

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-171](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

WIOA was enacted in 2014 and requires DOL, Education, and HHS to collaborate on an ongoing basis to implement the law. WIOA requirements involving interagency collaboration include issuing regulations, developing a common performance system, and overseeing state planning. In prior work, GAO identified leading practices that can enhance and sustain federal collaborative efforts. Given the ongoing collaboration required by WIOA, GAO was asked to review the collaborative approaches the agencies have used to implement the law.

This report examines the extent to which federal agencies' efforts to implement certain WIOA requirements have aligned with leading collaboration practices.

GAO reviewed relevant federal laws, regulations, and guidance. GAO also interviewed officials from DOL, Education, and HHS who led the overall collaboration effort, gathered information from interagency workgroups, and reviewed relevant documentation. In addition, GAO interviewed Office of Management and Budget staff regarding their role in this collaboration. GAO assessed the agencies' efforts against leading collaboration practices and federal internal control standards.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making 6 recommendations to DOL, Education, and HHS to better address their resource needs and document their agreements. HHS agreed with GAO's recommendations. DOL and Education neither agreed nor disagreed but planned to take actions to address the recommendations.

View [GAO-18-171](#). For more information, contact Cindy Brown Barnes, (202) 512-7215, brownbarnesc@gao.gov.

February 2018

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

Federal Agencies' Collaboration Generally Reflected Leading Practices, but Could Be Enhanced

What GAO Found

Federal agencies' efforts to implement Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements related to regulations, program performance, and state planning aligned with most of the leading collaboration practices that GAO identified in its prior work, but could be enhanced in two areas. Officials from the Departments of Labor (DOL), Education (Education), and Health and Human Services (HHS) reported having taken actions consistent with five of seven leading collaboration practices (see table).

Table: Examples of Federal Agencies' Actions That Were Consistent with GAO's Identified Leading Collaboration Practices

| Leading Collaboration Practices | Examples of Actions Taken by the Departments of Labor (DOL), Education (Education), and Health and Human Services (HHS) to Implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) |
|--|---|
| Defining Outcomes and Accountability | Implemented outcomes and time frames required by WIOA by establishing interim outcomes and deadlines. The agencies also identified additional outcomes and tracked their progress, for example, by developing work plans with deadlines for specific tasks. |
| Bridging Organizational Cultures | Shared information about differences across agencies in programs and processes. For example, identified each agency's existing process for reviewing and approving state plans before developing a joint process. |
| Establishing and Sustaining Leadership | Shared leadership of the collaboration by identifying a senior leader from each agency and workgroup co-chairs from each agency. These workgroup leadership roles are generally a core job responsibility. |
| Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities | Developed a collaboration structure, including roles and responsibilities of interagency workgroups, and a joint decision-making process involving senior leaders from each agency. |
| Including Relevant Participants | Involved relevant participants from DOL, Education, HHS, and other agencies as needed. Participants committed staff resources to help carry out interagency workgroup activities. |

Source: GAO and analysis of information from DOL, Education, and HHS officials. | GAO-18-171

However, GAO noted that the agencies' efforts could be enhanced in two areas:

Resources. The agencies have leveraged various resources, but have not fully identified the resources needed to address technology challenges. Online collaboration tools could help address these challenges, and officials said they have used them to a limited extent based on their business needs. DOL and Education officials said the agencies are exploring options for using online tools to a greater extent, but have not fully identified their technology needs or which tools would best meet these needs. Without doing so, the agencies may be missing opportunities to collaborate more efficiently and effectively.

Written agreements. The agencies have not formally documented their agreements about how they are collaborating or sharing resources. Officials said they have not formally documented their agreements because they believed it was not necessary, and they faced time constraints. However, the agencies have experienced turnover among senior officials, and without documentation of how they are collaborating, it may take longer for newly appointed officials to become familiar with and implement collaboration efforts. In addition, without documenting decisions about how they share resources, the agencies may be missing opportunities to assess whether their approach could be enhanced.