

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-819](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Effective implementation of GPRAMA can help address significant and long-standing budget, management, and performance challenges the federal government faces. This report is the latest in a series of GAO work in response to a statutory provision to review GPRAMA implementation. It examines how implementation has affected progress in addressing (1) crosscutting issues; (2) the extent to which performance information is useful and used; (3) alignment of daily operations with results; and (4) communication of performance information.

To address these objectives, GAO reviewed GPRAMA and related guidance, recent and ongoing work related to these four areas, and the status of the 69 recommendations made to OMB and agencies as part of GAO's prior work on GPRAMA implementation. GAO also interviewed OMB and Performance Improvement Council (PIC) staff. GAO included work issued since June 2013, when GAO issued the previous summary report on GPRAMA's initial implementation.

GAO is not making any new recommendations in this report. OMB and agencies generally agreed with the 69 related recommendations GAO made between 2012, when GAO issued its first report in response to the statutory provision in GPRAMA, and now, but most recommendations (about 80 percent) have not yet been implemented. GAO shared a draft of this report with OMB. OMB staff generally agreed with the information presented in the report and provided technical clarifications, which GAO incorporated as appropriate.

View [GAO-15-819](#). For more information, contact J. Christopher Mihm, (202) 512-6806, mihmj@gao.gov.

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MANAGING FOR RESULTS

Implementation of GPRAMA Modernization Act Has Yielded Mixed Progress in Addressing Pressing Governance Challenges

What GAO Found

GAO's work over the past 2 years shows that implementation of the GPRAMA Modernization Act (GPRAMA) continues to be uneven, with varying effects on agencies' performance management. Some progress has been made in areas where GAO has made prior recommendations; however, GAO has continued to identify a range of long-standing challenges in the four areas discussed below.

The executive branch still needs to take additional actions to address crosscutting issues, but the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has increased emphasis on governance of cross-agency priority (CAP) goals. For example, OMB has issued new guidance and governance for CAP goals, which cover areas where cross-agency collaboration is needed. However, more effective implementation of GPRAMA requirements, such as the requirement that agencies develop inventories of their programs, would help address crosscutting issues by providing decision makers with comprehensive program and funding information.

Ensuring performance information is useful and used by managers remains a challenge, but OMB and agencies are implementing processes that may lead to improvements. Agencies continue to have problems effectively using performance information. GAO's analysis indicates that agencies' reported use of performance information generally did not improve between 2007 and 2013. However, as OMB and agencies continue to implement data-driven and strategic review processes, the use of performance information should improve. For example, GAO found that nearly all of the 22 agencies that reported holding in-person data-driven reviews of agency priority goals (APG)—which represent agencies' highest priorities—said they use the reviews to assess progress on APGs and that they have had a positive effect on goal progress. Similarly, some agencies have increased their use of or enhanced their efforts to improve their capacity to use other evidence-based tools, such as program evaluations.

Agencies continue to face challenges linking individual and agency performance to results. GPRAMA provisions, such as the requirement that agencies identify a goal leader responsible for APG achievement, promote linkages between individual performance and agency results. GAO has recommended that agencies strengthen some mechanisms that can promote this connection, such as through Senior Executive Service performance plans. Agencies also need to take additional actions to address GAO recommendations on measuring performance in a number of areas, such as customer service.

OMB and agencies have not clearly communicated reliable and complete financial and performance information, but more effective implementation of GPRAMA requirements would improve transparency. GPRAMA requirements for reporting on the quality of performance information have the potential to improve the transparency of that information. While OMB has updated some of its guidance, improved reporting on the quality of information is not expected from the agencies until the fiscal year 2016 and 2017 reporting cycle.