Department of Government Efficiency: Recent Developments and Considerations
Updated February 13, 2025

Purpose

This analysis provides an overview of the Department of Government Efficiency's (DOGE) implementation to date—authorizing executive actions, practices underway, legal implications, and priority considerations for APHSA members.

Policy: Authorizing DOGE

DOGE was established by President Trump on January 20, 2025, and is situated within the existing United States Digital Service (USDS). The authorizing Executive Order (EO), *Establishing and Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency,"* directs the reorganized USDS to "implement the President's DOGE Agenda, by modernizing federal technology and software to maximize governmental efficiency and productivity."

On February 11, 2025, the White House issued another EO, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative,* and an accompanying fact sheet with direction on how to downsize the federal government by consolidating or eliminating agencies and enhance conduct standards.

Key Directives:

- **Coordinated Downsizing and Hiring Limitations:** Agency heads will consult with DOGE to reduce the federal workforce and limit hiring to essential positions. When the hiring freeze lifts (April 20), agencies will be permitted to hire only one employee for every four who depart, with exceptions for critical functions such as national security and public safety.
- **Enhanced Conduct Standards:** The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will initiate rulemaking to ensure federal employees adhere to the highest standards of conduct.
- **Agency Restructuring:** Agencies will develop plans for significant reductions in force and assess which components or entire agencies may be eliminated or consolidated if their functions are not legally mandated.

See Table 1 for Key EO Breakdown. See Tables 2 and 3 for EO Task Timetables.

Federal Implementation: Executing DOGE Mandates

Led by Elon Musk, who is now a Special Government Employee,[1] DOGE has initiated several restructuring efforts impacting the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), some of which are beginning to **directly impact state human services agencies**.

- The DOGE team, which is technically situated in a temporary organization[2] within USDS, is comprised of an advisory board and distributed (embedded) agency assignments.
- DOGE is reviewing the operational structures across HHS to identify financial inefficiencies and regulatory redundancies. DOGE has requested data access from USDA and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to evaluate the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and child welfare programs for potential cost savings. DOGE is conducting a financial efficiency audit, leading to expected funding reductions and regulatory rollbacks. Federal agencies are expected to begin implementing plans that will include largescale reductions in staffing, budgets, and programs this May.
- Recent DOGE actions have prompted discussions about the broader implications for federally funded programs and services. Multiple lawsuits have been filed questioning DOGE's authority to access federal data, control key funding sources, and implement structural changes without congressional approval.

See Tables 4 and 5 for Breakdowns of Active Litigation.

State Implementation: State-Level DOGE-Inspired Actions

Several states are launching state-level DOGE initiatives that aim to reduce bureaucracy and cut costs, mirroring the federal DOGE model. These state-level efforts could signal a national trend of government downsizing that may impact state-administered human services programs.

See Table 6 for Key State Level DOGE Efforts.

Ongoing Activity: DOGE Data Access Across Federal Agencies

DOGE has sought access to various federal agencies, including USDA, ACF, CMS, and others, to evaluate program efficiencies and identify areas of potential cost savings. DOGE has reportedly been granted read-only access of CMS data and has requested USDA data access.[3] USDA's request is under review.[4]
Human services agencies are already subject to a breadth of existing privacy and cybersecurity laws that regulate data practices, including The Privacy Act of 1974, which is cited in ongoing lawsuits against DOGE. The broad data access that DOGE has already been granted, and that it continues to request, are requiring government agencies—general councils and contract attorneys in particular—to conduct complex risk assessments against the laws, contracts, and consent agreements that are already in place.

APHSA will continue providing updates on the impact of DOGE implementation across human services agencies. Continue below for priority considerations for APHSA members and tables 1-6 (referenced above).

Priority Considerations for APHSA Members

Impact Area	Potential State Prep Actions
Funding	• State agencies should evaluate funding risks from potential program cuts (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid, TANF).
Workforce	• Agencies should prepare contingency plans for workforce reductions and staff attrition. • Agencies should assess the impact of potential program cuts on public service delivery. • Agencies and partners should forecast impact on customers' access to human services and public benefits programs.
Legal	• Legal teams should assess compliance risks related to federal data access requests. Before granting new data access, key personnel can ensure successful legal and security risk assessments have been completed. • Develop protocol. Agencies can create processes for reviewing all data access requests for alignment with HIPAA, Privacy Act, cybersecurity protocols, and any other compliance standards the organization is bound to.
Privacy	• Develop deeper connection between agency leadership, program staff, and cybersecurity professionals to (re-)establish internal safeguards to protect personally identifiable information.
Policy	• Some national budget decisions lack public reporting requirements, prompting concerns over unchecked executive authority. Members could engage with Congressional committees on potential budget impacts. • Monitor ongoing litigation that may affect DOGE's authority. • Agencies could coordinate legal and policy responses to any DOGE-related compliance challenges.

Table 1 - Key Executive Orders Related to DOGE

Executive Order	Date	Summary
Establishing and Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency"	January 20, 2025	Establishes DOGE to streamline federal operations, modernize IT infrastructure, and identify wasteful spending.
Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Works to Remake America's Federal Workforce and Implementing The President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative	February 11, 2025	Announces initiatives to optimize the federal workforce, including coordinated downsizing, enhanced conduct standards, and directives for agencies to develop plans for significant workforce reductions.
Hiring Freeze	January 20, 2025	Institutes an immediate hiring freeze across the federal government, prohibiting the filling of vacant positions and creation of new positions, with exceptions for military personnel and roles essential to national security and public safety.
Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service	January 20, 2025	Directs agencies to prioritize merit-based hiring and implement measures to ensure a competent and efficient federal workforce.

Table 2 - Executive Order Timeline: Establishing DOGE

Task	Responsible	Deadline
Establish the U.S. DOGE Service Temporary Organization to implement the President's DOGE Agenda	Executive Office of the President	Immediate upon EO - January 20, 2025
Form a DOGE team of at least four employees	All Federal Agencies	Within 30 days of EO - February 19, 2025
Submit initial reports detailing plans to modernize technology and improve efficiency	All Federal Agencies	Within 60 days of EO - March 21, 2025
Provide feedback or directives for further action	U.S. DOGE Service	Within 90 days of EO - April 20, 2025
Implement approved plans and begin reporting progress	All Federal Agencies	Ongoing, quarterly updates starting 120 days after EO - May 20, 2025
Compile a comprehensive efficiency report for the President	U.S. DOGE Service	Within 180 days of EO - July 19, 2025

Table 3 - Executive Order Timeline: Implementing DOGE Workforce Optimization Initiative

Task	Responsible	Deadline	Notes
Federal Hiring Freeze (from "Day 1 EO" 14159)	All Federal Agencies	Effective January 20, 2025 – Indefinite	No new federal civilian hires except for military, national security, and public safety roles.
Develop Workforce Reduction Plan	OMB, OPM, DOGE Administrator	Due by April 20, 2025	Plan must outline strategies for workforce reductions and efficiency improvements. *After this milestone, federal agencies can hire only one new employee for every four employees who leave.*
Submit Workforce Reduction Plans to DOGE	All Federal Agencies	Due within 90 days - May 12, 2025	Each agency must propose workforce reductions based on OMB's framework.
General Hiring Freeze Lifted	All Federal Agencies (except IRS)	After April 20, 2025	OMB and DOGE must finalize workforce reduction strategies before lifting freeze.
IRS Hiring Freeze Remains in Effect	Department of Treasury, IRS, OMB, DOGE	Indefinite – until Treasury determination	IRS hiring restrictions remain until Treasury Secretary and DOGE approve lifting the freeze.
Submit Efficiency and Cost-Savings Reports to DOGE	Agencies with workforce plans	Due by June 30, 2025	Must outline cost-saving strategies and workforce reductions.
DOGE Review and Approval of Reduction Plans	DOGE	July – August 2025	DOGE will approve or request revisions before implementation.
Begin Workforce Restructuring	Federal Agencies	Starting September 1, 2025	Agencies will implement staff reductions and restructuring efforts.

Table 4 - Legal Challenges: Summary of Active Lawsuits and Allegations Against DOGE

Law/Act	Allegation	Attached Lawsuit(s)
Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)	DOGE functions as an advisory committee but has not complied with transparency, public accountability, and balanced representation requirements.	*National Federal Employees Union v. DOGE (2025)*
Privacy Act of 1974	DOGE's unauthorized access to Treasury and OPM data violates protections against the disclosure of personally identifiable information (PII).	*Electronic Privacy Information Center v. DOGE (2025)*
U.S. Constitution (Separation of Powers, Appointments Clause)	DOGE's leadership structure grants excessive executive power to individuals (e.g., Elon Musk) without Senate confirmation.	*Public Citizen v. White House Office of Government Efficiency (2025)*
Federal Records Act	DOGE has failed to properly manage federal records, raising concerns over improper data handling or destruction.	*American Oversight v. Executive Office of the President (2025)*
Ethics in Government Act	DOGE's leadership, including Elon Musk's involvement, may create conflicts of interest by allowing private	*Government Accountability Project v. DOGE (2025)*

	individuals undue influence over federal decision-making.	

Table 5 - Legal Challenges: Federal Agency Compliance with Data Privacy and Unauthorized DOGE Access

Agency Involved	Allegation	Legal Action(s) Taken
Department of Labor	DOGE allegedly accessed federal systems without proper authorization, violating data security laws.	Under legal review
Department of Treasury and Department of Education	A federal judge temporarily blocked DOGE's access to Treasury payment systems due to cybersecurity risks.	*Order blocking DOGE from Treasury systems*
Labor Unions	Labor unions sued to prevent DOGE from accessing sensitive agency employee data.	*Labor Unions v. DOGE*
U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)	USAID effectively closed under DOGE oversight, potentially violating federal reorganization laws.	*Investigation ongoing*

Table 6 - State-Led DOGE Efforts

State	Initiative Name	Key Actions
Iowa	Iowa DOGE	Governor Kim Reynolds created a state DOGE to find savings across agencies, citing prior cost reductions of $200 million.
Oklahoma	DOGE-OK	Governor Kevin Stitt launched DOGE-OK to limit government expansion and maintain flat budgets. "DOGE-OK will help identify and root out inefficiencies and government waste. It's an essential part of making us a top ten state."
Texas	Lone Star Efficiency Task Force	Governor Greg Abbott announced task forces to audit state spending and cut administrative costs.
Florida	Sunshine State Efficiency Council	Governor Ron DeSantis established an oversight group to evaluate potential program cuts similar to federal DOGE's initiatives.