Technology Modernization Board
Meeting Minutes
Monday, June 4, 2018

Attendance

PRESENT

1. Suzette Kent — Chair
2. Alan Thomas — Permanent Member
3. Mark Kneidinger — Permanent Member
4. Maria Roat — Term Board Member
5. Rajive Mathur — Term Board Member
6. Charles Worthington — Term Board Member
7. Matt Cutts — Term Board Member
8. Grant Schneider — Alternate Board Member
9. Dr. Erwin Gianchandani — Alternate Board Member
10. Darren Ash — Alternate Board Member

OTHER ATTENDEES

11. Elizabeth Cain — GSA PMO
12. Jay Johnson — GSA PMO
13. Alison Brigati — General Services Administration
14. Ben Skidmore — White House Office of Management and Budget
15. Kathy Kraninger — White House Office of Management and Budget
16. Matthew Cornelius — Office of the Federal Chief Information Officer
17. Somer Smith — Office of the Federal Chief Information Officer
18. Max Tassano — Office of the Federal Chief Information Officer, Contractor

Meeting Minutes

1. The Board heard two Final Project Proposal presentations from the United States Department of Agriculture.
2. The Board discussed two Final Project Proposals and voted on one Final Project Proposal.
3. The Board adjourned

Action Items

1. The GSA PMO team will make edits and circulate to the Board the 2 Accept FPP decision memos for the 2 projects considered today. The FPP Decisions should be ready for Board review by tomorrow, 6/5. Board Members should review the language in both FPP decisions to have them ready by the Thursday event.

Voting Decisions

PROJECT DETERMINATIONS

Order	Project Title	Agency	Project Stage	Determination
1	**Single Family Housing Direct Lending Origination System Replacement**	USDA	Final Project Proposal	Approved
2	**Farmers.gov Portal**	USDA	Final Project Proposal	Approved

Voting Record

1. Single Family Housing Direct Lending Origination System Replacement

Matt Cutts	Reject
Mark Kneidinger	Reject
Rajive Mathur	Accept
Maria Roat	Accept
Alan Thomas	Accept
Charles Worthington	Accept
Suzette Kent	Accept

**Conditions

The Board originally voted 4-3, which meant the project did not meet the 2/3 voting threshold to recommend funding. Charles Worthington casted a "Reject" vote then changed his vote to "Accept" following Board deliberation.

- GS: If we do not fund SFHD, do we create risks for the Farmers.gov Portal?
- SK: Do we indicate to the project team that we are very interested in funding but have some conditions? We saw a major component missing that made us not want to fund the project at this point, but once that point is addressed, we can re-adjudicate.
- EC: Our concerns might not be relevant if there is little customer overlap.
- CW: didn't feel like first team had a good pulse on the user problem.
- GS: The team's answer to our question about why the project failed in 2016 -- that the current team was not involved – is not a good answer.
- RM: Should be simple effort to come back to the Board to address our concerns. This would send the right signal to the project team: that the Board is concerned with a couple point.
- CW: Farmers.gov is a much more compelling pitch.

- SK: We need to see the team demonstrate more frontend understanding of what is currently happening. Is this project just for frontend assistance, how much is actually getting better?
- SK: Additionally, the old age of the intended user base and adoption of new technology from this market segment is a major risk to this project's success.
- SK: Should we move to not decline the project, but revert and have the team come back and answer some targeted questions? Decline or revert?
- SK: It is important to remember that in the grand scheme of things, this investment is a tiny pin prick, so there is little risk to the overall health of the fund.
- CW: Agrees with the point about this project being a small, low risk investment.
- DA: What I understand from Gary and USDA leadership is that it is imperative that projects are synchronized and finding synergies. SFHD doing their own siloed project does not match that leadership effort.
- SK: We could headline it with: one of the reasons we are funding this project is to improve customer service, move forward with Commercial products, fulfill a market inefficiency in rural America, service a vulnerable population (old, single women with dependents), following the same path as mortgage vendors in the industry. This project does have messaging potential.
- MC: Right now we are 4-3 and the funding is not recommended. Why are they doing their own portal on the side?
- MR: For $1M is this low hanging fruit they could execute on then integrate with farmers.gov in the future?
- DA: In agreement: overall, this project is low risk to the health of the TMF.
- AT: The concern that there will be duplicative customer views is low, because the farmers taking advantage of farmers.gov are likely to be large corporate farm operations, while the customers for SFHD are likely to be more vulnerable populations. I agree with Suzette's point earlier: that SFHD could tell a compelling story.
- **CW: Could be changing vote. CW changing vote**
- AT: Both are built on Salesforce, even if not integrated, they are using the same technology

Charles changed his "Reject" vote to an "Accept" vote following Board deliberation. Therefore, the project passed the 2/3 voting threshold and was recommended for funding.

1. Farmers.gov

Matt Cutts	Accept
Mark Kneidinger	Accept
Rajive Mathur	Accept
Maria Roat	Accept
Alan Thomas	Accept
Charles Worthington	Accept
Suzette Kent	Accept

**Conditions

- SK: The Board will fund the first $4M tranche and set aside the full $10M request.

For Future Consideration

None

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Meeting Deliberations

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1. **Welcome and Opening Remarks –** Suzette Kent, Chair (5 minutes)

   - Chair Suzette Kent reviewed the agenda for today's meeting. Suzette reiterated to the Board that there has been no official communication with the previous 2 projects that were recommended for funding because it is the Board's intention to message all initial awards at a single event.
   - Chair Suzette Kent informed the Board there will likely be an event on Thursday, June 7 to include representatives from the agencies receiving funds and members of Congress.
   - Chair Suzette Kent indicated the goal for today's Board meeting is to finalize decisions for the 4 projects under FPP consideration in preparation for Thursday's event. Once decisions are made, agencies, then the Hill, then the press will be notified (in that order).

2. **May 24 and May 30, 2018, Meeting Minutes review and approval** – Suzette Kent (2 minutes)

3. **Break for USDA SFHD Team Set Up** – All (8 minutes)

   - Suzette Kent provided the Board and USDA SFHD team with the rules and procedures of the presentation.

4. **USDA SFHD Pitch** – USDA SFHD Team (10 minutes)

   - Curtis Anderson and Mia Jordan from USDA presented.

5. **Board Q+A with USDA SFHD Team** – Board and USDA SFHD Team (20 minutes)

   - CW: Would the system be used for the applications that are still in pdf or paper based?

     - USDA will conduct a staged paper application transfer to the new system. Currently, USDA is using a third party solution to move paper based data into new systems. At some future point, all loan processes will be in the digitized system.

   - RM: Once intake is done, will the technician have to access to this system to process it?

     - The goal of this project is to provide Salesforce as a CRM tool for intake and processing.
     - The current Unifi system will not be turned off immediately. There are currently no FedRAMP compliant tools that allow for the complete decommissioning of the Unifi system.

   - MR: What other agencies have you talked with that have done this already?

     - HUD, but HUD outsources a lot of this process. Currently looking to engage with SBA and Accenture is our vendor partner.

   - MR: Why use Salesforce, are there other tools you considered?

- o RD has significant current investment in Salesforce. Because of current investment and 7 other internally facing Salesforce application, using Salesforce is the quickest way to leverage available technology and put a solution in place.

- MK: How does this project relate to the CoE?

  - o The project team is working with the CoE. SFHD has a call center that supports it and there is a parallel CoE effort to modernize call centers and support.

- MK: 2016 effort that failed, what occurred then and why is this going to be more successful than previous effort?

  - o This project is not being led by the same people. There are cultural changes to how IT is being implemented in RD that are significantly different from the culture that existed in 2016.

- DA: What changes on the business and program side have occurred since 2016?

  - o There has been a reduction in program staff. State field staffers do most of the intake currently. Due to staff reductions, program staff are being asked to deliver more program with fewer people, and there is a greater need for a technology solution at this time. SFHD is labor intensive because it targets some of the most low income and vulnerable Americans.

- MR: What is the long term effect of shutting down UniFi?

  - o UniFi has custom coding that needs to be updated whenever business or legal requirements change. This means that is very difficult to update this system.

- MC: Are there synergies between SFHD and Farmers.gov, how do you envision this integration?

  - o Farmers.gov customers not necessarily the same customers as SFHD. It is important that it is easy for people to navigate to the services they need on USDA.gov.

- CW: IS the main KPI to get the 95% paper users lower?

  - o The goal is to get that KPI to 0. Paper reduction

- CW: Where are people falling out in the current electronic process?

  - o It is hard to determine that for certain, but the current process requires applicants to answer every possible questions instead of a dynamic digital system that can streamline and be applicant-specific.

- CW: Do you have a sense of the number of people that started the current e application but did not finish it?
  - o No

- RM: Do you have data around what information technicians are currently missing?

  - o No, low adoption of the current pdf, there are no metrics on what question are being answered or applications not finished (leads lost). Additionally, the current forms have

no ability to interface with banking information, so there are disparate processes that could be done in one process.

- Can you leverage eAuth?

    o No, looking at other solutions in government

- SK: How long does it take to complete a paper application from a customer standpoint?

    o No firm data, electronic form will speed process for customers

- SK: Of the 100% that go through the process, how many are granted?

    o About 2%

- AT: Is the 900k cost savings due to just headcount reduction or will those employees do other things?

    o The employees will do other, more productive things. RD is under the directive to reduce the total staff from the President's Budget, this project will contribute to that staff reduction.

- AT: It says hoping to recruit loan processors, how do you know you're on the right track?

    o We have loan packagers now.

- AT: Have you talked with customers?

    o Yes with customers, all on board. Much of the feedback received is that it is currently difficult to conduct business on the paper-based system.

- Matt Cutts: First MVP in about 5 months?

    o Yes

- RM: Agile, multiple teams?

    o 2 teams. Leverage previous projects. Can leverage lessons learned and move much faster. The execution will be done in an Agile fashion.

- Cutts: Do you expect any initial costs on the Salesforce licensing?

    o Can equip each employee with a Salesforce license in 2018.

6. **Break and USDA Farmers.gov Team Set Up** – All (15 minutes)

- SK: General comment: when you improve the process on the front end you increase volume on the back end, which creates inefficiencies. DA: Did not addresss external Salesforce licensing.
- AT: Why is the government in the business of building an application like this? There are people that do this. Why not use a vendor?
    o RM: Target market is geographically remote
    o SK: Many ongoing discussion, it is a political and philosophical question about whether the government should do this or not?
- CW: The features are only about intake, not the backend.
- RM: Market demand ill defined.

- CW: I was hoping they would have a better idea of whether a bunch of people are attempting and falling off. It could be not many people are even attempting.
- KK: It still sounds like an assisted process, sending employees with tablets into the field.
- SK: One data point = 50% are 62 and older, digital adoption would be very low among this population.
- MC: 5% still leaves high opportunity to improvement.
- CW: Lesson from VA, still good for online form even with low mobile and internet access, because older peoples' children or guardians can provide assistance.
- MC: I was disappointed that Salesforce was the only vendor considered.
- KK: My biggest concern: what is the story we are telling about the projects we pick?
- SK: the story for this one is harder, we can talk about improving customer service, but we are not actually modernizing a functionality.
- CW: I'm looking at the current website and it is bad. One questions I have: is this something the actual customer is using or just the field personnel?
- MC: It is only $2M and it is an old system moving to a cloud based system.
- DA: I am still fuzzy about the connection to farmers.gov.
- MR: Big question around data piece and data agreement with farmers.gov.

7. **USDA Farmers.gov Pitch** –USDA Farmers.gov Team (10 minutes)

- Bill Northey and Chad Sheridan presented.

8. **Board Q+A with USDA Farmers.gov** – Board and USDA Farmers.gov Team (20 minutes)

- CW: How does log in work?

  o Use the existing log in system.

- MK: Why has this not been done before, what were past barriers?

  o Because USDA is a federated organization, it has historically been difficult to get all components bought in. Now, there is leadership support to reorganize the entire mission to be customer facing.

- MK: Are there infrastructure challenge?

  o Leadership buy-in makes infrastructure challenges less difficult

- MR: Platform?

  o The platform is Salesforce and the website is building off Drupal.

- MR: How does this relate to the SFHD? Duplicative views of the same customer?

- MC: If this is using Drupal and Salesforce, what is the $1M cost for application platform selection?

  o We have reassured the business lines that USDA will review platform capabilities. We don't want to repeat mistakes from the past that forced all services and business lines to adopt a single application.

- RM: When do you start delivering programs to the end user?

    o End of March 2019. Start development in January with a planned end of March/early April release date.

    o With TMF funding, the intention is to start business process reengineering not later than September.

- CW: How does the content on Farmers.gov relate to existing content on USDA.gov?

    o USDA.gov is more focused on disseminating agency-related information, whle farmers.gov is focused on the customer and end user.

- CW: Will the content on farmers.gov agree with that on USDA.gov or will USDA deprecate over time and farmers.gov do more?

    o Not thought through, but is a good point to clarify going forward.

- AT: Help me understand the cost savings better?

    o Building on platform with agile delivers more value per hour, lower development costs in the future, lower O&M costs with conservative O&M predicted costs in the future. Furthermore, this solution will improve value delivery and allow employees to deliver more value per hour and reduce the burden to customers.

- MC: eSignature, how do you see that rolling out?

    o There is a lot of discussion about eSignature, one agency within USDA, NRCS, has already implement.

- MC: What is the existing solutions in NRCS?

    o eSign live.

- CW: What are some of the top level applications that can be shut off that are possible?

    o Conservation cost share.

    o Eliminating pro-tracks, the NRCS financial assistance capabilities.

    o Mostly employee facing tools.

- MR: What other agencies have you talked to?

    o FCC, VA, and GSA. We have also worked with industry partners including suppliers and vendor partners, especially Salesforce.

- RM: Talk about business process engineering.

    o It is a complicated process and the scope is not defined yet.

- CW: What are the biggest risks to the successful implementation of this project?

- o Cultural risks: we are asking 2 agencies with separate funding sources and cultures to reevaluate the way they do business. We are thinking about the barrier, policies, and procedures required to mitigate risks. Currently, agencies within USDA have independent authorization and appropriations. On the IT-side, USDA is used to building in-house applications so there are risks associated with moving to vendor platforms.

- AT: Beyond leadership push, you mentioned CIO Council?

  - o Clarification: USDA internal CIO Council

- AT: Is there anything you would recommend doing in the first year for structural change?

  - o USDA is in the process of moving 3 separate agencies' IT shops into single entity. By October 14, they will all be organized as a single entity.

- CW: First transactional release July 14th? Just front end or changes to the existing system?

  - o Yes, eventually changes to the existing system

9. **Review and Discussion of Phase II Projects** – Board (20 minutes)

- SK: point of protocol, Darren Ash will not vote on any of the projects and during the actual voting, will be asked to leave the room, in order to not affect the voting process in any conceivable way.
- MR: I don't think they've though through the possible redundancy for the customer with SFHD and farmers.gov.
- CW: I like that there plan is bold, they don't all the answers yet. This is a downside, but reminds me of my experience working on Vets.gov. The best way to start is to start and figure out the problems and pain points by doing.
- MR: They should do more thinking about the long-term architecture.
  - o SK: We should make that a required outcome or milestone.
- MR: the vision and leadership buy-in is there, but it may not be the executive leadership that understands the technology, that should come from the CIO.
- SK: The fact there is a change to the org structure, this could force siloed parts of the organization to work together, this is a message we are trying to get across other agencies as well.
- RM: They are saying all the right things, but they don't have all the answers. I am more skeptical about the aggressive timeline outlines in their FPP material. Will the schedule make them fail? Especially since they have a lot of learning to do.
  - o DA: The aggressive timeframe is a product of the new leadership's mindsight.
- MC: The alignment to leadership is a major bright spot and reinforces the role of the TMF as an agency leadership megaphone that can be leveraged at other agencies.
- SK: They are a poster child for executive sponsorship.
- CW: I am excited because we did a similar project at VA.gov. USDA has many fights to come and having more weight behind their leadership's vision from the TMF will help move the needle and increase buy-in throughout the large, federated USDA.
- MC: I liked frank answers about what applications and programs they want to remove.
- AT: I am worried about the separate budget, this could be a major risk to achieving the desired results.

- DA: The project does have CFO buy in. The USDA CFO community has tight control of investment of money, which stems from how the 2 agencies are appropriated. This creates financial challenges when accounting for the color of money and which agencies appropriations are being spent on which aspects of the project.
- SK: Gary mentioned they were going to segment their WCF to account for savings and refilling from other WCF.
  - BS: This was not discussed specifically, but they have a large existing WCF (around $1B).
- EC: On SFHD, the project team was a little tough to get a hold of.
- EC: On farmers.gov, the team was super responsive and prepared.

10. Votes on Phase II Projects – Board (5 minutes)

- Single Family Housing Direct Lending Origination System Replacement: Accepted in a 5-2 Vote.
- Farmers.gov Portal: Accepted in a 7-0 Vote.

11. Next Steps and Confirmation of Action Items – Board (5 minutes)

- SK: It is important to capture **why** we are funding the projects we're choosing and especially why the TMF is necessary.
- EC: The GSA PMO team will make edits and circulate to the Board the 2 Accept FPP decision memos for the 2 projects considered today.
- EC: The FPP Decisions should be ready for Board review by tomorrow, 6/5. Board Members should review the language in both FPP decisions to have them ready by the Thursday event.
- Cornelius: The meeting on Thursday (6/7) will be in the EEOB and Members of Congress and agency representatives are expected to be present. Board Members should put a hold on their calendars for this time.
- SK: Board Members should plan to hold a regular Board Meeting on Monday.

Adjourn