Making federal grants data user-friendly for local leaders (White House Office of Management & Budget, U.S. Department of the Treasury)

Challenge: Create digital tools for Federal financial assistance that help local leaders navigate and manage Federal grants.

OMB/Treasury Policy Priority:
Maximize the return on investment of Federal grant dollars, build on the results of the recent pilot required under Section 5 of the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act) by providing digital tools and data in an accessible format to reduce administrative burden, and build public trust by appropriately publishing data that links spending to performance.

What is the problem?
State, local, and tribal governments, nonprofits, and universities complain that, despite the plethora of public data available, it can be difficult to navigate information about federal programs, funding opportunities, and current awards to find the best available resources to address their most pressing challenges. This is especially true for lower capacity entities who may not have as much experience partnering with the Federal government. Further, to manage and report on these awards, these organizations must interface with multiple Federal reporting requirements and systems, creating expensive administrative burden. The results of the DATA Act section 5 pilot indicate that burden is reduced when recipients are required to interact with fewer systems to partner with the Federal government, and when identical data can be entered once and reused as necessary.

Why is this problem important?
The Federal government spends more than $700 billion annually on Federal financial assistance, equivalent to 20% of the Federal budget and 5% of the United States gross domestic product. There are more than 40,000 organizations across the country that rely on Federal financial assistance, which often accounts for 20-30% of a state or local government's revenue. Federal grants support everything from local refighters, police officers, elementary schools, buses, bridges, housing, school lunches, community health centers, research to cure cancer or invent technology, and even the pipes we use to drink water or flush toilets. Unfortunately, while there are multiple Federal data sets and websites about these resources available to the public, not all local leaders are able to find and access the resources that could most benefit their communities. Further, these resources are managed in a siloed way, authorized ad hoc over time by Congress, and administered by separate departments within agencies, with separate goals and requirements. For a single local government managing multiple awards, the required reporting processes add up. This fragmentation results in missed opportunities for alignment among complimentary Federal programs. Our taxpayer dollars could go much further faster if those who use them could access and manage them more seamlessly.

Our Vision: Leaders across America maximize return on Federal investments by navigating quickly to the resources best positioned to help them solve their toughest challenges, and access tools to efficiently manage this partnership.