

TTS IMPACT

Modernizing and Leading the USDA to Cloud Adoption

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) partnered with GSA's Federal Acquisition Service's (FAS) Technology Transformation Services (TTS) to support and advocate for the FedRAMP Agency Liaison program.



USDA'S STORY

USDA provides leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on public policy, the best available science, and effective management.

USDA's Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) has seven divisions covering all aspects of developing, delivering, and defending USDA information technologies. The OCIO enables USDA's mission of do right and feed everyone through innovative, secure, and cost-effective IT solutions and services. As they continued to modernize, USDA wanted to both share their experience in technology modernization and more efficiently and effectively adopt secure cloud services through FedRAMP.



THE CHALLENGE

As agencies scale their technology modernization efforts, they seek more support and resources as they procure, implement, and secure cloud services. Agencies interested in using cloud products have to know the FedRAMP program's assessment, authorization, and continuous monitoring processes and procedures.

In addition, agencies were interested in having a place where they would collaborate and learn more about FedRAMP, cloud, security, and authorization processes.

At the same time, FedRAMP wanted to identify a single point of contact within agencies to train, provide resources to, and gather feedback from.



THE SOLUTION

In May 2020, FedRAMP's Program Management Office (PMO) started its Agency Liaison Program. It will transform the way FedRAMP communicates and works with federal agencies.

Agencies play an important role in the success of FedRAMP, and through this program, the PMO will use a "train-the-trainer" model for liaisons to share knowledge and resources about the authorization process with others in their agency.

Nearly 40 agencies, including USDA, are currently participating and actively building a community to enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing across the government. Agency security practitioners were selected by their Chief Information Security Officer to serve as the FedRAMP Liaison. One of FedRAMP's guiding principles is "do once; use many," and the program is designed to help agencies and industry be more efficient in their cloud adoption efforts.



THE IMPACT

USDA is an advocate for the liaison program and selected two participants. In four events, nearly 40 agencies worked together on topics such as implementing continuous monitoring and authorization reuse, collaborative continuous monitoring, and following best practices in FedRAMP's authorization process.

The Agency Liaison program also establishes a formal feedback mechanism to enable continuous process improvement as FedRAMP rolls out new initiatives, which allows USDA to exchange best practices and lessons learned with the PMO and other agencies.

Along with other agencies, USDA uses the liaison group to:

- provide feedback on emerging technical guidance,
- understand and support implementation of responses to Binding Operational Directives from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and
- determine the best way to communicate with others in their agency about FedRAMP.

USDA is currently using 36 FedRAMP Authorized cloud services. FedRAMP actively works with Cloud Service Providers to achieve FedRAMP Authorizations, and serves the greater government community by expanding the marketplace of secure cloud offerings.

DATA POINTS

NEARLY 40

agencies collaborated on topics such as implementing continuous monitoring and authorization reuse, collaborative continuous monitoring, and following best practices in the FedRAMP Authorization process.