

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-788](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Federal agencies have not always clearly and transparently explained to Congress and the public how they ensure the quality of their performance information. GPRAMA requires agencies to publicly explain how they ensure the accuracy and reliability of their performance information used to assess progress for their APGs.

This is one of a series of GAO reports examining the implementation of GPRAMA, as required by the act. This report assesses how well selected agencies publicly reported on the quality of performance information used to measure progress on APGs. GAO selected six agencies—the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Interior, and Labor, and NASA and DHS—based on GAO’s 2013 federal managers survey on their agency’s use of performance information. GAO reviewed information concerning these agencies’ APGs published on Performance.gov and in their annual performance plans and reports.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that all six of the agencies work with OMB to describe on Performance.gov how they are ensuring the quality of their APGs’s performance information, and that all agencies, except for DHS, also describe this information in their annual performance plans and reports. GAO also recommends that OMB, working with the PIC, focus on ways the PIC’s data quality working group can improve public reporting for APGs. OMB did not comment on the recommendations, but the six agencies generally concurred or identified actions they planned to take to implement them.

View [GAO-15-788](#). For more information, contact J. Christopher Mihm at (202) 512-6806 or mihmj@gao.gov.

September 2015

MANAGING FOR RESULTS

Greater Transparency Needed in Public Reporting on the Quality of Performance Information for Selected Agencies’ Priority Goals

What GAO Found

The six agencies GAO reviewed generally did not publicly report on how they ensured the accuracy and reliability of performance information used to measure progress on their highest priority performance goals, referred to as agency priority goals (APGs). The GPRAMA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA) requires agencies to identify the following when publicly reporting on their APGs: 1) how performance information was verified and validated; 2) data sources; 3) level of accuracy required for intended use; 4) any limitations at the required level of accuracy; and 5) how the agency will compensate for such limitations (if needed) to reach the required level of accuracy. GPRAMA requires agencies to provide this information to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for publication on Performance.gov. GPRAMA also directs agencies to provide this information for performance goals, which include APGs, in their annual performance plans and reports. While all six agencies described how they ensured the quality of their performance information overall, GAO found discussions about performance information quality addressing all five GPRAMA requirements in only the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) performance plans and reports.

Agency Priority Goal (APG) Performance Information Quality Discussion in Selected Agencies’ Performance Plans and Reports for FY13-FY16

Agency	Description of how agency ensured performance information quality overall	Number of APGs for FY14 and FY15	Description of how each APG met GPRAMA performance information quality requirements
Agriculture	Yes	3	0
Defense	Yes	4	0
Homeland Security	Yes	3	3
Interior	Yes	6	0
Labor	Yes	3	0
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)	Yes	4	0
Total	6 yes	23	3

Source: GAO analysis of selected agencies’ performance plans and reports. |GAO-15-788

OMB and the Performance Improvement Council (PIC)—a cross-agency council of agency performance improvement officers—established the Data Quality Cross-Agency Working Group in February 2015. The group has identified several goals, such as improving the reliability and quality of performance information, and could serve as a vehicle for disseminating good practices in public reporting on data quality.