

How a Federal Budget Solution Will Benefit Your Agency

Ascella Technologies, Inc.



Federal budgeting is a pain. We get it.

Ask any federal agency about their budget processes and you will likely get some version of the same answer:

“There’s a lot of spreadsheets, many manual activities, and numerous stakeholders to work with—it’s a pain.”

Manual and inefficient processes in the budget office are key factors that limit the time available for analysis and prevent agencies from effectively using taxpayer dollars to accomplish their critical missions. Plus, keeping budget-related data in spreadsheets and disparate tools prevents agencies from leveraging their data as a strategic asset to inform better analysis and decision-making.

Ascella has supported federal budget and finance offices for over 20 years from both the technology and the business side. Our

experts understand the challenges facing federal budget offices and how to leverage technology to simplify the federal budget life cycle. That’s why Ascella built GovCycle, an innovative software solution that streamlines federal budget execution and formulation processes.

In the following sections, we discuss three of the most common issues we’ve seen federal budget and finance offices encounter, and how a federal budget solution, like GovCycle, can help solve them:

1. A spreadsheet-based approach to manage budget processes is inefficient and time-consuming
2. Managing budget processes with spreadsheets makes what-if analysis cumbersome
3. Disconnected data is difficult to leverage



What if your budget office could **spend its time strategically analyzing data** rather than wrangling spreadsheets?



What if you could **reduce your reliance on contractor support** for budget tasks that are manual and repetitive?



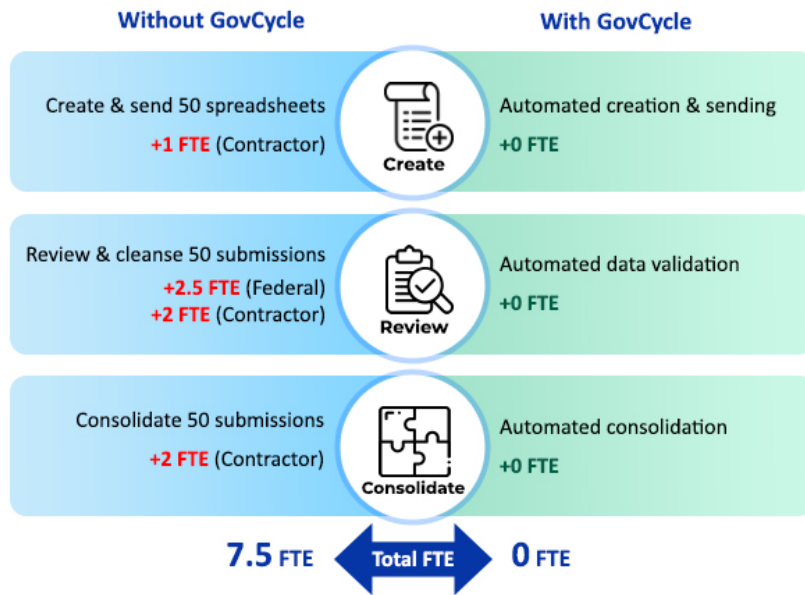
What if you could **fully integrate your budget and financial system data** to answer key budget and planning questions?



What if you could **save thousands of hours annually** for your agency?

Manual Effort Adds Up

Creating an operating plan for a federal agency with 50 offices



Ascella's GovCycle federal budget solution shifts effort away from manual processes towards value-added activities.

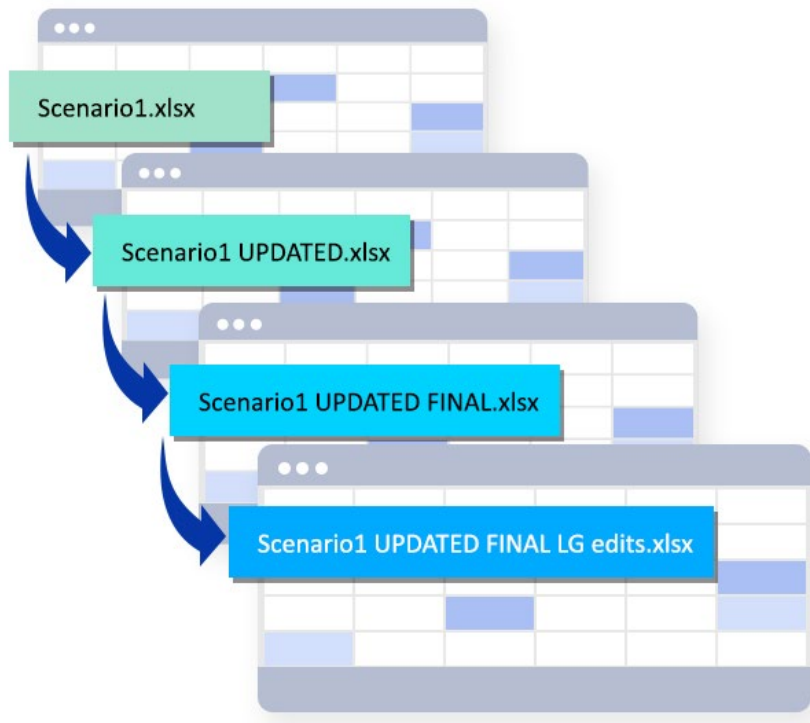
#1: A spreadsheet-based approach to manage budget processes is inefficient and time-consuming

When budget analysts spend their time on manual tasks like hunting down historical budget data; sending, tracking, and consolidating data calls to offices; and cleansing data, they are prevented from spending time on the value-added, analytical tasks that help their agency plan and budget more efficiently. Plus, budget offices often have to procure additional budget analyst contractor support to make sure everything gets done.

Consider just one common budget process: the creation of an agency-wide operating or spend plan. A budget analyst needs to create a spreadsheet for each office within the agency, send a spreadsheet to each office for completion and continuously track the status of each request, review and ensure the data provided is correct, consolidate the data received to create the agency-wide operating plan, and manually obtain approvals for the plan. In addition, throughout the fiscal year, this same budget analyst then needs to manually track every change or update. For even a relatively small agency—say, with 50 offices, this means at least 50 different spreadsheets need to be created and maintained annually, each taking multiple hours to complete from beginning to end. With this type of approach, time expended adds up fast.

However, there is a better way for federal agencies to manage manual budget processes, such as the creation of an operating plan. By implementing a dedicated federal budget solution, agencies can cut down on the manual activities that are necessary when using a spreadsheet-based approach. The graphic on the left breaks down how Ascella's GovCycle federal budget solution saved the time and effort of 7.5 full-time equivalents (FTE) for one of our federal clients during the annual creation of their operating plan.

Takeaway: By automating and streamlining key activities in federal budget formulation and execution processes, GovCycle frees up significant time for staff to focus on higher-value activities within the budget life cycle.



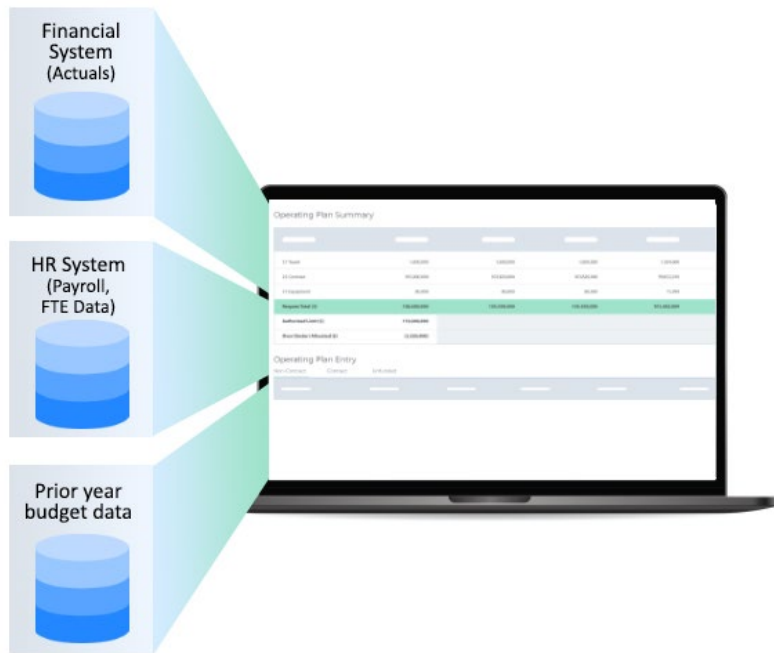
Analysis in Excel often requires multiple similar copies of the same spreadsheet, making it difficult to keep track of changes made.

#2: Managing budget processes with spreadsheets makes what-if analysis cumbersome

Budget offices need to simulate and evaluate multiple potential scenarios in order to make informed budget decisions. With spreadsheets, this type of analysis is often done manually, with analysts creating multiple versions of the same spreadsheet, making updates to values individually, and cumbersome evaluating and comparing their impact. As the number of scenarios being examined increases, managing these spreadsheets gets increasingly unwieldy—not to mention the risk of broken formulas or formatting issues. Plus, the lack of internal controls, version control, audit trail, and comments makes it difficult to stay on top of the most up-to-date version of a spreadsheet, keep track of changes, and review past decisions to understand the reasoning behind them.

Agencies need federal budget solutions to provide capabilities to create, manage, and analyze what-if scenarios all within a single system, without having to juggle multiple spreadsheets or workbooks. GovCycle delivers these capabilities and takes this functionality a step further by allowing users to copy an existing budget request scenario with the click of a button, enter assumptions such as inflation rates or hiring data and custom adjustments, and automatically generate and compare new versions of a hypothetical budget request.

Takeaway: With spreadsheet-based processes, what-if analysis is cumbersome at best; with GovCycle, it's simple.



Ascella's GovCycle federal budget solution can help you visualize all of your budget life cycle data through an integrated data experience, regardless of where it lives.

#3: Disconnected data is difficult to leverage

Budget-related data is scattered across many different sources in a federal agency, including an ever-increasing number of spreadsheets, other enterprise systems such as the agency's financial management or HR systems, and various homegrown tools and applications. Without standardized and consistent consolidation of this data, there is not a "single source of truth" that can be used to rapidly support reporting, analysis, and data-driven decision-making activities.

This disconnected data typically results in budget analysts having to manually track down historical data to populate spreadsheets to answer executive or congressional inquiries, or requires a federal agency to procure additional contractor support to support budget analyst activities.

With a federal budget solution, an agency can combine and leverage pertinent data that was previously siloed or otherwise unavailable. GovCycle provides users with an integrated data experience within a single system, interfacing with and incorporating data from federal financial management systems such as CGI Momentum, Oracle Federal Financials, or SAP. In GovCycle, this data is made available for users in a variety of ways. For example, users can view historical budget data and actuals data when creating their operating plan, monitor the ongoing execution and spending of their budget, or even directly query data for ad hoc reporting and analysis purposes.

Takeaway: Disconnected data is difficult to leverage. With GovCycle, the user receives an integrated data experience within a single system that combines and leverages data across an agency's entire budget life cycle.

What can Ascella's GovCycle do for you?

With Ascella's 20+ years of experience supporting federal budget and finance offices across the federal government, our experts have built GovCycle from the ground up with the needs of federal agencies in mind. Here are just a few of the many benefits GovCycle can bring to your federal agency.



Streamline and automate manual tasks

Budget staff shouldn't have to manually create, populate, send, and track spreadsheets to manage their budget process. GovCycle can automatically send simultaneous requests to offices, route completed data calls for review and approval, and provide efficient status tracking for key data calls such as an agency's operating plan or Congressional Budget Justification.

Improve analysis capabilities

Budget analysts should have more time for analysis—not wrangling spreadsheets. GovCycle can help create, manage, and analyze multiple budget formulation and execution scenarios simultaneously with what-if and predictive capabilities, all without having to maintain multiple spreadsheets.

Integrate data for improved reporting

GovCycle can automatically query data and prepare reports that integrate budget, financial/accounting, and other data to support decision-making and meet compliance reporting requirements. GovCycle is compatible

with all major federal financial management systems, including CGI Momentum, Oracle Federal Financials, and SAP, and can combine budget and financial system data into a single system.

Increase data quality through internal controls

Whether it's inconsistent formatting, duplicate entries, or even simple typos, low quality data takes valuable time to correct, and mistakes can often go unnoticed. GovCycle enforces numerous configurable and agency-specific rules to ensure data submissions across the agency are accurate and consistent.

Improve traceability and transparency

Without a federal budget solution, it can be difficult to understand the rationale behind changes to plans and budgets. Analysts have to dig through old emails or notes—if they even exist—to see why a change was made. GovCycle offers a detailed, easy-to-use, edit history to drill down into any changes made within the system.

Contact Us

Let's talk about how Ascella's GovCycle can work for your federal agency.

Our team can provide a customized demonstration of GovCycle, conduct a preliminary assessment of which of your budget processes are strong candidates for automation or streamlining, or even configure a proof-of-concept application specific to your organization.

To find out more about how GovCycle can save your budget office thousands of hours annually, contact us today or visit us at www.ascellatech.com/products.

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