

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-526](#), a report to congressional addressees

Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government faces complex, high-risk challenges, such as protecting our nation's critical information systems. Effectively managing these challenges is essential for national and economic security and public health and safety. However, responsibility for addressing these challenges often rests with multiple agencies. To effectively address them, shared goals and cross-agency collaboration are fundamental.

This report responds to GAO's mandate to evaluate the implementation of GPRAMA. It assesses (1) what is known about progress made towards the interim CAP goals; and (2) how, if at all, quarterly progress reviews reflected GPRAMA requirements and leading practices for reviews, as well as how reviews contributed to improved cross-agency performance and collaboration. To address these objectives, GAO analyzed CAP goal status updates and other documents from OMB and CAP goal progress-review meetings, and interviewed OMB staff and CAP goal representatives. GAO compared this information to GPRAMA requirements and to leading practices for performance reviews previously reported on by GAO.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making seven recommendations to OMB to improve the reporting of performance information for CAP goals and ensure that CAP goal progress reviews meet GPRAMA requirements and reflect leading practices. OMB staff generally agreed to consider GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-14-526](#). For more information, contact J. Christopher Mihm at (202) 512-6806 or mihmj@gao.gov.

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MANAGING FOR RESULTS

OMB Should Strengthen Reviews of Cross-Agency Goals

What GAO Found

CAP Goal Progress. The GPRAMA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA) requires the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to coordinate with agencies to: (1) establish outcome-oriented, federal government priority goals (known as cross-agency priority, or CAP, goals) with annual and quarterly performance targets and milestones; and (2) report quarterly on a single website now known as Performance.gov the results achieved for each CAP goal compared to the targets. In February 2012, OMB identified 14 interim CAP goals and subsequently published five quarterly updates on the status of the interim CAP goals on Performance.gov. While updates for eight of the goals included data that indicated performance towards an overall planned level of performance, only three also contained annual or quarterly targets that allowed for an assessment of interim progress. Updates for the other six goals did not report on progress towards a planned level of performance because the goals lacked either a quantitative target or the data needed to track progress. The updates on Performance.gov also listed planned activities and milestones contributing to each goal, but some did not include relevant information, including time frames for the completion of specific actions and the status of ongoing efforts. The incomplete information in the updates provided a limited basis for ensuring accountability for the achievement of targets and milestones.

OMB Quarterly Progress Reviews. GPRAMA also requires that OMB—with the support of the Performance Improvement Council (PIC)—review CAP goal progress quarterly with goal leaders. OMB instituted processes for reviewing progress on the goals each quarter, which involved the collection of data from goal leaders and the development of a memorandum for the OMB Director. However, the information included in these memorandums was not fully consistent with GPRAMA requirements. For example, GPRAMA requires OMB to identify strategies for improving the performance of goals at risk of not being met, but this was not consistently done. Without this information, OMB leadership and others may not be able to adequately track whether corrective actions are being taken, thereby limiting their ability to hold officials accountable for addressing identified risks and improving performance.

Leading Practices for Reviews. At the CAP-goal level, goal leaders for two CAP goals and one sub-goal instituted in-person progress reviews with officials from contributing agencies that were broadly consistent with the full range of leading practices for reviews, such as leadership involvement in reviews of progress on identified goals and milestones, and rigorous follow-up on issues identified through these reviews. In these cases, goal managers reported there were positive effects on performance, accountability, and collaboration. In contrast, review processes used by other goal leaders did not consistently reflect the full range of leading practices. Effective review processes consistently engage leaders and agency officials in efforts to identify and address performance deficiencies, and to ensure accountability for commitments. Thus, not using them may result in missed opportunities to hold meaningful performance discussions, ensure accountability and oversight, and drive performance improvement.