

## Tip Sheet 5: Performance Management Information and Resources

Step 4 of this guide includes information on the options analysts may consider recommending to reduce or better manage fragmentation, overlap, and duplication, including that agencies engage in performance management activities. This tip sheet provides information on performance management activities.

Effective performance management helps the federal government to improve outcomes in areas that affect nearly every aspect of American's lives. The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), as updated by the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA) provides performance planning, management, and reporting tools that can help inform congressional and executive branch decision making to address significant challenges facing the nation. GAO's work illustrates how GPRAMA, if effectively implemented, could help address government challenges in five areas (see the list of key GAO products at the end of this tip sheet):

- 1. Instituting a more coordinated and crosscutting approach to achieving meaningful results.** GPRAMA could help inform reexamination or restructuring efforts and lead to more effective, efficient, and economical service delivery in overlapping program areas by requiring the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and agencies to identify the various federal activities—including spending programs, regulations, and tax expenditures—that contribute to crosscutting outcomes. These program areas could include numerous teacher quality initiatives or multiple employment and training programs, among others.
- 2. Focusing on addressing weaknesses in major management functions.** Agencies need more effective management capabilities to better implement their programs and policies. GPRAMA requires OMB to develop long-term crosscutting goals, including government-wide goals to improve management functions in five key areas: financial, human capital, information technology, procurement and acquisition, and real property management. GAO's work has highlighted opportunities for improvements in each of these areas and aspects of all of them are on the GAO high-risk list.
- 3. Ensuring performance information is both useful and used in decision making.** Agencies need to consider the differing needs of various users, such as agency top leadership and line managers, to ensure that performance information will be both useful and used. For performance information to be useful, it must be complete, accurate, valid, timely, and easy to use. Yet decision makers often do not have the quality performance information they need to improve results. To help address this need, GPRAMA requires (1) quarterly reporting on agency and crosscutting priority goals on a publicly available website and (2) disclosure of information about the accuracy and validity of performance data. In addition, to help ensure that performance information is used—not simply collected and reported as a compliance exercise—GPRAMA requires top leadership and program officials to be involved in quarterly reviews of priority goals. During these sessions, they are expected to review the progress achieved toward goals and assess the contributions of underlying federal organizations, programs, and activities, whether internal or external to the agency leading the review, which could help identify successful practices to improve results or activities that are duplicative or working at cross-purposes. In addition, review participants are to categorize goals by their risk of not being achieved and develop strategies to improve performance. While there are many approaches to managing performance to achieve goals that rely on multiple agencies, few are likely to provide the benefit of bringing together the leadership and all the key players to solve problems and motivate performance improvement.
- 4. Sustaining leadership commitment and accountability for achieving results.** Perhaps the single most important element of successful management improvement initiatives is the demonstrated commitment of top leaders, as shown by their personal involvement in reform efforts. This is particularly important when addressing crosscutting issues, where the committed leadership of those

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involved in a collaborative effort is needed to overcome the many barriers to working across agency boundaries. GPRAMA assigns responsibilities to a Chief Operating Officer and Performance Improvement Officer in each agency to improve agency management and performance. In particular, the Chief Operating Officer is to coordinate and collaborate with relevant personnel within and external to the agency who have a significant role in contributing to the agency's mission and goals.

- 5. Engaging Congress in identifying management and performance issues to address.** In order for performance improvement initiatives to be useful to Congress for its decision making, garnering congressional buy-in on what to measure and how to present this information is critical. GAO has previously noted the importance of considering Congress a partner in shaping agency goals at the outset. GPRAMA significantly enhances requirements for agencies to consult with Congress.

### Key Websites

Managing for Results in Government: [http://www.gao.gov/key\\_issues/managing\\_for\\_results\\_in\\_government/issue\\_summary](http://www.gao.gov/key_issues/managing_for_results_in_government/issue_summary)

Performance.gov [www.performance.gov](http://www.performance.gov)

### Key GAO Reports

*Managing for Results: Selected Agencies Need to Take Additional Efforts to Improve Customer Service.* [GAO-15-84](#). Washington, D.C.: October 24, 2014.

*Government Efficiency and Effectiveness: Inconsistent Definitions and Information Limit the Usefulness of Federal Program Inventories.* [GAO-15-83](#). Washington, D.C.: October 31, 2014.

*Managing for Results: Agencies' Trends in the Use of Performance Information to Make Decisions.* [GAO-14-747](#). Washington, D.C.: September 26, 2014.

*Managing for Results: Enhanced Goal Leader Accountability and Collaboration Could Further Improve Agency Performance.* [GAO-14-639](#). Washington, D.C.: July 22, 2014.

*Managing for Results: OMB Should Strengthen Reviews of Cross-Agency Goals.* [GAO-14-526](#). Washington, D.C.: June 10, 2014.

*Government Efficiency and Effectiveness: Views on the Progress and Plans for Addressing Government-wide Management Challenges.* [GAO-14-436T](#). Washington, D.C.: March 12, 2014.

*Financial and Performance Management: More Reliable and Complete Information Needed to Address Federal Management and Fiscal Challenges.* [GAO-13-752T](#). Washington, D.C.: July 10, 2013.

*Managing for Results: Executive Branch Should More Fully Implement the GPRA Modernization Act to Address Pressing Government Challenges.* [GAO-13-518](#). Washington, D.C.: June 26, 2013.

### Other Key Resources

OMB, Circular No. A-11, *Preparation, Submission, and Execution of the Budget*, pt 6 (July 2014).