PRESIDENTIAL AND CONGRESSIONAL TRANSITION

Management Agenda:
Promote Transparency and Open Government to Enhance Civic Engagement and Foster Innovation

The Presidential Transition Act points to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) as a resource for incoming administrations as well as new Congresses.

GAO's **Management Agenda** is a streamlined tool for new leaders to quickly learn about critical management challenges and risks facing the federal government and the actions needed to address those challenges.

Promote Transparency and Open Government to Enhance Civic Engagement and Foster Innovation is one of the eight management challenges highlighted in the Management Agenda.

To foster transparency, improve oversight, and enhance public participation in decision-making, Congress and the new administration are challenged to ensure government and public access to reliable and complete federal financial and performance information. Attention to these initiatives can help agencies gather more data, make data more accessible, be more responsive to the public, and involve the public in accomplishing social goals.

Read on to learn more about the following challenges:

1. Implement the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act)

2. Improve Performance.gov

3. Enhance Customer Service

4. Encourage Open Innovation

Implement the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act)
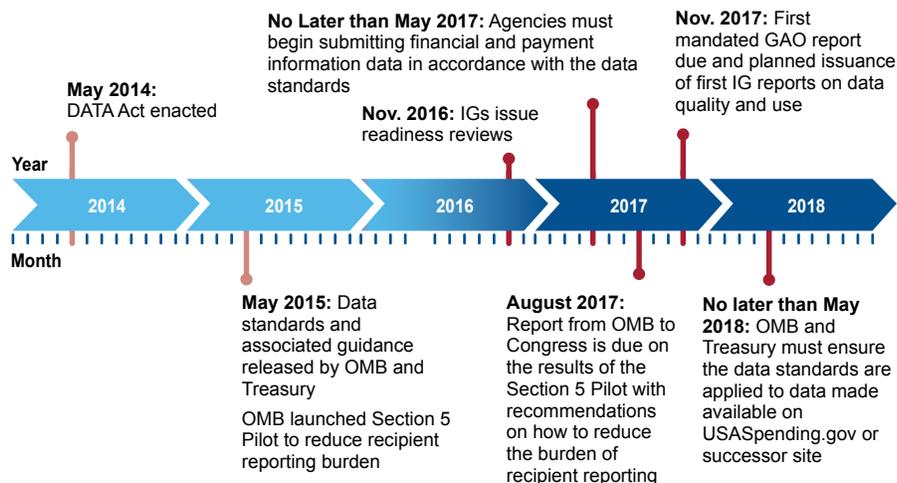
Challenge: Effective Implementation As Critical Deadlines Approach

The transition to a new administration presents risks to the effective implementation of the DATA Act due to turnover of key officials in coming months when critical steps are required to meet the May 2017 statutory deadline for agencies to submit financial information.

Government-wide data standards for financial reporting are essential to fully identify the magnitude of federal spending and enable agencies to share data with each other, Congress, and the public. Full and effective implementation of the DATA Act will allow federal funds to be tracked at multiple points in the federal spending lifecycle and significantly increase the types of data reported.

The DATA Act requires the federal government to set government-wide data standards, identify ways to reduce reporting burdens, and regularly review data quality to help improve the transparency and accountability of federal spending data. If implemented effectively, the act should produce financial information that will likely improve government decision-making, oversight, and transparency.

DATA Act of 2014: Timeline of Key Provisions from 2014 to 2018

No Later than May 2017: Agencies must begin submitting financial and payment information data in accordance with the data standards

Nov. 2017: First mandated GAO report due and planned issuance of first IG reports on data quality and use

May 2014: DATA Act enacted

Nov. 2016: IGs issue readiness reviews

Year

2014 — 2015 — 2016 — 2017 — 2018

Month

May 2015: Data standards and associated guidance released by OMB and Treasury

OMB launched Section 5 Pilot to reduce recipient reporting burden

August 2017: Report from OMB to Congress is due on the results of the Section 5 Pilot with recommendations on how to reduce the burden of recipient reporting

No later than May 2018: OMB and Treasury must ensure the data standards are applied to data made available on USASpending.gov or successor site

Sources: GAO analysis of Pub. L. No. 113-101, 128 Stat. 1146 and December 22, 2015 letter from the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Congressional committees. | Modified from GAO-15-241T

Related GAO Work

- Transparency of Federal Data

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Key Actions Needed

1. Develop additional guidance on data standards and reporting to help agencies ensure that their data are reliable, accurate, and machine-readable.

2. Establish and sustain a clear governance structure for protecting the integrity of established data standards over time.

3. Effectively implement the DATA Act's Section 5 pilot to identify ways to reduce the burden of recipient reporting.

4. Create a comprehensive list of federal programs that will enable Congress, agencies, and the public to understand the scope of the federal government's investment in specific program areas.

Performance.gov

Challenge: Poor Usability and Lack of Planning

Performance.gov is intended to serve as a public window to the federal government's goals and performance in key areas and to enhance senior leadership decision making. However, usability issues with the site have limited its effectiveness.

Performance.gov does not include key content as required by the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, such as an inventory of all federal programs. The federal government needs a strategic plan for the future of Performance.gov, which will allow it to guide decisions regarding resources and actions necessary to improve the website's value and usability.

Performance.gov Home Page

Source: www.performance.gov (image as of 10/12/2016). | Modified from GAO-16-693

Related GAO Work

- Managing for Results in Government

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Key Actions Needed

1. Include all website content required by the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 and ensure website usability issues are addressed.

2. Develop a strategic plan to meet website requirements, create a customer outreach plan, and develop a strategy to manage and archive content and data from the website.

Customer Service

Challenge: Insufficient Focus on Addressing Customer Needs

Federal agencies face a long-standing challenge to meet the needs of customers who depend on the government for vital services such as providing medical and insurance benefits to veterans, managing border and airport security, informing and educating visitors within national parks and forests, and in many other roles.

Agencies often do not set measureable customer service performance goals, measure progress towards meeting those goals, maintain a formal feedback mechanisms to make changes, and do not always make information easily available to the public. As a result, agencies may not be meeting the needs of customers or identifying improvements to address customer concerns.

Customer Service Cross-Agency Priority Goal Statement

Selected Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) Goal	Goal Statement
Customer Service	Increase citizen satisfaction and promote positive experiences with the federal government by making it faster and easier for individuals and businesses to complete transactions and receive quality services.

Source: Performance.gov. | Modified from GAO-16-509

Related GAO Work

- Federal Customer Service

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Key Actions Needed

1. Update agency customer service standards to include performance information required by the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 and executive orders. Standards should be meaningful to customers and measurable.

2. Implement formal feedback mechanisms to improve customer service.

3. Develop customer service strategies to define and communicate standards and expectations.

Open Innovation

Challenge: Engage the Public to Achieve Goals

Complex challenges facing the federal government highlight the need for agencies to engage and collaborate with all sectors of society. Open innovation involves using various tools and approaches, such as open dialogues, prize competitions, and crowdsourcing and citizen science, to directly engage with citizens, experts, and stakeholders. Agencies can leverage outside expertise and resources to more efficiently and effectively address an issue and achieve goals.

Practices for Effective Implementation of Open Innovation Initiatives

1. Select the strategy appropriate for the purpose of engaging the public and the agency's capabilities

2. Clearly define specific goals and performance measures for the initiative

3. Identify and engage external stakeholders and potential partners

4. Develop plans for implementing the initiative and recruiting participants

5. Engage participants and partners while implementing the initiative

6. Collect and assess relevant data and report results

7. Sustain communities of interested partners and participants

Source: GAO analysis. | www.gao.gov

Related GAO Work

- Open Innovation

- Federal Open Innovation - Podcast

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Key Actions Needed

1. Expand the use of open innovation strategies to: collect information and a broader range of perspectives; develop new ideas, products, or solutions; enhance agency capacity; build or expand a community; and increase awareness about an issue.

2. Apply identified practices when designing and implementing an open innovation initiative.