

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-223](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Since 1993, OMB has reported over \$154 billion in funding for federal climate change activities, spread across the government—raising questions about fragmentation, overlap, or duplication.

GAO was asked to review federal climate change funding. This report examines (1) reported federal funding from 2010 to 2017 and the extent to which reports on such funding are clearly linked to the federal fiscal exposure to climate change; (2) the extent to which selected agencies reported climate change funding that supports programs where addressing climate change is the primary purpose; and (3) the extent to which the primary purpose programs are fragmented, overlapping, or duplicative.

GAO reviewed OMB climate change funding reports; analyzed budget justifications for six agencies—the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, and Energy; the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the National Science Foundation—representing 89 percent of OMB-reported climate change funding in fiscal year 2014; analyzed documents on primary purpose programs against GAO's fragmentation, overlap, or duplication criteria; and reviewed GAO's prior work on fiscal exposures.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making two recommendations to OMB for enhancing the information it provides to Congress, in conjunction with future funding reports. OMB agreed with the findings but disagreed with GAO's recommendations, which GAO continues to believe are valid as discussed in the report.

View [GAO-18-223](#). For more information, contact Alfredo Gómez at (202) 512-3841 or gomezj@gao.gov.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

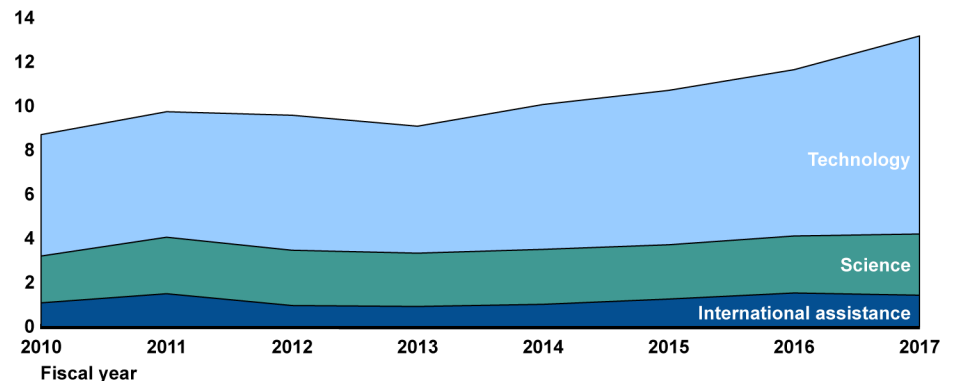
Analysis of Reported Federal Funding

What GAO Found

In its reports to Congress, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) reported that annual federal climate change funding increased by \$4.4 billion from fiscal years 2010 through 2017. For example, reported annual funding for technology to reduce emissions increased by about \$3.5 billion, as seen in the figure below. Although OMB included information on federal fiscal exposure to climate change in the President's budgets for fiscal year 2016 and 2017, it did not provide this information in its most recent climate change funding reports. For example, the reports did not include information on programs—such as disaster assistance—whose costs were likely to increase due to climate change which would have provided more complete information for making spending trade-off decisions for climate activities. According to GAO's prior work, more complete information on fiscal exposures and the long-term effects of decisions would help policymakers make trade-offs between spending with long-term and short-term benefits.

Reported Federal Climate Change Funding by Category- Fiscal Years 2010-2017

Dollars in billions



Source: GAO analysis of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) reports. | GAO-18-223

Note: The figure presents enacted budget authority except for fiscal years 2011, 2013, and 2017. For fiscal years 2011 and 2017, OMB reported proposed budget authority. For fiscal year 2013, OMB reported final operating level funding. Funding is reported in nominal dollars, which are not adjusted for inflation.

Based on its review of the budget justifications of six agencies representing 89 percent of OMB-reported funding, GAO identified few programs (18 of 533) whose primary purpose is to address climate change. The remaining programs were multi-purpose—the budget justifications included other program goals in addition to addressing climate change. The 18 programs represented about 6 percent of these agencies' reported climate change funding for fiscal year 2017.

According to GAO's analysis, the 18 primary purpose climate change programs GAO identified are fragmented across four federal agencies, but the programs serve different purposes, target different audiences, or operate at different time periods and scales, which minimizes potential overlap or duplication. Additionally, agency program managers collaborate through the U.S. Global Change Research Program—a coordinating entity—to avoid potential negative effects from fragmentation. However, climate change programs outside GAO's review have not been analyzed for potential fragmentation, overlap, or duplication.