

Highlights of [GAO-13-228](#), a report to congressional addressees.

Why GAO Did This Study

Given the federal government's central role in addressing many of the American public's most pressing concerns, it is critical that government performance is managed effectively. GAO's previous work has shown that many federal agencies have struggled to adopt effective performance management practices. Congress took steps to improve federal performance management with the passage of the Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA), which included a provision for agency leaders to conduct quarterly, data-driven performance reviews. As part of GAO's mandate to review GPRAMA implementation, this report (1) identifies practices that can promote successful data-driven performance reviews at the federal level and examines how they are being implemented at selected agencies and across the government, and (2) examines the impact of quarterly data-driven performance reviews on selected agencies' progress toward high priority and other performance goals. To address these objectives, GAO reviewed academic and policy literature; information from practitioners at the local, state, and federal level; and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidance. GAO surveyed performance improvement officers at 24 federal agencies and examined review implementation at three agencies—DOE, SBA, and Treasury.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that OMB identify and share practices to use the reviews for interagency collaboration, when relevant, to achieve agency goals. OMB staff generally agreed with the recommendation.

View [GAO-13-228](#). For more information, contact J. Christopher Mihm at (202) 512-6806 or mihmj@gao.gov.

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MANAGING FOR RESULTS

Data-Driven Performance Reviews Show Promise but Agencies Should Explore How to Involve Other Relevant Agencies

What GAO Found

GAO identified nine leading practices to promote successful data-driven performance reviews—referred to as quarterly performance reviews—at the federal level.

- Agency leaders use data-driven reviews as a leadership strategy to drive performance improvement.
- Key players attend reviews to facilitate problem solving.
- Reviews ensure alignment between agency goals, program activities, and resources.
- Agency leaders hold managers accountable for diagnosing performance problems and identifying strategies for improvement.
- Agency has capacity to collect accurate, useful, and timely performance data.
- Agency staff have skills to analyze and clearly communicate complex data for decision making.
- Rigorous preparations enable meaningful performance discussions.
- Reviews are conducted on a frequent and regularly scheduled basis.
- Participants engage in rigorous and sustained follow-up on issues identified during reviews.

Treasury's Deputy Secretary Leads the Department's Quarterly Performance Reviews



Source: Treasury.

Most officials GAO interviewed at the Department of Energy (DOE), Small Business Administration (SBA), and Department of the Treasury (Treasury) attributed improvements in performance and decision making to the reviews. DOE, SBA, and Treasury officials said their reviews allowed different functional management groups and program areas within their agencies to collaborate and identify strategies which led to performance improvements. GAO's survey of performance improvement officers indicated that there was little to no involvement in the reviews from other agencies that could help achieve agency goals. This was also true at DOE, SBA, and Treasury, where officials expressed concerns about including outsiders in their reviews and described other means of coordinating with them. However, OMB guidance—along with a leading practice GAO identified—indicates that including key players from other agencies can lead to more effective collaboration and goal achievement.