

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-112](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The Board is charged with overseeing and supporting the Capitol Police. GAO was asked to review the Board's operations, including the Board's accountability and level of communication. This report examines (1) the roles and responsibilities of the Board and the Police Chief and the comparability of the Board's scope to other law enforcement oversight entities; (2) the extent to which the Board's Manual incorporates leading practices for accountability, transparency, and external communication, and how the Board implements these practices; and (3) Congressional stakeholder perspectives on the Board's approaches and adjustments to enhance them.

To complete this review, GAO analyzed relevant statutes and Board governing documents and operations. GAO also used internal control and corporate governance standards to articulate the key principles of accountability, transparency, and effective external communication; identified six leading practices that facilitate these principles; and analyzed the Board's Manual against each. GAO also interviewed Board members and staff, Congressional stakeholders, and experts selected for their knowledge of law enforcement oversight.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Board revise its Manual to fully incorporate leading practices, including evaluating its performance, and engage with stakeholders and incorporate their views, as appropriate, on any changes. The Board did not state whether it concurred with the recommendation.

View [GAO-17-112](#). For more information, contact Gretta L. Goodwin at (202) 512-8777 or goodwin@gao.gov.

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CAPITOL POLICE BOARD

Fully Incorporating Leading Governance Practices Would Help Enhance Accountability, Transparency, and External Communication

What GAO Found

The Capitol Police Board (Board) has wide-ranging responsibilities and according to experts with knowledge of law enforcement oversight bodies, like civilian oversight boards, the Board's scope is unique by comparison. For example, the Board has authority for security decisions, as well as certain human capital and personnel matters, including the approval of officer terminations.

In 2013, the Board adopted a Manual of Procedures (Manual) that references its operations and establishes protocols for outreach with the Congressional committees and leadership offices (stakeholders) with whom the Board interacts. This Manual fully incorporated one and partially incorporated five of the six leading practices that facilitate the principles of accountability, transparency, and effective external communication; however, the Board has not always implemented these practices, such as notifying stakeholders that certain information on the Board's decisions and operations is available to them.

The Extent to Which the Capitol Police Board's Manual of Procedures Incorporates Accountability, Transparency, and Communication Leading Practices

Leading Practice	Connection to accountability, transparency, and communication	Extent to which Manual incorporates the practice
Define roles, responsibilities, and areas of authority	Promotes accountability	○
Oversee functions of the corporation (Capitol Police)		○
Conduct performance evaluations and reviews		○
Develop processes for internal functions of the board		●
Disclose information to stakeholders	Fosters transparency	○
Develop processes for communication with stakeholders	Enhances effective external communication	○

Key:

- Fully incorporated
- Partially incorporated
- Not incorporated

Source: GAO analysis. | GAO-17-112

Note: A determination of "fully incorporated" means that procedures in the Manual align with all activities associated with the leading practice; "partially incorporated" means that procedures in the Manual align with some activities associated with the leading practice; and "not incorporated" means that no provisions in the Manual align with any activities associated with the leading practice.

Some stakeholders raised concerns, such as the Board not adequately soliciting their input, and suggested adjustments to enhance the Board's approaches. Board officials told us that the Manual has not incorporated some leading practices, in part because they address activities beyond statutory requirements. Leading practices note that effective governing bodies make commitments to stakeholders that exceed basic requirements, and GAO found the Manual includes activities that go beyond what is statutorily prescribed. Working to fully incorporate leading practices into its Manual and operations would help the Board enhance its accountability, transparency, and effective external communication with stakeholders.