



Architecture and Infrastructure Committee

May 7, 2010

Dear CIO Council Colleagues,

Candidate settings for Windows 7 and Internet Explorer 8 United States Government Configuration Baseline (USGCB) settings are here! The USGCB replaces the Federal Desktop Core Configuration (FDCC) and provides the baseline settings that Federal agencies are required to implement for security and environmental reasons. The Architecture and Infrastructure Committee's (AIC) Technology Infrastructure Subcommittee (TIS) has approved the Department of Defense (DOD) candidate settings for use by agencies until the official USGCB settings are released by the TIS later this year.

We urge agencies to both use these settings and provide comments to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) at usgcb@nist.gov. NIST will review the submitted feedback and modify these settings accordingly to reflect civilian and DOD requirements. The TIS will review these NIST-proposed candidate settings for final approval. Once approved by the TIS, implementation of these settings will be required for all agencies at the direction of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). To assist in implementation, NIST will release the supporting Security Content Automation Protocol (SCAP) content for all USGCB settings. Additionally, NIST is working with vendors to provide configuration/testing materials so that agencies can easily assess and apply settings. The USGCB baselines and supporting content are available at <http://usgcb.nist.gov>.

These settings are a baseline and provide guidance to agencies on what should be done to improve and maintain an effective security posture, but agencies are ultimately responsible for ensuring proper procedures are followed within their organization. Agencies should make risk based decisions as they customize the baseline for their operational environment and should document and track any changes, including implementation of more secure settings.

We encourage you to ensure that vendors deliver products properly configured to your Agency's needs and standards. It can be most efficient to include the USBCG configurations in contract terms and conditions related to Agency's acquisition policies.

Moving forward, updated settings may be provided for Windows 7 and Internet Explorer 8 to account for unforeseen challenges or upgrades. Modifications to the USGCB may be forthcoming as agencies begin to use these products and learn about unpredicted difficulties that should be addressed. In addition to such modifications, candidate settings for MAC OS X and Red Hat Enterprise systems should be available soon.

We hope that these initial settings will enable your Agency to move forward in implementing Windows 7 and Internet Explorer 8 imminently and to include settings for non-standard products in the future. It is critical that we plan for the requirements of an open government and these settings provide an excellent step in moving towards that goal. We hope that your Agencies will participate in the comment period for these settings to ensure that they are the strongest possible configurations and we look forward to working together to improving the way the government does business.

Sincerely,

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