers a special thank you to guest speaker Ms. Sheila Conley from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Topic: “COVID-19: Learning from Our Experience to Inform the Future.”

**December 18th - Wreaths Across America:** Thank you to the Community Service Committee and all the volunteers who supported this special event.

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### Up Next!

**January 11, 2022, 11:30AM - 12:30PM; Virtual Luncheon:** Monthly meeting with guest speaker Monica R. Valentine, Executive Director, Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board, Topic: “FASAB Update”

**January 18, 2022, Game Time 7PM:** Come see the Capitals take on the Winnipeg Jets at the Capital One Arena. Hosted by Member Services. *Member price is \$20 and guest price is \$79.*

## President's Message

We are midway through our program year and I'd like to summarize some of our accomplishments thus far. Our Monthly Luncheon committee hosted two virtual and one hybrid training luncheon. Verified attendance at our September, October and December programs increased over last year by 74%, 47% and 72%, respectively. Our Sponsorship committee hosted 4 virtual sponsor training events and 3 in-person sponsor recognition events. Our Member Events committee hosted an outing at Nationals Park, a holiday happy hour at Elephant & Castle restaurant, and a co-sponsored golf outing with the ASMC. Our Community Service committee organized a volunteer event at Arlington National Cemetery and also helped raise an aggregate \$450 for Unity Healthcare, *Toys for Tots*, and *Wreaths Across America*. Our Newsletter committee compiled and published our Fall and Winter newsletters. These newsletters, combined with the activities of our Social Media and Web committees, effectively communicate useful information about our programs, initiatives and sponsors. Our Membership committee initiated a member recruitment contest and a new feature in our newsletters welcoming new members to our Chapter. Chapter membership has increased from 1,707 to 1,770 since July 1. The Audit committee completed an independent review of our FY 21 financial statements and no material issues were noted. The Webinar committee initiated a procedure to track and identify attendee no-shows to enhance our ability to make sure that all 60 webinar slots are fully utilized. The Awards committee submitted three nominations for NLT awards. The CGFM committee awarded member subsidies to cover exam materials and also co-sponsored a virtual study group with the Northern Virginia chapter. The Citizen Centric Reporting (CCR) committee produced the Chapter's first CCR since 2017. Regarding the Historian committee, we were able to obtain our founding Certificate of Incorporation dated April 27, 1951 from the DC



government archives and it has been uploaded to our website. On the governance side, we established two internships to give college students experience helping us with our accounting and technology functions. We also held a productive in-person planning meeting for our Chapter officers and committee members.

Our goal is to continue providing a variety of training and networking opportunities for our members in the second half of the year. We remain focused on the safety of our members so adjustments will be made based on developments with the pandemic, and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Thanks to all our volunteers and sponsors for supporting our efforts.

**Al Pavot**  
**President**  
**AGA Washington DC Chapter**

## Vision

AGA is the premier association for advancing government accountability. AGA defines government accountability as a government's obligation to the people for its actions and use of resources.

## Mission Statement

AGA fosters learning, certification, leadership and collaboration for professionals and stakeholders committed to advancing government accountability.

# Practical Solutions for Complex Challenges



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## National Council of Chapters (NCC) Update

The NCC was established in 2019 with an objective of facilitating communication, support and collaboration among chapters and between chapters and AGA National's Governing Board. The Council is composed of representatives from some of the chapters and meets four times a year. At the November 2, 2021, meeting there were various topics discussed including membership, chapter health, and the Council for the Advancement of Women.

AGA membership has declined from nearly 15,000 members in 2015 to 12,000 today. AGA National is encouraging existing members to recruit new members in their Everyone Get One campaign. Details can be found [here](#).

Over half of AGA's chapters are being monitored or nurtured for continued viability. There are 12 chapters that have closed or may close in the next couple of years. Chapters generally do not receive any direct financial contributions from AGA National so are substantially reliant on member dues and sponsorships to fund their operations.

AGA National generated a \$1.3 million profit in FY 21 and is very strong financially. Their financial statements can be seen [here](#).

The AGA Council for the Advancement of Women is composed of members who act on behalf of the

association to manage gender diversity initiatives and progress. The Council will create strategic accountability for results, promote governance and oversight of gender diversity efforts and integrate gender diversity into strategy and programming. Details regarding the Council can be found [here](#).

More than 300 AGA members serve on national boards and committees to tackle challenges, propose solutions, and serve members. The great strides AGA has made as a professional association would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of our exceptional volunteer board and committee leaders. Board and committee service develops leadership skills while contributing to the growth of the financial management profession. Each spring, AGA solicits board and committee member candidates. The national president-elect works with the board and committee chairs to fill leadership vacancies. AGA works to ensure each board and committee, taken as a whole, is representative of AGA membership. Details about the various Boards and Committees can be found [here](#). After signing into "My AGA," if you are interested in serving, AGA has a streamlined, online self-nomination form [here](#).

*If you have any questions about the NCC, or would like to propose any issues for discussion at the 2/1/22 NCC meeting, please contact us at [agadc1950@gmail.com](mailto:agadc1950@gmail.com).*



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# New Member Contest

*Do you like money? Then please read!*

During the 2021-2022 Program Year, the Membership Committee of the **AGA DC Chapter** is instituting a **CASH PRIZE** (\$100 USD in the form of an Amazon gift card) provided at each coming quarter end (March and June, 2022 remain), to the member who sponsors and/or recruits the **most new members** in a given quarter. With your help and dedication, we can achieve our Chapter's 10% growth goal of new members this year! **Congratulations to Veronica Baird who recruited the most members in the Fall quarter!**

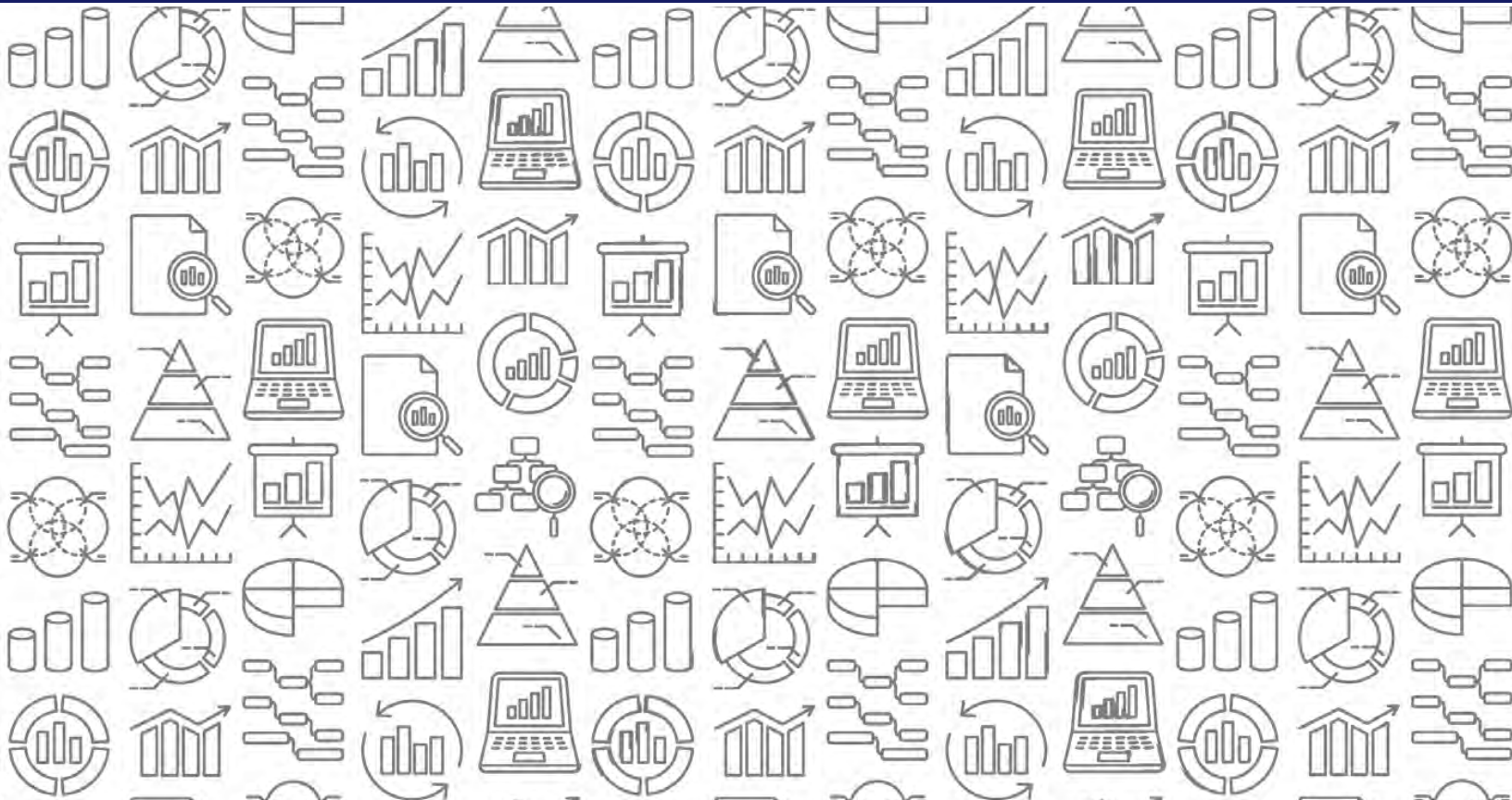
Please note the membership referral/sponsoring application is a three-step process:

1. New members should create a "My AGA Account" found at the AGA National website;
2. New account login details will be sent to email provided during registration in step 1;
3. Once logged into the "My AGA Account," new members are to complete their AGA membership application, whereby within the Demographics data page of the application, the new member **must** denote the "Recruited by Member ID" and/or "Recruiter's Name."

Recruitment/Sponsoring winners will be contacted via email and announced in the following quarter's newsletter. The *Membership Committee* looks forward to every member "getting" a member (or more)!

In addition, *AGA National* is sponsoring a campaign to recruit 2,022 new AGA DC members by April 2022. All members who recruit new members are eligible to win prizes – like Amazon gift cards or registration for PDT 2022.

**Don't wait, there are wonderful new members out there to recruit that could make you win big! (NOTE: Previous quarterly winners are ineligible for future prizes in the same program year.)**





## Welcome New Members!

The AGA DC Chapter and the Membership Committee extends a warm welcome to our newest members! Thanks to you, the AGA continues to grow. Stay up-to-date on fantastic programs, membership benefits, and recruiting incentives starting now. Remember if you have not yet renewed, you may do so at the AGA Washington DC Chapter website to take advantage of member benefits throughout the next program year.

Ms. Jill Graham

Miss Michelle Denise Hackney

Mr. Joseph M. Kulenguski

Mrs. Hanh D. Ng

Ms. Terrie L. Peterson

Mrs. Kristina L. Waha

Ms. Jeffri P. Wainwright

Ms. Qwanzetta Young

Miss Dana Agosto, CGFM

Mr. Brian C. Becker

Mr. Carl J. Biggs, CGFM

Ms. Ann M. Calvaresi Barr

Mr. Jaideep K. Chakravorty,  
CGFM

Mr. David A. Finkelstein, Jr.,  
CGFM

Mr. Dominic JC Garner

Mr. Don Geiger, CPA

Mr. Aiden O. Jelle

Mr. Jaime L. Murillo Cabas

Mr. Hypolite Pene

Mr. Bryan Rosario Garcia

Mr. Austin A. Setzer

Ms. Glenda P. Somerville

Mr. Alex Starck

Mr. CJ Staton

Ms. Valerie V. Tillman, MBA,  
CDFM-A

Mr. Joseph C. Arnold

Ms. Katrina J. Clemons

Mr. Rafael Cotto

Mr. Colin T. Crigger

Ms. Megan Curtis

Mr. Joseph P. DiMartino

Ms. Rayshawn L. Elliott

Ms. Patricia Leto

Ms. Catherine E. Lynn, CGFM

Ms. Caelen Marinelli

Ms. Natalie Medler

Ms. Maria Pahigiannis

Mrs. Madhavi Puritipati

Ms. Stacey L. Scull

Mr. Harry M. Seidman, CGFM

Mrs. Sara Semmami

Mr. Connor Charles Tetrault

Mr. Roberto A. Velarde

Mr. Ken Willis

Mr. Adebayo Y. Bakare, CFE,  
CPA, CGFM

Ms. Hyo J. Choi, CGFM

Ms. Kimberly Dickerson

Mrs. Catrina Johnson

Ms. Erin Kelley, CGFM

Ms. Emily S. Law, CPA

Miss Virginia A. Maddrey

Ms. Kiera N. Murphy

Mr. Adam R. Schildge

Mr. Daniel R. Shriver, CPA

Mr. Michael Van Deusen

Ms. Xinyu Zhang



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## AGA DC's Fall 2021 Newsletter Survey Respondent Winners

THANK YOU for taking time from your busy schedule to provide your valuable feedback and comments for our Fall 2021 newsletter survey! Working with Wendy Allen, our chapter's volunteer on survey design and analysis, the newsletter team is in the process of reviewing and analyzing the survey results. We commit to make the future newsletters even better to suit your needs.

To express our appreciation of your feedback, we randomly selected the following four survey respondents and each of the lucky members will receive a \$25 gift card:

- **Chukwuma Apugo**
- **Chris Babcock**
- **Hilda Gil**
- **Angela Leroux**

**Congratulations to the above four members!** Our newsletter team will continue to hear from you and receive feedback. A new short newsletter survey will be created to seek your feedback all year around in future. Stay tuned!

Thank you again for your support!  
**AGA DC Newsletter Team**

Check out  
**Accountability Talks**, hosted  
by the DC Chapter's very own  
**Paul Marshall!**

The podcast focuses on the  
government accountability  
community and is available  
everywhere you get your  
podcasts.



# Training & Conferences

## AGA Sponsored Training & Events

**\*\*Special Event\*\***

**When: 02/02/22 - 8:00-9:00 AM, (In-person) Bowen Building, 875 15th Street NW, WDC:** *“Using Technology to Improve the Customer/Citizen Experience,”* Special event hosted by DC Chapter and J.P. Morgan. To request an invitation, please send an email with your name, title and organization to: [Treasury.Services.Events@jpmchase.com](mailto:Treasury.Services.Events@jpmchase.com)

**When: 02/10/22 - 12-12:30 PM, Virtual GoToWebinar:** Sponsored training event hosted by MIL Corporation with VP Bruce Corfield.

**When: 03/01/22 - Time TBA; VIP Special Event for Diamond Sponsors Only** hosted by DC Chapter Sponsorship Committee with guest speaker Craig Bennett Deputy CFO, U.S. Coast Guard.

**When: 05/10/22 - Time TBA, VIP Special Event for Diamond Sponsors Only** hosted by DC Chapter Sponsorship Committee with guest speaker Kika Scott Deputy Chief Financial Officer, USCIS.

\*\*\*

DC Chapter members are provided FREE training opportunities throughout the year — thank you, Sponsors!

These training sessions or product demos are informational only. **CPE will not be provided.**

**\*Virtual Training (please note):** Advanced registration is necessary to gain a personal log in. You will receive one email with instructions to finalize your registration, and a second email from [customercare@gotowebinar.com](mailto:customercare@gotowebinar.com) with access links prior to the scheduled date.

For questions regarding Sponsor Training and Events, please contact Paul Marshall at [agadc1950@gmail.com](mailto:agadc1950@gmail.com).

**\*\* SAVE THE DATE\*\***



## AGA DC Audio Training Schedule

The AGA DC Chapter will host the following AGA National audio training sessions throughout the 2021-2022 program year.

**Cost:**

There is no charge for AGA members in good standing for these events and attendees will earn two (2) CPE credit hours.

**When:**

- 01/12/22 — Uniform Guidance
- 02/02/22 — GASB Update
- 03/02/22 — Improper Payments
- 03/23/22 — Cybersecurity/ERM
- 04/06/22 — Ethics
- 04/20/22 — CARES Act
- 05/11/22 — Fraud/Data Analytics
- 06/08/22 — Leadership

For more information on this audio conference and the full schedule of AGA National's audio conferences please visit the AGA National website at: [AGA DC Webinars](http://AGA DC Webinars)

**\*\* SAVE THE DATE \*\***



OneStream Software is an independent corporate performance management (CPM) software company backed by private equity investor KKR. Our primary mission is to deliver 100% customer success.

We will continually listen to the changing needs of our customers to determine the direction of our platform, service and support. We will never compromise on quality or their success.

Our vision is a world where finance departments leverage modern software applications that unify and streamline CPM processes across the enterprise, minimize system maintenance, and allow them to get back to business - and life.

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# AGA DC Chapter October Virtual Luncheon

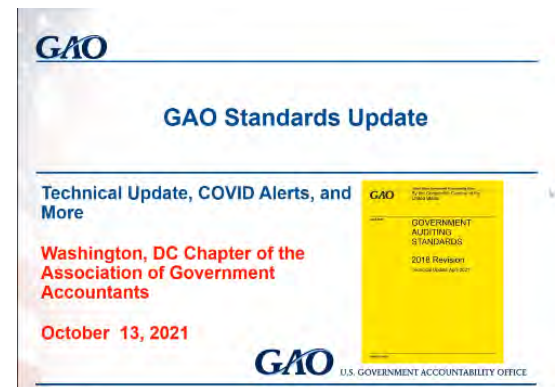
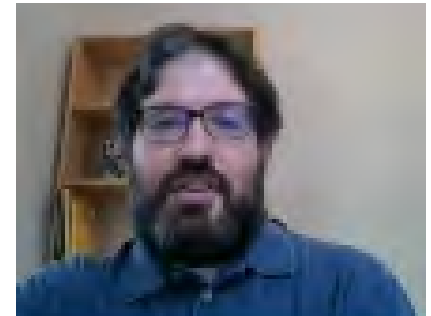


## "AGA DC Chapter October Virtual Luncheon: GAO Standards Update"

On October 13, 2021, the DC Chapter welcomed our October virtual luncheon speaker **Mr. Michael Bingham from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) Financial Management and Assurance (FMA) Team**. Mr. Bingham is a Senior Auditor for the Standards Group within the FMA team. His duties include the 2018 revision of the Government Auditing Standards (known as the "Yellow Book"), responding to the "Yellow Book" and "Green Book" (Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government) technical assistance groups, and serving as a project liaison of the Supreme Audit Institution. We had 179 members (also joined with the Northern Virginia Chapter) attend our October virtual luncheon.

During Mr. Bingham's presentation, he highlighted the following recently-issued and forthcoming updates to GAO standards.

- "Yellow Book" 2021 technical update:
  - Adding a new concept "equity" relate to government functions and services;
  - Clarifying auditor's requirements and providing flexibility on performance audits related to internal control assessment.
- Discussion paper on further defining five Es (effective, efficient, economy, ethical, and equity) and explain rationale for such updates.
- "Yellow Book" Continuing Professional Education (CPE) alert: provide a six-month grace period for completing CPE (which has since expired); waiving 20-hour annual CPE requirement (which has since expired); and allowing carry-over of CPE.
- "Yellow Book" COVID-related audit alert, which covers the following audit considerations: audit risk, risk of fraud, internal control, evidence, and quality control.
- Financial Audit Manual (FAM) updates:
  - Creation of templates for creating audit documentation (optional use for auditors);
  - March 2021 FAM Volume 2 revisions on Agreed-Upon Procedures and Management Schedule for Legal Representation Letters;
  - Next FAM update is expected to cover the latest AICPA's Statements on Auditing Standards, including revisions to the reporting model.
  - Upcoming AICPA's exposure draft on quality management (formerly referred as quality control).



We sincerely appreciate the time Mr. Bingham spent with us for this timely update during the audit busy season. We would also like to thank our Corporate Sponsor, **OneStream Software**, and **Mr. Dan Gornetzki**, Director of Sales, Federal Government at OneStream Software for his introductory remarks!



**A big THANK YOU to the Northern Virginia Chapter for co-sponsoring this event with us!**

# AGA DC Chapter December Virtual Luncheon

## ***"COVID-19: Learning from Our Experience to Inform the Future"***

On December 7, 2021, the DC Chapter welcomed our December hybrid luncheon speaker **Ms. Sheila Conley from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**. We are happy to bring back the in-person portion of the luncheon series, while continuing to provide the virtual option to our members. We had 172 Washington, DC and Northern Virginia Chapter members join us either in-person (34) at Hyatt Regency hotel at Tysons Corner or virtually (138) for this exciting December hybrid luncheon!



Ms. Conley is HHS's Deputy Assistant Secretary and Deputy Chief Financial Officer, as she provides strategic leadership to the HHS's program integrity and financial management programs. With annual budgetary resources exceeding \$1.5 trillion, she is responsible for the financial accountability and stewardship efforts for roughly a quarter of the Federal budget. She launched and led HHS's best-in-class Enterprise Risk Management program, and led one of the largest and most successful Federal financial system modernization efforts.

Ms. Conley's presentation topic is *"COVID-19: Learning from Our Experience to Inform the Future."* She walked our attendees through some recent significant events, including public health crisis such as SARS in 2003, Ebola Outbreak in 2014, and Zika Epidemic in 2015, to illustrate such "Black Swan" (high impact/unlikely occurrence) events are occurring more frequently, but also resulting in advancements and operational improvements - it is even more critical now to prepare for the next big events. Since the enactment of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, HHS has successfully responded to such events by leveraging and continuously improving its strong foundation of financial accountability and transparency. Such events present new opportunities for HHS on improving how it conducts business and communicates to stakeholders. HHS received funding from each of the six COVID-19 supplemental appropriation bills during the span of one year. As of September 2021, HHS had committed or obligated approximately 75 percent (\$283 billion) of the funding received, which was used on COVID-19 vaccines, testing, contact tracing, mental health service, and childcare assistance, etc.

Ms. Conley mentioned that HHS leveraged what it already has in terms of the existing foundation of HHS's financial processes, systems, and people to effectively manage the surge of COVID-19 supplemental funding, in order to establish new programs and meet reporting requirements to ensure accountability and transparency. With the urgency to push the funding to the public, the Operating Division and program staff are able to leverage those core documented processes and established internal control inventory and apply them in the new programs with applicable modifications to the process and internal controls. Ms. Conley also added that HHS leveraged lessons learned and the infrastructure established from the DATA Act instead of starting all over on financial systems. That resulted in better data quality reporting and HHS is able to accelerate data reporting from quarterly to monthly basis.

Ms. Conley stressed that people are the greatest assets at HHS, as HHS adopts well on remote working, embraces hybrid work environments, and takes on the opportunity of recruiting highly qualified financial

## December Virtual Luncheon Cont'd.

workforce regardless of geographical areas. Ms. Conley mentioned that preparing the workforce meant developing some organizational "muscle memory" to deal with events as they occur, which includes training the workforce, getting systems in place, and leadership. To provide accessible resources, her team has a contract vehicle with standard operating procedures in place. Ms. Conley also discussed the importance of collaboration to share best practices as coordination needs to be both internal to the agency and across the Federal space. Finally, she talked about using data to inform responses on integrating data into meaningful data sets with data visualizations to provide stakeholders with analysis. Ms. Conley concluded that the government has come a long way after going through these "Black Swan" events. We can apply lessons learned from the past and can do a lot to prepare for the future.



We sincerely appreciate the time Ms. Conley spent with us to share her insights and experience. We would also like to thank our Corporate Sponsor, **MIL Corp**, and **Mr. Bruce Corfield**, Vice President of Federal Financial Services at MIL Corp for his introductory remarks!

### **A big THANK YOU to the Northern Virginia Chapter for co-sponsoring this event with us!**

Finally, our December hybrid luncheon was made possible by our hard working volunteers from the Monthly Luncheon Team who took care of the programming, in-person, and virtual operations. We will highlight the Monthly Luncheon Team's work in our next newsletter. See more photos from the December hybrid luncheon later in this newsletter.

### ***THANK YOU to our Monthly Luncheon Team!***

## Member Luncheon Videos

To access past recordings of our luncheon speaker presentations, please visit our chapter website and select the menu section "Members Luncheon Videos" or visit this direct link.

***Please Note:*** Login and password are the same as your access to the AGA National website.





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# AGA DC Chapter Community Service



## Wreaths Across America | Veterans

The Community Service Committee is encouraging members to consider supporting *Wreaths Across America*. Their mission is to remember and honor our nation's veterans. On National Wreaths Across America Day, the organization coordinates wreath laying ceremonies throughout the country. In addition, they continue their commitment to remember our fallen servicemen and women by conducting various activities throughout the year. If you want to support this charity, you can sponsor a wreath at a cost of only \$15, by visiting:

<https://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/>

The Chapter offers members the opportunity to “pay it forward” by sharing their gifts and talents with the DC Community through volunteer opportunities in areas such as:

- **Social Safety** - Hunger, homelessness, and unemployment
- **Education** - Literacy and college prep
- **Health** - Awareness for mental, emotional, and physical illnesses
- **Veterans** - Support for service personnel and their families
- **Equal Opportunity** - Diversity and inclusion
- **Capital Causes** - Other local causes

Once you give, please consider providing a screenshot evidencing your proof of donation to Maurice Preston ([mpreston@guidedhousefederal.com](mailto:mpreston@guidedhousefederal.com)) or Myriam Galvan Zambrana ([myriam.galvan-zambrana@us.gt.com](mailto:myriam.galvan-zambrana@us.gt.com)) so we can apply for AGA National's donation matching program.

*The AGA DC Chapter is also making a financial donation to this organization*

We hope you will join us in participating in all or some future community service opportunities.

We invite you to share photos on the impacts you are making and thoughts on how we can support your cause by connecting with the **Community Service Committee**.

As always, thank you, for everything you do to make an impact in our community. Be well and stay safe!

**Myriam Galvan-Zambrana** and **Maurice Preston**

Co-Directors

AGA DC Chapter

Community Service Committee





From strategy to execution, the Government & Public Sector (GPS) practice of Ernst & Young LLP provides a full range of consulting and audit services to help our federal, state and local clients implement new ideas to achieve their mission outcomes. We have experience in delivering real change and measurable results through our diverse, high-performing teams, quality work at the highest professional standards, operational know-how from across our global organization, and creative and bold ideas tailored to each client's unique mission. We help support our GPS clients in protecting our nation and serving our people; increasing public safety; improving health care for our military, our veterans and our citizens; delivering essential public services; and helping those in need. In doing so, we play a critical role in building a better working world for our people, for our clients, for our government and for our communities.

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## AGA Young Professionals and Mentoring

The DC Chapter supports the **AGA National's Achievements in Chapter Excellence (ACE) program**, as we highlight the Young Professionals and Mentoring programs mentioned below:

### **AGA - Young Professionals**

Whether you are considering a career in government financial management or have already started down the path, AGA is here to support you! Membership in AGA gives you access to practical resources to develop your skills, expand your knowledge, boost your job performance and advance your career.

Remember to check out what each AGA chapter offers — like scholarships, board positions and other opportunities to develop your leadership skills. **For more details on discounts, scholarships, awards, education, training, and more, click here:** [AGA Young Professionals](#)

### **AGA - Mentoring Program**

We all have a responsibility to leave this world better than we found it and to have a positive impact on the next generation of government leaders. Mentoring is important, not only because of the knowledge and skills young professionals can learn from mentors, but also because mentoring provides professional socialization and personal support. At a time when most are working remotely, having a trusted advisor to turn to can help balance the blending of work and life.

#### **Mentors**

Share your knowledge and expertise to help develop future leaders of our profession! To participate, create and complete your Mentor Profile, accessed via the AGA Mentoring Program hyperlink below. Mentee candidates will seek you out based on the areas of expertise you specify in your profile.

#### **Mentees**

If you'd like to develop a certain skill or ability, you can benefit from the experience of other AGA members. To participate, create and complete your Mentee Profile, accessed via the AGA Mentoring Program hyperlink below. No matter where you are in your career, you can benefit from mentoring!

*The program is open to AGA members only.* Having complete and accurate profiles is crucial to the success of mentor/mentee selection and matching! **For more details on the roles of a mentor and/or a mentee, and how to enroll, click here:** [AGA Mentoring Program](#)



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*Thank you for your Diamond Sponsorship!*

## Special Events

DC Chapter members volunteered to assist **Wreaths Across America** on December 18, 2021 at Arlington National Cemetery. More than 150,000 wreaths were placed by nearly 40,000 volunteers at the United States' largest military cemetery in Virginia, an effort to individually recognize those who served and many who made the ultimate sacrifice. The Chapter's volunteer effort was organized by our Community Service committee.



On December 2nd we partnered with the Northern Virginia chapter for a **Holiday Party** at the Wildfire restaurant in McLean, VA. Approximately 80 attendees enjoyed appetizers and an open bar. Ten lucky guests won \$25 gift cards that were provided by the restaurant. Justin Lang and Al Pavot welcomed our members and thanked our sponsors on behalf of the Northern Virginia and DC chapters, respectively.



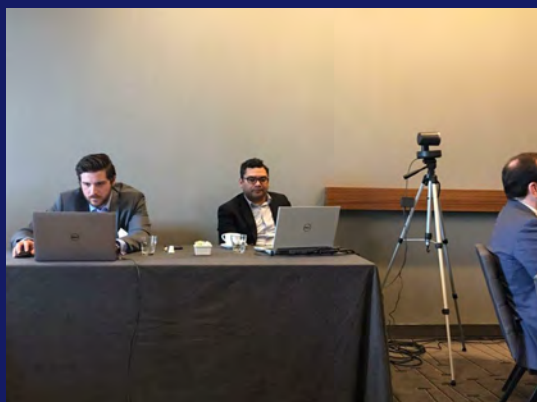
## Special Events

On December 9th our Member Events Committee hosted a **Holiday Happy hour** at the Elephant & Castle restaurant in Washington, DC. Approximately 30 attendees enjoyed appetizers and an open bar. Paul Lionikis was on-hand to thank our generous sponsors and volunteers.



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The DC Chapter was pleased to welcome guest speaker Ms. Sheila Conley from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) sharing her insight on “COVID-19: Learning from Our Experience to Inform the Future.” The **Hybrid Monthly Luncheon** event on December 7th was sponsored in conjunction with the Northern VA Chapter.



Matt Gorman and Alexis Alfaro, Co-Directors on our Monthly Virtual Luncheon committee.

December Luncheon Guest speaker Ms. Sheila Conley from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

## Special Events

On October 21st we hosted a **Diamond Sponsors Luncheon** at The Hamilton restaurant in Washington, DC. The event featured a presentation by Jay Hoffman, Chief Financial Officer at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. The topic was “*Hybrid First – Managing in a Post-COVID-19 Paradigm at the USPTO.*” The event was well-attended and gave participants plenty of time for networking both before and after the meal. Additional Diamond sponsor events are planned for the Spring.

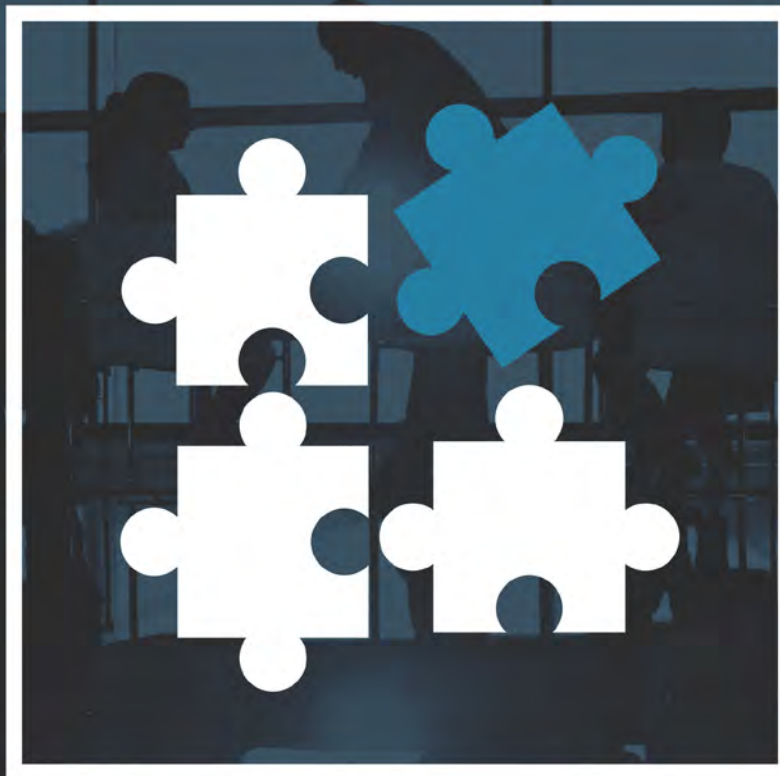


Our featured guest Mr. Hoffman is the Chief Financial Officer of the United States Patent and Trademark Office where he oversees an annual budget of \$4 million and manages the financial operations and systems. He previously served as CFO at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, and before that in financial management roles at Department of Energy, Department of Treasury and the United States Mint. He holds a Bachelor of Science in economics from the University of Nebraska, a Master of Public Administration from Indiana University, and is a Certified Government Financial Manager.



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
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## CGFM Committee Updates

### New Year, Obtain a New Credential!

Start the New Year with a new credential. Consider the Certified Government Financial Manager certification, a respected credential that recognizes the specialized knowledge and experience needed to be an effective government financial manager. Learn more about the CGFM by clicking this link.

#### We Will Help

The DC, Richmond and Northern Virginia Chapter of the Association of Government Accountants (NOVAGA) held a virtual CGFM study group on Thursday, December 9th from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. on material from examination one. Best of Luck to the 20 members that attended!

Additionally, our chapter continues to support our members by providing the following:

- **Training Modules, Study Guides, and Practice Exams** – AGA DC is reimbursing members for training modules, study guides, **and** practice exams. AGA DC will reimburse the cost of each item up to \$125 total. We only have a limited amount of rebates available so it is first come, first served. Please submit the following to Sara Specht at [sspecht@cricpa.com](mailto:sspecht@cricpa.com) if you are interested:
  - Proof of scheduled exam
  - Proof of payment
  - Mailing address
  - AGA member number
- **Exam Rebate Initiative** – Take the exam, pass it, and we will reimburse you the cost. Cost of each exam is \$125. Please submit

the following information to Sara Specht at [sspecht@cricpa.com](mailto:sspecht@cricpa.com) to qualify: Copy of passing certification, Proof of payment, Mailing address & AGA member number.

FAQ: What are the Qualifications for the CGFM?

- **Education Requirement** – A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university is required to take any of the CGFM examinations.
- **Experience Requirement** – CGFM candidates must have at least two years of experience in government financial management prior to designation as a CGFM. Experience is not necessary to sit for the exams; however, documentation of professional experience must be filed and approved by AGA before the CGFM designation can be granted. For more information, and to apply, visit here.

#### NEW CGFMs

Congratulations to the following members obtained their CGFM October through November 2021!

**Christine Martin, CGFM**

**Adebayo Y. Bakare, CFE, CPA, CGFM**

**Tonya Chase Baker, CGFM**

**Brian A. Davidson, CGFM**

You should be very proud of your accomplishment!

Have questions? Check out our CGFM chapter web-page at this link.

Alternatively contact Shawn Syed at [agadc1950@gmail.com](mailto:agadc1950@gmail.com).



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# Member Spotlights

## ★Special Edition★

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Welcome to this special edition of Member Spotlights! For more than a year and a half, most of our chapter activities had been conducted virtually (as we slowly and safely resume in-person events). We miss seeing each other in person, especially those familiar faces. With that, the newsletter team reached out to some of our retired past Chapter Presidents - bringing you (part 1 of) their life updates and great wisdom for the entire DC Chapter family. The contents have been condensed and edited for length and clarity.

The newsletter team would like to thank our interviewees for their valuable time and continued contributions to AGA, financial management community, and/or general public after their retirement!

**Joe Donlon (DC Chapter President: 1975-76):** Life has been busy for my wife and I since we moved to Florida 20 years ago. Tom Mundell [past DC Chapter President] and I live in The Villages, Florida. Bill Anderson and Eva Williams [two other past DC Chapter Presidents] are living in another nearby retirement community. We see each other frequently and have over the last nearly 20 years spent many enjoyable times together.



*Four DC Chapter past presidents together! From left to right: Joe Donlon (75-76), Eva Williams (98-99), Bill Anderson (97-98, 02-03 as National President), Tom Mundell (78-79)*

We are active in several clubs, have traveled, and cruised to many foreign countries. I have used some of the financial knowledge I acquired in my Federal work as a Board member of a Federally-funded medical

center that particularly provides needed medical service to the less fortunate citizens of several counties near to The Villages.

I encourage all members of AGA to enjoy their work, and plan well before retiring what you may want to do and where you would like to live during your retirement years.



**Virginia Robinson (DC Chapter President: 1984-85; National President: 1989-90):** One of my most memorable experiences during the pandemic was learning, as I was departing from the Honolulu airport with two friends that we were, indeed, about to enter a COVID-19 zone. The virus had been barely notable in Hawaii but landing at the Seattle airport was a fast introduction to a changed world. For the first time we felt the need to get masks and really use them. Although retired from our Federal service, we still consider ourselves public servants; and so, we donned the masks, practiced social-distancing, and, in time, received our vaccinations and boosters.

This early adjustment to a COVID world helped to convince me that the nature of my normal activities would have to change. Pre-COVID, much of my daily life revolved around professional activities, service on my homeowner's association,



## Member Spotlight Cont'd.

and volunteer activities. Early on, I decided I didn't want to give up these activities after so many decades of enjoying them.

I've long been a very active AGA lifetime member, as well as maintaining active membership in other financial management associations. I've served on the Finance and Bylaws committees of my HOA. I'm in my 14th year as a volunteer docent at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Renwick Gallery. I'm happy to report that all of this has continued throughout the pandemic, mostly by adapting to virtual (Zoom) technology. As with most of my endeavors, except flower gardening (see the photo above), my faith-based activities and numerous exercise programs are virtual as well. I've found that tours, lectures, book clubs, training, and travel can be every bit as engaging as when I enjoyed them in person.

Before and throughout the pandemic, I've enjoyed the blessings of family, friends, health and wellness, and being productively engaged in professional and personal endeavors that helped me to want to be a continuing volunteer in service to others. My hope is that your professional and personal pursuits, especially volunteerism, will serve you and those you value in the best possible way.



### **Sam Mok (DC Chapter President: 1991-92; National President:**

**2008-09):** Since a good portion of my consulting business involved heavy trans Pacific face-to-face business meetings that required trips to Asia almost quarterly, and frequent attendance of receptions and other public gatherings in DC, the business hit a brick wall in January 2020 with the travel ban and lock down. To keep everyone safe, I told my staff to stay home immediately though they were willing to continue to come into town. The transition to work from home was complicated and painful as we were not prepared nor properly organized for the sudden change.

Almost two years later, I found I saved a lot of money by not traveling nor paying for conferences and receptions. As many "in-office" functions went away, costs for staff and other items such as entertainment and gas were reduced. I became extremely proficient with Zoom and totally computer literate. Although overall business shrank, the substance part of the core business became a lot more efficient and cost effective.

I lost weight, became healthier, and slept better without much late night socializing. I did go through a brief period of pseudo anxiety (or light depression?) because of the "withdrawal" from the daily hustle bustle of life. I questioned myself each time as I drove into the office (maybe once or twice a month) in my suites and wondered why it stressed me out so much by just being downtown.

COVID came as a curse but it became an uninvited opportunity for me to reassess my business process and lifestyle. I believe the "transition" placed me in a better place than before and it is a place I would have never voluntarily gone to, purely because of the fear of the unknown. Now that I am "there," there I may stay and enjoy my adapted business model accordingly!

Early career Chapter members, whether you're in the Federal service or service provider related, take maximum advantage of leveraging the employers current willingness to permit telecommuting to improve your quality of life and more time with family, or look for another employer that offers the flexibility. You can stay connected and enhance your network through AGA events or volunteering as these options are more flexible and solely self directed.

For the mid career Chapter members, the upcoming retirement surge will offer many opportunities for

## Member Spotlight Cont'd.

advancements and promotions. I did not go from a GS 5 (my first Civil Service rating) to a PAS (Presidential Appointee Senate Confirmed sub cabinet officer) in less than 20 years by waiting for the next better gig or promotion opportunities to be posted by OPM. I followed the old saying: the best time to look for a better next job is the day you start this current job. I also invested a lot of spare time in networking through volunteerism with organizations such as AGA. I was DC Chapter Treasurer and later rose to become National President. I made a lot of very productive business contacts that paid off handsomely along the way.

For the matured Chapter members who qualify for the Leisure World marketing mail lists, major life transition points often sneak up on you before you notice. Most important, retirement is NOT what it cracked up to be. Many former colleagues became tired of retirement in a year or so and longed to return to a life they left. So spend your time wisely to prepare for a second option and invest in framing a landing platform or stepping stone when you need it. Always leave the door open for a "second bite at the Apple" just in case you are tired of playing golf, gin rummy, or square dancing.

I started to identify my "next gig" the day I was sworn in as Senate confirmed CFO at Labor and started to "map" my route accordingly during the next six years. The day after I left Labor, I started my "new life" and the rest is history. For the ensuing fifteen years, I lived up to my life motto: Make some money; Have some fun; Leave some footprint.

**Evelyn Brown (DC Chapter President: 1995-96; National Treasurer: 2003-04; National President: 2012-13):** As I reflect on my life since the beginning of the pandemic, I can honestly say I never foresaw the initial and continuing adjustments that my life activities have undergone due to the pandemic. What I do know and appreciate is each day is a new opportunity. This positive outlook enables me to continue with the faith and confidence that has sustained me throughout my life.

I rely on life lessons learned from my parents, particularly from my father. First and foremost, you plan but you also execute each step of your plan with care and consideration. Dad instilled in all four of his children that you "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Life as given to each of us is so precious; you respect and make the best of life's situations. One thing that has remained constant throughout this pandemic is that I am blessed with a family from whose love and affection I continue to benefit and enjoy.

That being said, I continue to participate in AGA activities, be it at the National, state, or local levels. Monthly luncheons via Zoom are enjoyable; PDT, CEAR Award recognition, webinars, special presentations are all a part of staying involved and active. I am the treasurer of my homeowner's association. I also serve as a support and mentor to the African American Federal Executives Association whose mission is to create a pipeline of Federal employees ready to serve in the Senior Executive Service. I participate in "mock" interviews including interviewing techniques, and feedback to the participants similar to mentoring programs in AGA. It is the paying forward that adds value to what we do and the training that was instilled in me during my career path. Along the way there are many, many mentors to thank. So giving back is just a natural occurrence and one I enjoy.

In my personal life, I adopted a little rescue Chihuahua dog. Her name is Ms. Belle (see picture above), and she has been my constant companion since July 2020. Ms. Belle was introduced to me when I agreed to "dog sit"



*Evelyn with her rescue dog Ms. Belle.*

## Member Spotlight Cont'd.

for a few days. When it came time for her to return home, her then owner said that she looked more comfortable with me. And so, by mutual agreement, Ms. Belle has continued to stay with me. Ms. Belle has been the greatest companion I could ask for. She does not argue, fuss, or disagree with me. She is a great gift, a loyal companion, and I would never trade her. She is always here for me, just like my AGA family.

Staying safe, staying active, and living life for what makes me happy and content is a blessing for which I am truly thankful. My family, friends, and acquaintances remain constant. I have lost a number of family members to COVID-19, as well as through natural means. I am very blessed to have had them in my life. As long as I live, they live within me. And I wish peace, happiness, and contentment for each of you. Take time for yourself and appreciate the life you have.



**Wendy Payne (DC Chapter President: 2002-03):** Leaving the DC area in 2019 was a major change. Little did I know that the pandemic would follow in early 2020 and bring even more change!

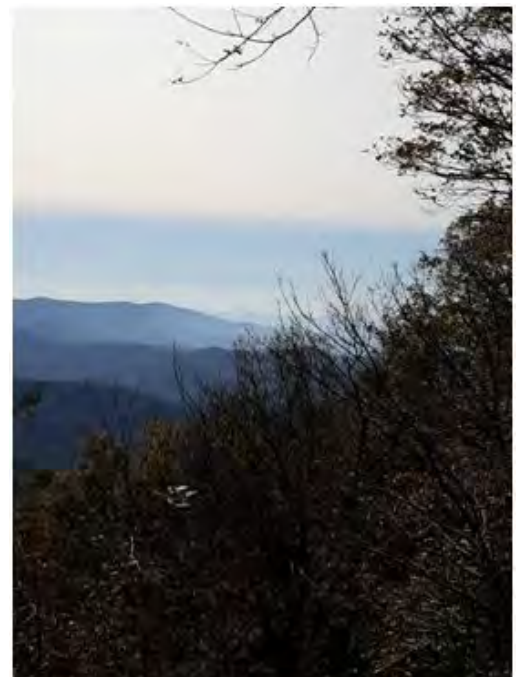
I retired from my position as the Executive Director of the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board (FASAB) in April 2019. My hope was to continue to support the Federal financial management community indefinitely but remotely. I've enjoyed supporting a handful of agencies remotely and sharing a different view—the preparer view—of requirements and implementation challenges.

When the pandemic kicked in, the community really stepped up and remote work became the norm. Most importantly, AGA harnessed technology to continue to meet the training and networking needs of the profession! The technology at AGA advanced so quickly that I saw an opportunity to fill a training void – the absence of online on-demand training for Federal financial managers.

Working with AGA to develop the Federal Financial Management Course Library has been a blessing during the pandemic. The dual challenge of learning the technology side of creating video content and meeting the quality standards applicable to a National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) registered course provider has satisfied my need to stay mentally engaged in the world!

I was thrilled when Ross Simms (also a past Chapter President) joined me as a course developer. To date, we have completed three courses on foundational topics (laws and regulations, the budget process, and the Federal reporting model) and have two additional courses coming soon (the new land accounting standards and the GAAP hierarchy).

Being “quasi-retired” during the pandemic did leave me with the need to stay physically engaged in the world but in a safe way. Living in east Tennessee provided many opportunities! I've been kayaking, paddle boarding, and hiking my way through the shutdown. If you have not visited the Great Smoky mountains, you should put the area on your list. The area is lovely and vast. We look forward to exploring our new home state for years to come.



## Member Spotlight Cont'd.

My own backyard also provided a chance to engage through a gardening challenge. My neighbors on either side are also gardeners – together we've created a park-like setting behind our houses! We used the new "park" to host many wonderful neighborhood parties when the weather cooperated. The great outdoors had been a blessing while we were socially distanced. Like many, I've found my outdoor time a necessary outlet during the pandemic.

Bottom line is life is what you make of it. Like you, I did not expect the pandemic or that it would arrive just as we were adjusting to our new life in a new place. The biggest surprise has been the support we've all offered each other. Whether it's been neighbors finding ways to connect safely, friends lending a hand to each other when needed, businesses offering new ways to "dine out" or shop, doctors and nurses being there when we really need them, or colleagues supporting each other 100% remotely, we are truly blessed when we share the load. That's the gift that AGA offers – a chance to connect with and support each other. Remember that your fellow chapter members are a gift; it's up to you to engage and accept that gift.

**Ross Simms (DC Chapter President: 2015-16):** I see that we have launched another year of fostering learning, certification, leadership, and collaboration and developed a series of programs to keep everyone informed on topics relevant to the times. Also, we're continuing to be innovative and creating opportunities to network and share meaningful insights. I've always been awed by the talented thought leaders in our Chapter and the poise they possessed to produce high-value events and activities.

As for me, I'm currently enjoying attempts to be like Tony Stark of Marvel Comics' Iron Man and develop voice-activated automations. When they work, they're super cool! However, when they don't work, I must decide whether to drop the project or try again.

I imagine that many of us face times when new ideas or projects seem to collapse or don't go as planned; and any opportunity for future reward seems like only a dream. We may feel like it would be better to simply take the road called, "easy" rather than face the critics and the test of our resolve.

However, one of things I observed with our Chapter membership is that no one desires to be known by what they "could have done." DC Chapter members want "to do." So, I'm inspired to continue onward, and I want to encourage everyone to maintain that resilient attitude, pursue your goals despite the obstacles, and take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way.

Remember that AGA offers numerous resources and events to support you and be sure to check-out the new tools like the Federal Financial Management Course Library if you're new to Federal financial management or need a refresher.







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# Inside the Black Box

by Simcha Kuritzky, CGFM CPA

## The FY 2022 Balance Sheet

### Introduction

The Balance Sheet for FY 2022 has a few notable changes from the one for FY 2021, mostly to more directly support Treasury’s Reciprocal Categories (RC) which are used to identify eliminating entries to produce the consolidated Financial Report (FR) of the US Government.

### Reciprocal Categories

A noticeable change is that all 27 intra-governmental lines include an RC in their title. The Reciprocal Category is especially useful for eliminating balances between agencies and Treasury’s General Fund. Since eliminations occur on the Balance Sheet, Statement of Net Cost, and Statement of Changes in Net Position, it should not be surprising that only 14 of the 48 RCs appear on the Balance Sheet, as follows:

RC	Line	Asset Abbreviated Name	Line	Liability Abbreviated Name
01	2.1	Federal investments	23.1	Federal debt
02	2.2	Interest receivable - investments	23.2	Interest payable - debt
04	4.1	Interest receivable - loans	24.1	Interest payable - loans
10	3.1	Agency's custodial assets	26.4	Agency's custodial liabilities
12	3.2	Capital transfers receivable	22.1	Capital transfers payable
17	4.2	Loans receivable	24.2	Loans payable
21	3.3	Benefit contributions receivable	22.2	Benefit contributions payable
22	3.4	Accounts receivable,net	22.3	Accounts payable
23	5	Advances and prepayments	25	Advances from others, deferred revenue
27	3.5	Transfers receivable	22.4	Transfers payable
29		n/a	26.1	Other liabilities (without reciprocals)
30	6.1	Other assets	26.2	Other liabilities
40	1	Fund Balance with Treasury	21	General fund liability
46	6.2	Custodial and non-entity assets	26.3	Liability to the General Fund



## New Lines

In order to support RC 23, advances have been moved to their own lines (highlighted above) instead of appearing on a sub-line or lumped together with other accounts in a catch-all line. The federal advance asset was moved from sub-line 5.1 to its own line 5, and the federal advance liability was moved from sub-line 22.1 to its own line 25. To be consistent (even though they don't impact RCs), the public advance asset was taken out of 14 Other assets and given its own line 13, while the liability was taken out of line 32 Other liabilities and given its own line 36. This added four lines overall. One more line (15) was added for Investment in special purpose vehicles, presumably taken out of line 14 Investments, though no Standard General Ledger (SGL) Accounts have been assigned to it yet. Reciprocal Categories are described in Treasury Financial Manual Volume 1 part 2 Chapter 4700 appendices 2 and 3.

## Vendor Types

Not a change from last year, but something to be mindful of, is that many SGL Accounts are split between two lines, one for nonfederal and a different one for federal. Complicating the mapping is the fact that the Federal/Non-Federal Flag has five different values, and not just F for federal and N for nonfederal. There is E, federal exempt, which fortunately always acts like N on the Balance Sheet and is not subject to elimination. There is also G for the General Fund (managed by Treasury), and Z for Non-Reciprocating, which identifies federal activity

that is reported by only one of the affected agencies. Three SGL Accounts can appear on three different lines based on whether the Flag is F versus G (199000 Other Assets, 259000 Other Debt, and 298000 Custodial Liability), two based on whether the Flag is N versus Z (221300 Employer Contributions and Payroll Taxes Payable, and 229000 Other Unfunded Employment Related Liability), and one which has four options based on Flag values F, G, N and Z (299000 Other Liabilities without Related Budgetary Obligations). So extra care has to be taken with these accounts to ensure the proper flag value is set and the amounts reported on the correct line. For additional information on the Federal/Non-Federal Flag and other attributes, see Section IV: Account Attributes for USSGL Proprietary Account and Budgetary Account Reporting, located at this link.

## Unavailable Status Accounts

Five new USSGL Accounts hold unavailable anticipated funding. These use all six digits (none end in 00). With all of the new USSGL accounts for temporary and permanent reductions in authority, the USSGL Board decided to create specific accounts for the anticipated authority, supporting the logic of Tie Point 14. In all transactions listed here, the offsets are available status accounts.

## Conclusion

The new Balance Sheet format now directly maps intra-governmental lines to the Treasury's Reciprocal Categories. This gives agencies the flexibility of using the Balance Sheet as a basis for reconciling balances with their federal trading partners.





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**Thought Leadership:****Three Practical Recommendations to Secure Robotic Process Automation (RPA) in a Federal Information Technology (IT) Environment****By: Mark Munster, Principal****Overview**

RPA is a rapidly growing automation technology that allows software (referred to as a “bot”) to automate repetitive work tasks, such as executing queries; performing calculations; creating and updating records; filling out forms; producing reports; and executing other high-volume or time-consuming transactional tasks that involve moving data within and between applications.

This article provides three overarching recommendations for RPA Program Teams to support the successful implementation and operation of the program.

**Challenge**

Bots can work in “attended” or “unattended” deployment modes

- An attended bot can perform automations as part of an end-to-end process with human involvement (i.e., humans initiate the bots)
- An unattended bot executes automations and interacts with applications independent of any human involvement (i.e., a command center or orchestration server operates the bots)

Each deployment mode must consider certain risks. Additionally, as programs mature (typically measured by the number of unattended bots in a production environment), additional controls will be selected and implemented and artifacts will be produced to support the decision-making, growth, and performance of the program. Program Teams can often overlook fundamental security and



internal control requirements. This results in increased risks to the program.

Additionally, for production bots that support security operations and financially relevant business processes, there is an increased risk to the overall financial systems control environment. Ultimately, this can have a high degree of impact on the reliability of control performance over these financially relevant processes and systems, in addition to third-party service providers leveraging this technology to improve the efficiency of their operations.

**Recommendations**

There are three overarching recommendations for RPA Program Teams when implementing or executing RPA programs:

**1. Involve Key Stakeholders**

The General Services Administration (GSA) RPA Program Playbook depicts the RPA Program in part based on the number of bots in production. RPA Program Teams, regardless of the level of maturity of the program, should consider involving key assurance stakeholders throughout. This will ensure that the proper security and internal controls are considered early and throughout, from pilots to product-ready bot development.

RPA Program Teams typically consist of, at a minimum:

- The System Owner (i.e., the owner of the technology), Project Manager (PM)

- RPA Development Team
- Consultation with the Chief Information Officer (CIO)/technology office
- Key Assurance Stakeholders (individuals or groups) with the following broad responsibilities: Systems Security, Information Security, Privacy, IT Risk Management, Internal Compliance, and Internal Controls
- Additional collaboration may be required from key business stakeholders sponsoring and participating in pilots, use case workshops, software testing, or stakeholders impacted by Agency automation initiatives

## 2. Implement Security and Internal Controls for Key Risk Areas

While implementing RPA brings operation effectiveness and efficiency to an organization, it also introduces risks to the existing business system environment. The RPA Program Teams should proactively identify, assess, and manage the risks with appropriate controls.

In our experience, RPA Program Teams should pay particular attention to certain focus areas. Minimally, we recommend the following considerations to implement key security and internal controls over the following risk areas:

- Program Management (e.g., Project Management, Technical Evaluations, Vendor Selection, Pilots, Obtaining Security Approval)
- Risk and Governance (e.g., Security Strategy, Policies and Procedures, Risk Management Framework, Data Strategy)
- Access Controls (e.g., Access Authorization/Reauthorization, Logging and Monitoring, Protection of Credentials, Physical Access, Network Security)
- Configuration Management (e.g., Change Management, Program Development, Patch Management, Maintenance)
- Segregation of Duties (SOD) (e.g., SOD Matrix, Incompatible Business Transactions, Administrator Access, Developer Access)
- Bot Deployment and Monitoring (e.g., Data Input Validation, Completeness and Accuracy, Error Handling, Error Resolution)

## 3. Develop and Maintain Key Artifacts

A critical component of the program is to produce and maintain the right documentation to support the program and audit response activities. At a minimum, the following artifacts should be created, retained, and maintained to support compliance activities:

- Privacy Impact Analysis
- Security Impact Analysis, RPA Security Plan (e.g., RPA Standards, Naming Conventions, Testing Protocols, Operational Protocols), Security Architecture, Initial Security Approvals
- High-Risk Control Considerations (i.e., Access Controls, Configuration Management Controls, SOD Controls)
- Data Sharing Agreements (DSA), Interconnection Security Agreements (ISA)
- Memorandums of Understanding (MOU)/Memorandums of Agreement (MOA)

Unique challenges exist for emerging and pre-production RPA programs. As RPA Program Teams begin their journey with this technology, a coordinated and integrated effort with key assurance stakeholders will help manage the risks associated with proper security control selection and testing and the development of the artifacts that support internal control and audit activities.

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**Thought Leadership:**

# Addressing improper payments: strategies for the public sector

The rise in misappropriated funds has prompted a shift in how industries in both the public and private sectors address the prevention and reduction of improper payments—aiding in successfully introducing new data mechanisms and improving user experience.

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## Defining improper payments

Like a persistent drumbeat, for federal agencies and the private sector, improper payments are an ongoing and serious challenge. Improper payments, while broad by definition, is considered a payment that should not have been made, or was made in the incorrect amount, as well as a fraudulent or duplicative payment.

## Current state: Identifying the issue



\$31.6<sup>B</sup>

In 2020, improper payments increased by \$31.6 billion (18 percent) from FY 2019 levels.<sup>1</sup>

With many U.S. households receiving stimulus checks over the past year, alongside hundreds of billions of dollars of relief sent to businesses and other organizations, the scope for error or misappropriation has grown. Working to reduce all improper payments is paramount.

Preventing and understanding the root causes of improper payments that result in monetary loss are a high priority for the federal government. While there is still progress to be made, the federal government has continued to make substantial strides towards enhancing efforts in identifying methods for the detection, prevention and recovery of improper payments.

Examining improper payments has created an opportunity to develop [counter-acting tools to address the issue](#), and has opened the door for public and private exchange of information, experiences and learnings.

Taxpayers expect efficiency and minimized wastage, and ensuring taxpayer dollars are properly allocated is a critical function of the federal government—which has caused improper payments to become an elevated concern.

Improper payments negatively impact profitability. This friction leads to losses within the private sector, and can result in higher taxes and wasteful spending in the [public sector](#). Although not all improper payments are a result of fraud, they all have the potential to erode trust and question why more is not being done.

# Reshaping strategies for prevention and reduction of improper payments

Here are three primary conditions that are contributing to improvements in addressing improper payments in the public and private sector.



## 1. Executing a successful onboarding experience is essential

The benefits of reducing improper payments are significant. The most obvious is the hard dollar savings that can be delivered preventively. As a result of ongoing issues, the federal government has the opportunity to leverage best practices and advanced solutions from the private sector to augment its payment systems.

Commercial solutions that focus on identity and bank account validations are helping corporations and government agencies in managing improper payments by providing access to state-of-the-art fraud detection and prevention tools. Fraud mitigation and preventative tool utilization have become a necessity for enabling the validation and authentication of individual payments to root out improper or fraudulent payments prior to release of funds.

## Building the framework for addressing improper payments

There are several important pivot-points that can create the framework to address improper or fraudulent payments:



Through use of tools, straight-through processing results can improve markedly, reducing the need for manual processing and customer interaction. This also allows federal agencies and other payors to redirect their resources towards exceptions and complex cases, which can help in improving both payment times and lowering the error rate.

Two examples are tools that can:



Verify bank account data in order to ensure an error-free follow-on payment.



Authenticate the identity of the counterparty consumer or commercial entity by cross-referencing a number of data elements—address, name, national ID, for example.



Increasing automation in payments processing is also vital, as it adds capacity. Manual processing is both time-consuming and can result in errors, especially when there is a large increase in applications for programs, such as benefits or tax refunds.



Authenticating the identity of a beneficiary as well as validating “credentials” across multiple government agencies makes it possible to get a “single source of truth” for each individual or business. This enables agencies to verify that payments are not being sent twice, or that individuals are only receiving payments they are entitled to.

Improper payments FY 2018–2020





## 2. Mitigating improper payments with AI and data

Financial institutions have integrated emerging technology and innovative solutions to maximize payment efficiency, which can greatly reduce improper payments within the public and private sector. For example, deploying the latest data analytics and machine-learning techniques can increase accuracy, allowing agencies to scale processing volumes with minimal exceptions. Previously, some data analytic approaches sought to detect errors after improper payments had been made –creating a time-consuming and expensive resource in attempting to recover funds or correct data.

Utilizing emerging technologies that are designed for detection, such as "pre-listing" an existing attribute, can proactively prevent errors and mitigate payment fraud. For example, analyzing an account's transaction history, when an account was opened, identifying exceptions, net-new counterparties and payment history, can provide an indicator of whether the payment should be stopped, reviewed or commence.

Enabling artificial intelligence (AI) by applying real-time correction based upon sourced proprietary or accessible databases, can be effective in improving automation. These solutions are able to identify if a piece of information—such as an address or account routing number—is incorrect, and automatically correct it. The information is then fed back into the system so that over time the AI algorithm becomes more accurate.



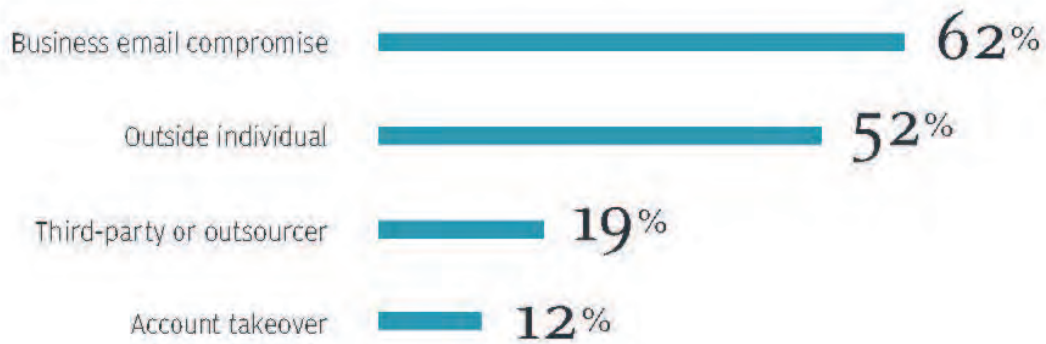
## 3. Improving the user experience with multiple-data pools

A key element of addressing improper payments is the ability to grow machine-learning attributes through ongoing data and payment handling, while continually improving the sophistication of its analytic tools. Today, users may be required to validate their identity multiple times across various government agencies, or payments can be delayed due to missing information. Utilizing multiple data analytics tools can enhance all aspects of the payment process, while prioritizing prevention and recovery for improper payments.

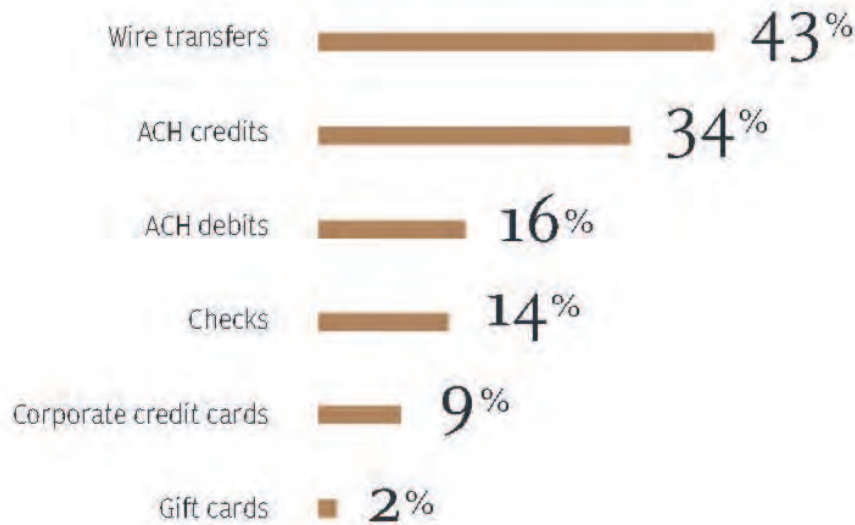
As shown below, business e-mail compromise (BEC) has also contributed to fraudulent and improper payments. As we conduct more of our business and financial lives online, bad actors continually seek to exploit consumers and businesses when they are most vulnerable to e-mail compromises, an important use case for account validation prior to payment storage and processing.

**Payment fraud trends—BEC fraud leads**

Sources of attempted and/or actual payments fraud in 2020<sup>2</sup>



Payments methods impacted by business email compromise in 2020<sup>2</sup>





## Leveraging blockchain networks

Blockchain technology—a secure and encrypted digital database shared by all parties in a distributed network—is another technology area that has great potential for reducing improper payments. All transactions occurring within the network are recorded, verified and stored in a database that is accessible to all participants through an unalterable transaction tracker. A peer-to-peer blockchain network that allows banks and other financial services organizations to share payment information with each other are commercially available today. These networks can also enable organizations to pre-validate account information in near real time, before a transaction is made. Importantly, adopting preventative solutions and techniques, can help agencies comply with regulatory and statutory payment requirements without resorting to a “pay and chase” approach.

### Key strategies

- 1 Adopting a strong onboarding process, while enforcing industry best practices and advanced technology has the potential to significantly cut improper payments with minimal exposure for the tax payer.
- 2 Implementing automation, big-data analytics and machine learning like AI into payments systems can greatly reduce the rate of error for financial institutions.
- 3 Adopting blockchain technology in order to connect participating network partners—which updates and re-uses validated data points crucial to successfully executing payments, while mitigating risk.

Public-private partnerships and information exchanges have proven successful in addressing challenges with payments and a means of sharing best practices. The opportunity to establish joint incubators and conduct co-creation exercises has become more prevalent and relevant as the issue of improper payments continues to challenge agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> "Annual improper payments datasets," paymentaccuracy.gov. Available at: <https://www.paymentaccuracy.gov/payment-accuracy-the-numbers/>

<sup>2</sup> 2021 AFP payments fraud and controls survey

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