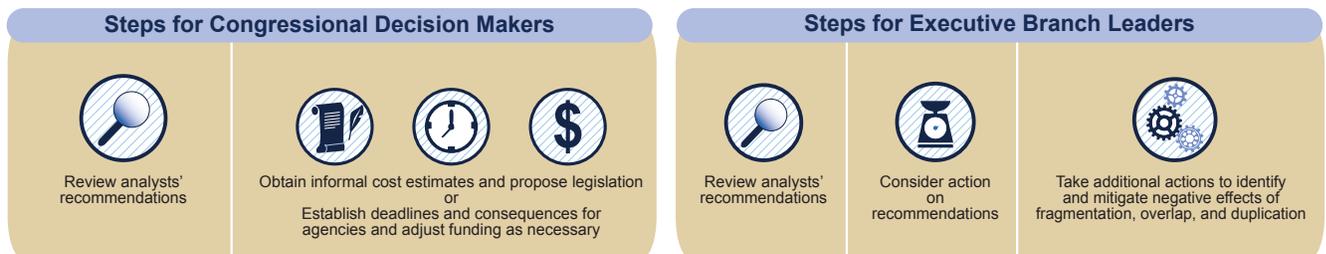


PART TWO

Reducing or Better Managing Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication: Guidance for Policymakers

This part of the guide is intended for policymakers and is divided into two sections, one for congressional decision makers and one for executive branch leaders. Each section provides guidance on how to assess information and implement recommendations from analysts' fragmentation, overlap, and duplication reviews. In addition, the section for congressional decision makers includes information on making decisions about how to reduce or better manage fragmentation, overlap, and duplication in the absence of recommendations from analysts (primarily when limited information is available about the performance of programs).



Section 1: Guidance for Congressional Decision Makers on Improving Efficiency and Reducing or Better Managing Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication

Table 7 outlines questions for congressional decision makers to consider as they review the detailed work of analysts' fragmentation, overlap, and duplication reviews and determine what, if any, actions to take.

Table 7: Questions for Congressional Decision Makers to Consider when Reviewing Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication Reviews

Summary of analysts' steps	Questions to consider about the analysis and findings
Step 1 outlines how to identify fragmentation, overlap, and duplication among a selected set of programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which programs did analysts identify as fragmented, overlapping, or duplicative? • What agencies administer and oversee the fragmented, overlapping, and duplicative programs? • How, if at all, do the fragmented, overlapping, or duplicative programs relate? For example, does one program rely on (or is it relied upon by) other programs to achieve goals? Are specific activities or functions coordinated between programs? • Which congressional committees have jurisdiction over the fragmented, overlapping, and duplicative programs? • What is the total or approximate current-year funding for the fragmented, overlapping, or duplicative programs? Is this funding consistent with identified and current needs?
Step 2 explains how to identify the potential positive and negative effects of any identified fragmentation, overlap, or duplication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the identified fragmentation, overlap, or duplication potentially resulted in any positive effects, including clearly defined roles and responsibilities that enable effective work processes among administering agencies, planned and necessary redundancies in program operations and processes to provide added reliability, or shared expertise to improve government-wide understanding of an issue? • Has the identified fragmentation, overlap, or duplication potentially resulted in inefficiencies or other negative effects, such as beneficiaries receiving similar benefits from multiple programs and wasteful spending?
Step 3 outlines how to use existing or new evaluations to validate the effects of fragmentation, overlap, and duplication and assess and compare programs in order to determine their relative performance and cost-effectiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which programs or aspects of programs are the most and least effective at meeting goals? • Which programs or aspects of programs are the most and least cost-effective? • If a new evaluation is warranted, are resources (time, money, and appropriate staff) available to carry it out? When is the evaluation expected to be completed?
Step 4 provides guidance on identifying options to improve efficiency or reduce or better manage fragmentation, overlap, or duplication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What options, if any, have analysts recommended to reduce or better manage the identified fragmentation, overlap, or duplication? • What are the benefits, potential trade-offs, and unintended consequences of the recommendations? • What legal restrictions or limitations in agency authorities might prevent implementation of these recommendations? • All things considered, what are the best options for improving efficiency and reducing or better managing fragmentation, overlap, or duplication among the identified programs? • Who (oversight committees, appropriations committees, executive branch leaders, program administrators) needs to be involved in implementing efficiencies or reducing or better managing fragmentation, overlap, or duplication? What specific actions must they each take to implement change? • Are recommendations or proposed actions to reduce or better manage fragmentation, overlap, or duplication specific enough? Have actions been drafted into legislative proposals and sufficient information been gathered to request an informal cost estimate of the legislative proposal from CBO? If not, what additional information is needed? • What actions can be taken to increase efficiency or reduce or better manage fragmentation, overlap, or duplication in the absence of analyst recommendations (because, for example, limited performance information is available)?

Source: GAO. | GAO-15-49SP

Next Steps for Congressional Decision Makers

 If the analysts' review of fragmentation, overlap, and duplication results in recommendations, those recommendations should provide congressional decision makers with a suggested plan for action. Depending on the effects analysts have identified and the relative performance and cost-effectiveness of the identified programs, options to address fragmentation, overlap, and duplication can include improving coordination and collaboration within and across agencies; changing statutes to revise or explicitly define the roles and responsibilities of agencies and program administrators; consolidating or streamlining programs; and eliminating programs.

To the extent congressional decision makers propose legislation to implement any recommendations, they can **request an informal cost estimate of their legislative proposal from CBO**. In today's fiscal environment, obtaining a cost estimate from CBO may help create buy-in for the proposed legislation.²⁴ CBO may also produce informal cost estimates of legislative proposals at various stages of the legislative process if requested to do so by a relevant committee or by the congressional leadership and as resources permit given its statutory priorities.

However, in some cases the path forward may be less clear because, for example, limited performance information is available, and congressional decision makers may need to take one or more of the following actions:

 **Establishing deadlines and consequences for agencies.** In some cases, analysts may not have made recommendations to increase efficiency or reduce or better manage fragmentation, overlap, or duplication because, for example, sufficient information is not available to assess the performance and cost-effectiveness of programs. In such cases, congressional decision makers could consider establishing deadlines through legislation for agencies to provide performance and other programmatic information, as well as establishing consequences for noncompliance (such as reducing funding in future appropriations). Deadlines and consequences could compel agencies to demonstrate the performance (including contributions to crosscutting goals), cost-effectiveness, and continued need for their programs. Analysts could use the information provided to make recommendations to congressional decision makers on how to reduce or better manage the fragmentation, overlap, or duplication they identified in their ongoing reviews.

 **Appropriating funds based on program efficiency and effectiveness.** If agencies are unable to respond to requests or mandates to engage in strategic planning and conduct performance evaluations or if the information they provide is limited, congressional decision makers could consider, for example, appropriating funds only to those programs that demonstrate their effectiveness and efficiency.

Congressional decision makers could consider **using their existing processes and powers to establish deadlines or consequences for agencies or to appropriate funds in order to help establish programs' performance, cost-effectiveness, and contributions toward shared goals**. More specifically:

- **Authorization/reauthorization.** Authorizing legislation is substantive legislation proposed by a committee of jurisdiction other than the House or Senate Appropriations Committees that establishes or continues the operation of a federal program or agency either indefinitely or for a specific period, or that sanctions a particular type of obligation or expenditure within a program. The authorization/reauthorization process affords Congress the opportunity to probe the effectiveness of a program and to terminate or make any changes to a program.
- **Congressional budget.** The Congressional Budget Act establishes several key steps in the congressional process, one of which is the adoption of a budget resolution. The resolution sets forth, for the upcoming fiscal year and each of at least the next 4 years, the total of new budget authority, outlays, revenues, the deficit or surplus, the public debt, and spending by functional category. The budget resolution may include reconciliation instructions to the extent necessary to meet the revenue or direct spending targets in the resolution. The congressional budget process as a whole gives Congress the opportunity to review existing programs and articulate overall targets for spending and revenue, as well as priorities across various broad categories.
- **Discretionary appropriations.** Discretionary appropriations are those budgetary resources that are provided in appropriations acts other than those that fund mandatory programs. The annual appropriations process gives Congress the opportunity to review funding programs and operations

²⁴Congressional Budget Act of 1974, Pub. L. No. 93-344, 88 Stat. 297 (1974). CBO is required by law to produce a formal cost estimate for nearly every bill that is reported (that is, approved) by a full committee of either the House of Representatives or the Senate. The Congressional Budget Act does not provide for individual members to request formal cost estimates.

supported by discretionary appropriations. Approximately one-third of total federal spending is funded through discretionary appropriations.²⁵

- **Congressional oversight.** In most cases, general oversight of an agency's or program's operation is undertaken by an agency's authorizing committee. In addition, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on Government Reform also have general oversight on budget and accounting measures other than appropriations, except as provided in the Congressional Budget Act of 1974. Other authorizing committees also engage in oversight reviews and hearings in connection with matters within their jurisdiction. This oversight authority provides Congress the means to hold agencies accountable for the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of existing policies, programs, and agency operations.

Appendix IV contains examples of other specific approaches that could supplement existing congressional processes to increase efficiency and reduce or better manage fragmentation, overlap, and duplication across the federal government.

²⁵Mandatory spending, also known as direct spending, refers to budget authority provided in laws other than appropriations acts, as well as to outlays that result from such budget authority. By defining eligibility and setting the benefit or payment rules, Congress controls spending for these programs indirectly rather than directly through appropriations acts.