Federal CIOs—Who’s On First?

Federal chief information officers have long been a mysterious legion of public servants. Agency secretaries occasionally surface for speeches or ceremonies and remain in the public eye long enough for some people to recall their names. Sometimes their fame extends past their tenure, such as in the cases of Robert Gates and Henry Kissinger.

CIOs generally receive no such recognition. The average citizen could probably name the secretary of Homeland Security, but would not wager his lunch money on his ability to name the same agency’s CIO.

If a small number of citizens know the identities of Federal CIOs, then an even more exclusive faction knows how those CIOs get to where they are. Are CIOs selected? If so, by whom? Does the deputy CIO assume his or her predecessor’s position? Do they respond to a special CIO bat signal alerting them that they are needed?

The answers vary based on agencies; there are four different sorts of CIO positions. CIO positions across the Federal government fall into one of the following categories:

- Presidential appointee: These positions are presidential appointees who require Senate confirmation;
- Noncareer SES: These positions are senior executive-level roles and are filled by political appointees;
- Career SES: These positions are senior executive-level roles and are filled by career employees;
- General SES: These positions are senior executive-level roles and can be filled by either a career or a noncareer executive.
The start of any new administration leads to shifting within the offices of the CIO across many Federal agencies, and the start of Donald Trump’s presidency was no exception. Some CIOs left because their political appointment, issued by former President Barack Obama, was up. Other CIOs simply resigned.

The FITARA scorecard assesses 24 agencies. Nine are currently led by acting CIOs.

Four agencies have CIOs that are presidential appointees—EPA, DOT, VA, and DHS.

- Of these, three are acting (EPA, DOT, VA).
- One is a permanent CIO (DHS).
- One requires Senate confirmation (VA).

One agency has a CIO that falls into the noncareer category—SSA.

- The person in this position is an acting CIO.

Two agencies have CIOs that fall into the general category—Energy and Commerce.

- Both CIOs are acting.

The remaining 17 agencies have career CIOs—USDA, DoD, Education, HHS, HUD, DOI, DOJ, DOL, State, Treasury, GSA, NASA, OPM, SBA, NRC, NSF, and USAID.

- Of these, three are acting (DoD, HUD, and NSF).

It is also worth noting that the Federal CIO position is held by an acting CIO, Margie Graves.

MeriTalk checked in with 25 Federal agencies to find out who is CIO (or acting CIO) and which of the four position categories their jobs fall into. The 25 agencies MeriTalk researched consist of the 24 that are scored through FITARA and the Office of Management and Budget, which contains the office of the Federal CIO.

Here are the results:

**Environmental Protection Agency**

**Acting CIO:** Steve Fine  
**Position Status:** Presidential appointee—No Senate confirmation required

**Office of Management and Budget**

**Acting CIO:** Margie Graves  
**Position Status:** Presidential appointee—No Senate confirmation required

**Transportation**

**Acting CIO:** Kristen Baldwin  
**Position Status:** Presidential appointee—No Senate confirmation required
Veterans Affairs

**Acting CIO:** Rob Thomas

**Position Status:** Presidential appointee—Senate confirmation necessary

Homeland Security

**CIO:** Richard Staropoli

**Status:** Presidential appointee—No Senate confirmation required