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Contact: Andrea Yegros
National Grants Management Association
(202) 935-0927
andrea@ngma.org

Cara Whitehead Wins 2024 NGMA Impact Award, Public Sector

February 29, 2024 – WASHINGTON, D.C. – Cara Whitehead, Director, Office of Grants Management, Department of the Interior (DOI), has won the 2024 Impact Award, Public Sector from the National Grants Management Association (NGMA). She was nominated for her positive contributions and outstanding leadership in federal grants management.

In her current role, Whitehead has executive responsibility for DOI's leadership and strategic direction of financial assistance policy, oversight, internal controls and information technology (IT) systems. During her tenure, she has led the implementation of improved internal controls over financial assistance, which strengthened the Department's financial audit material. She also established an acclaimed financial assistance symposium and quarterly training webinars.

Whitehead has been instrumental in advancing federal grants management throughout her nearly three-decade career - from streamlining the grants application process through the use of electronic applications to leading the development of systems to improve grants management operations for both grantor agencies and award recipients. Whitehead has made significant contributions to numerous federal agencies' grants management policy, oversight, and audit functions, including the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Education, Department of Homeland Security and DOI.

As a director for the System for Award Management (SAM) at the General Services Administration (GSA), she led the development of the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) to provide government-wide data on the integrity and performance of federal awardees; led the transition from the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) to completely electronic Assistance Listings; and the implementation of financial assistance electronic grant certifications. As Senior Fellow with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), she created the vision and developed the strategy to accelerate the closeout of over \$500 billion in grant awards under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and led the development of the first-ever OMB-sanctioned grants management training course.

Whitehead previously served on the National Grants Partnerships (NGP) board, which includes two years as co-chair. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Economy from Johns Hopkins University and a master's degree in Public and Private Management from Yale University.



“Cara Whitehead’s breadth and depth of experience offers a shining example of the positive impact a talented and dedicated grants manager can have, both within their federal agency and beyond,” said NGMA President Scott Sheffler.

The NGMA Impact Award, Public Sector, honors a public official at the federal, state or local level who has made a positive impact on professional grants management practice. Whitehead and the winners in the other NGMA Award categories (Impact Award, Private Sector and Newton Award) were recognized at the 2024 Annual Grants Training (AGT) on February 29 in Washington, D.C..

The National Grants Management Association (NGMA) provides tools and resources for grants professionals to support and maintain high levels of grants management competency and to establish standards of excellence for grants managers. For more information, visit <https://www.ngma.org/>.

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