

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-507](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

To address the complex and crosscutting challenges facing the federal government, agencies need to effectively engage and collaborate with those in the private, nonprofit, and academic sectors; other levels of government; and citizens. Agencies are increasingly using open innovation strategies for these purposes.

The GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 requires agencies to identify strategies and resources they will use to achieve goals. The act also requires GAO to periodically review how implementation of the act's requirements is affecting agency performance. This report identifies the open innovation resources developed by GSA, OMB, OSTP, and six selected agencies, and examines the extent to which key guidance reflects practices for effective implementation.

To address these objectives, GAO identified various resources by reviewing relevant policies, guidance, and websites, and interviewing staff from each agency. GAO selected the six agencies based on several factors, including the number and type of open innovation initiatives outlined in their agency Open Government Plans. GAO also compared guidance to practices and key actions for effective implementation.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends GSA, OMB, and OSTP enhance key guidance for each open innovation strategy to fully reflect practices for effective implementation. GSA and OMB generally agreed with these recommendations. OSTP neither agreed nor disagreed with the recommendations.

View [GAO-17-507](#). For more information, contact J. Christopher Mihm at (202) 512-6806 or [mihmj@gao.gov](mailto:mihmj@gao.gov).

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## OPEN INNOVATION

# Executive Branch Developed Resources to Support Implementation, but Guidance Could Better Reflect Leading Practices

## What GAO Found

Open innovation involves using various tools and approaches to harness the ideas, expertise, and resources of those outside an organization to address an issue or achieve specific goals. Agencies have frequently used several open innovation strategies—crowdsourcing and citizen science, ideation, open data collaboration, open dialogues, and prize competitions and challenges—to engage the public. Staff from the General Services Administration (GSA), Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) developed resources to support agency use of these strategies:

- **policies and guidance** to encourage use, clarify legal authorities, and suggest actions for designing and implementing an open innovation initiative;
- **staff** to advise and assist agency staff implementing initiatives and open innovation-related communities of practice; and
- **websites** to improve access to relevant information and potential participants.

Six selected agencies—the Departments of Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Transportation; the Environmental Protection Agency; and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration—also developed resources for those strategies they frequently use. These resources complement those at the government-wide level, providing agency staff with tailored guidance and support to help ensure they carry out initiatives consistent with agency procedures.

For the open innovation strategies identified above, GAO determined that key government-wide guidance developed by GSA, OMB, and OSTP reflect to differing extents practices GAO previously identified for effectively implementing specific initiatives (see table). Several factors led to these variances, including differing scopes and methodologies used in their development, and when they were issued. Better incorporating these practices could help ensure agency staff are aware of, and are able to take, steps to effectively design, implement, and assess their initiatives.

Extent Key Guidance Reflects Practices for Effective Implementation by Strategy

Practice	Crowdsourcing and Citizen Science	Ideation and Open Dialogues	Open Data Collaboration	Prize Competitions and Challenges
Select the appropriate strategy	●	●	◐	●
Clearly define goals and measures	●	●	◐	●
Identify and engage stakeholders and partners	●	●	●	●
Develop implementation plans	●	◐	○	●
Engage participants and partners	●	◐	◐	◐
Collect, assess, and report relevant data	●	◐	○	●
Sustain community of participants and partners	◐	◐	○	◐

● Fully reflects practice    ◐ Partially reflects practice    ○ Does not reflect practice

Source: GAO analysis of key policy documents and guidance from OMB, OSTP, and GSA. | GAO-17-507