



FEDERAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

OMB Can Better Assess the Improvement Efforts of High Impact Service Providers

Report to Congressional Committees

July 2025

GAO-25-107652

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Accessible Version

GAO Highlights

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July 2025

Federal Customer Experience

OMB Can Better Assess the Improvement Efforts of High Impact Service Providers

Why GAO Did This Study

The GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA) provides for the establishment of CAP goals—4-year outcome-oriented goals—to improve the management of government. According to the act, OMB is responsible for overseeing these goals. GPRAMA also includes a provision for GAO to periodically assess the act’s implementation, including the CAP goals.

This report (1) describes information OMB obtained from high impact service providers about their customer experience improvement efforts; and (2) examines how OMB used this information to assess progress toward customer experience goals.

GAO reviewed information from OMB and the 37 high impact service providers identified by OMB. GAO compared OMB actions to key practices for federal performance management.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that OMB, in consultation with federal agencies, establish goals for federal customer experience and service delivery activities. These should include quantitative targets and time frames for the expected level of improvements, and related performance measures.

OMB did not provide comments on our draft report.

What GAO Found

Federal agencies serve the public in a vast number of ways, such as providing medical benefits to veterans, managing border security, and educating visitors to national parks. Given the breadth of these services, efforts have been made to improve customer service (agencies’ individual interactions with customers) and customer experience (the public’s perceptions of and overall satisfaction with those interactions).

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) established two Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) goals to improve federal customer experience, covering the period from 2022 through January 2025. The next set of CAP goals are to be released no later than February 2026. Further, the Government Service Delivery Improvement Act, enacted in January 2025, requires that OMB coordinate government efforts to improve federal service delivery from high impact service providers. This includes establishing government-wide standards, policies, guidelines, and performance measures.

One of the customer experience CAP goals focused on high impact service providers—federal entities that provide or fund services that have a large customer base or a critical effect on those served. There are currently 37 high impact service providers designated by OMB. From 2022 through 2024, OMB obtained annual capacity assessments and action plans from them about their customer experience improvement efforts.

- Capacity assessments summarized the practices and resources available to support customer experience work within the high impact service providers.
- Action plans described anticipated service improvements that the providers intended to take in future years. Most of the action plans emphasized digital improvements, such as the creation of mobile applications or the improvement of existing websites.

While obtaining such information from service providers is helpful, GAO found that OMB could not use the information to assess progress on the providers' customer experience improvements. For example, OMB established a goal that all providers would have the talent required to accomplish a range of customer experience activities by the end of fiscal year 2024. This goal included a time frame for improving talent. However, it did not communicate what was to be achieved (e.g., what specific changes in talent and skill were needed) or how that achievement would be measured (i.e., a quantifiable target).

OMB could better target its efforts to improve services to the public by developing goals with quantitative targets and time frames, and related performance measures, for the level of improvements it expects. This is consistent with OMB's responsibilities under the Government Service Delivery Improvement Act and key practices for federal performance management. For example, OMB had previously developed a goal to, "Increase energy productivity (amount of real gross domestic product in dollars/energy demand) 50 percent by 2030." This goal included a time frame, a definition of energy productivity, and a quantitative target. Similarly clear expectations would better position OMB and the service providers in their efforts to improve services to the public.

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Abbreviations

- CAP: Cross-Agency Priority
- CBP: U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- DHS: Department of Homeland Security
- DOD: Department of Defense
- FWS: Fish and Wildlife Service
- GPRA: Government Performance and Results Act of 1993
- GPRAMA: GPRA Modernization Act of 2010
- HUD: Department of Housing and Urban Development
- ITA: International Trade Administration
- NPS: National Park Service
- OMB: Office of Management and Budget
- RD: Rural Development
- SSA: Social Security Administration
- TSA: Transportation Security Administration
- USAID: U.S. Agency for International Development
- VA: Department of Veterans Affairs
- VBA: Veterans Benefits Administration

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July 28, 2025

Congressional Committees

Federal agencies serve the public in a vast number of ways, such as providing medical benefits to veterans, managing border security, and educating visitors to national parks. Given the breadth of these services, efforts have been made to improve the customer service provided by federal agencies and the customer experience of those interacting with agencies.¹ Most recently, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) established two Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) goals focused on improving federal customer experience covering the period from August 2022 through January 2025.²

Recent legislation supports the continuation of these efforts. The Federal Agency Performance Act, enacted in December 2024, requires the administration to develop a new set of CAP goals in 2025 and publicly report this information no later than February 2026.³ Additionally, the Government Service Delivery Improvement Act, enacted in January 2025, requires OMB to develop and oversee the implementation of government-wide service delivery standards, policies, and guidelines, and to establish related performance metrics.⁴

The GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA) includes a provision for us to periodically assess its implementation and the CAP goals established by each administration.⁵ This report (1) describes information OMB obtained from high impact service providers about their customer experience improvement efforts, and (2) examines how OMB used this information to assess progress toward customer experience improvements.

High impact service providers are federal entities that provide or fund critical customer-facing federal services, including those administered at the state or local level.⁶ To describe the information OMB obtained from high impact service providers about their customer experience improvement efforts, we contacted all 37 high impact

¹Federal customer service refers to agencies' individual interactions with customers, through the assistance and advice provided by the agency to people who use its services. Customer experience takes a more comprehensive view of the public's perceptions of and overall satisfaction with interactions with an agency, product, or service. See Executive Order No. 14058, *Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government*, 86 Fed. Reg. 71357 (Dec. 16, 2021).

²CAP goals are 4-year outcome-oriented federal priority goals required by the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 Pub. L. No. 111-252, § 5, 124 Stat. 3866, 3873 (2011). Under the law, OMB and agencies must establish long-term federal government priority goals, also known as CAP goals, every 4 years. 31 U.S.C. § 1120(a)(2). They are to cover (1) outcome-oriented goals for a limited number of federal policy areas (examples of past policy areas include cybersecurity and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Education); and (2) five specific management issues (finance, human capital, information technology, procurement and acquisition, and federal real property). 31 U.S.C. § 1120(a)(1).

³Pub. L. No. 118-190, § 4, 138 Stat. 2653, 2655 (2024), codified at 31 U.S.C. §§ 1120(a)(2)(A), 1122(c)(5)(B) (requiring CAP goals, at a minimum, to be updated and revised during the first year of each presidential term and to be made publicly available concurrent with the submission of the budget during the first fiscal year following the year that the President's term commences).

⁴Pub. L. No. 118-231, § 2, 138 Stat. 2829, 2830 (2025), codified at 5 U.S.C. § 322(a)(5) and (7).

⁵Pub. L. No. 111-352, § 15(b)(2)(C), 124 Stat. 3866, 3883-84 (2011). In addition, OMB must assess progress toward federal priority goals on a quarterly basis. 31 U.S.C. § 1121(a). OMB has stated that federal priority goals are CAP goals.

⁶Exec. Order No. 14058, 86 Fed. Reg. 71357 (Dec. 16, 2021).

service providers designated by OMB, and obtained and reviewed their capacity assessments and action plans. The capacity assessments we received also contained information about services designated by these providers for improvement (see appendix I for a list of providers and their designated services).

These providers were to submit customer experience capacity assessments and action plans to OMB on an annual basis, according to OMB guidance.⁷ Capacity assessments provided a summary of current practices and resources available to support customer experience work within the providers. Action plans described steps that these providers intend to take to improve customer experience in future years.

We reviewed and summarized high impact service providers' annual capacity assessments from fiscal years 2022 through 2024. We also reviewed and summarized action plans these providers completed in fiscal years 2022 through 2024. The action plans were forward looking, and thus contained information pertaining to fiscal years 2023 through 2026.

To examine how OMB used the providers' information to assess progress toward customer experience improvements, we reviewed the capacity assessments and action plans, as well as OMB's performance framework for measuring progress on CAP goals and related information, including quarterly updates, published on Performance.gov.

To address both objectives, we reviewed relevant federal laws (including GPRAMA), the executive order, and OMB guidance governing federal customer experience.⁸ We compared OMB's actions to OMB guidance and key practices related to both federal performance management and the implementation of CAP goals. We reviewed information related to federal customer experience posted on Performance.gov from 2023 to April 2025.⁹ We also reviewed documentation from OMB, and interviewed OMB staff from August 2024 to November 2024, to discuss their customer experience improvement efforts.

We conducted this performance audit from June 2024 to July 2025 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

⁷Office of Management and Budget, Circular No. A-11, Section 280 (2024).

⁸Pub. L. No. 111-352, 124 Stat. 3866 (2011). Exec. Order No. 14058, 86 Fed. Reg. 71357 (Dec. 16, 2021). Office of Management and Budget, Circular No. A-11, Sections 220, 280 (2024). GAO, *Evidence-Based Policymaking: Practices to Help Manage and Assess the Results of Federal Efforts*, [GAO-23-105460](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 12, 2023); and *Government Performance Management: Key Considerations for Implementing Cross-Agency Priority Goals and Progress Addressing GAO Recommendations*, [GAO-21-104704](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 28, 2021).

⁹Performance.gov is a federal website that provides relevant information related to the President's Management Agenda and its related CAP goals, in addition to other federal performance information. The creation of Performance.gov was required by GPRAMA as a platform for communicating government-wide and agency performance information.

Background

Customer Experience CAP Goals and Related Guidance

As the entity responsible for overseeing federal improvements in customer experience, OMB designated two customer experience CAP goals in August 2022:

- **Strategy 1 (CAP Goal).** Improve the service design, digital products, and customer-experience management of federal high impact service providers by reducing customer burden, addressing inequities, and streamlining processes.¹⁰
- **Strategy 2 (CAP Goal).** Design, build, and manage government service delivery for key life experiences that cut across federal agencies.¹¹

The implementation of these CAP goals was informed by the following guidance:

- **Executive Order 14058.** Issued in December 2021, this order details specific actions OMB is to take to coordinate federal customer experience improvements. The Director of OMB is responsible for designating high impact service providers. These providers are federal entities that provide or fund customer-facing services that have a high impact on the public, whether because of a large customer base or a critical effect on those served. These federal services include those administered at the state or local level.

OMB is also responsible for coordinating with high impact service providers to assess and improve the experience of their customers. The head of each provider annually selects specific services for prioritized improvement (also referred to as designated services), in consultation with OMB.¹²

- **OMB Circular A-11, Section 280.** This guidance, most recently updated in July 2024, supported the implementation of the executive order by describing actions to be taken by high impact service providers, including the completion of annual customer experience capacity assessments and action plans.

Customer Experience and Service Delivery Measurement, Reporting Requirements, and Practices

The Government Service Delivery Improvement Act, enacted in January 2025, requires OMB to coordinate efforts to improve federal service delivery. OMB is required to develop and oversee the implementation of

¹⁰For more information on the 2022-2025 CAP goals, see GAO, *Government Performance Management: Actions Needed to Improve Transparency of Cross-Agency Priority Goals*, [GAO-23-106354](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 4, 2023).

¹¹Customer life experiences relate to important points in a person's life during which they interact with one or more government entities, such as when one approaches retirement, or during recovery from a disaster. See 86 Fed. Reg. 71357 (Dec. 16, 2021). OMB convened cross-agency teams to oversee pilot projects designed to improve specific life experiences. For more information about this effort see GAO, *Federal Customer Experience: OMB Has Taken Actions to Implement Cross-Agency Priority Goals*, [GAO-24-106632](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 6, 2024).

¹²According to Exec. Order No. 14058, 86 Fed. Reg. 71357 (Dec. 16, 2021), the identification of designated services should be based on the moments that matter most to the individuals served, and on those services' public-facing nature, the number of individuals served, the volume of transactions, the total federal dollars spent, the safety and protection of lives, or the critical nature of the services provided in the lives of the individuals they serve.

government-wide service delivery standards, policies, and guidelines and to establish related performance metrics.¹³ Under this law, OMB is also required to collect and report qualitative and quantitative information and data on government service delivery.¹⁴

Measurement and reporting on CAP goals are also required under law and are a key practice, as discussed below:

- OMB is required by GPRAMA to review progress toward achieving CAP goals each quarter and report on progress on Performance.gov.¹⁵ In December 2024, the Federal Agency Performance Act of 2024 added new requirements for CAP goals. These include requiring CAP goals to include plans for the successful achievement of each goal within each presidential term and requiring OMB to publicly report on goal achievement at the end of the 4-year term.¹⁶

In our September 2021 report on key practices for the implementation of CAP goals, we also emphasized the importance of reporting on results.¹⁷ In particular, we noted that final reporting that includes baseline and trend data can enable decision-makers to fully assess performance and can provide important context for future CAP goals.

OMB's Performance Framework for Assessing Progress on Prior Customer Experience CAP Goals

In June 2024, we reported that OMB had established customer experience goals and measures as part of a broader performance framework to assess progress toward CAP goals.¹⁸ OMB established short-term goals for completion by the end of fiscal year 2024 in support of the first customer experience CAP goals, including its goal for improving talent within high impact service providers. OMB also established performance measures for this short-term goal, including milestones and success metrics. Milestones, which focused on outputs, included the annual completion of capacity assessments and action plans.¹⁹ Capacity, as measured in annual capacity assessments, was identified as a success metric (see fig. 1).

¹³Pub. L. No. 118-231, § 2, 138 Stat. 2829, 2830 (2025), codified at 5 U.S.C. § 322(a)(5) and (7).

¹⁴Pub. L. No. 118-231, § 2, 138 Stat. 2829, 2830 (2025), codified at 5 U.S.C. § 322(a)(6).

¹⁵31 U.S.C. §§ 1121(a)(1), 1122(c).

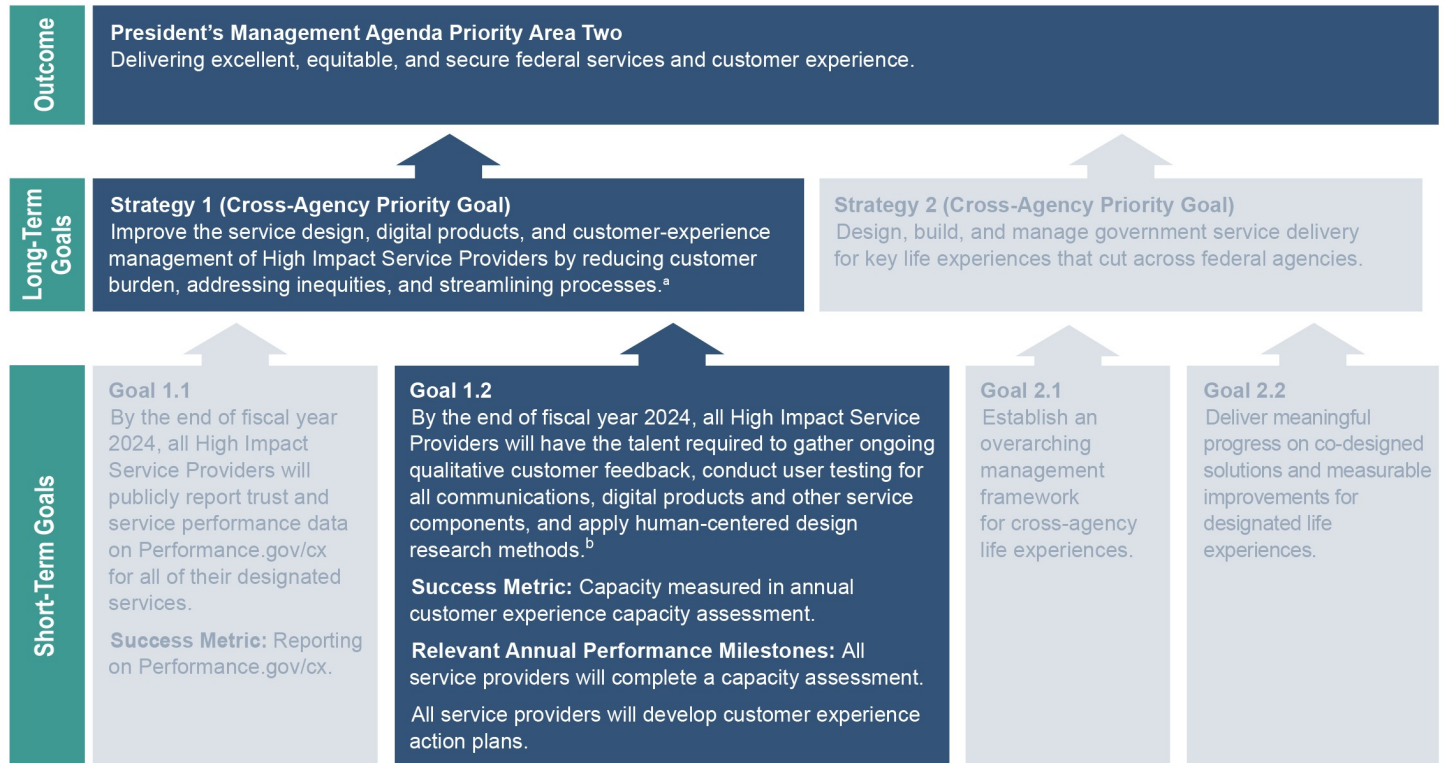
¹⁶Pub. L. No. 118-190, §§ 3, 4, 138 Stat. 2653, 2655 (2024), codified at 31 U.S.C. §§ 1120(a)(2)(A), 1122(c)(5)(B).

¹⁷GAO, *Government Performance Management: Key Considerations for Implementing Cross-Agency Priority Goals and Progress Addressing GAO Recommendations*, [GAO-21-104704](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 28, 2021).

¹⁸[GAO-24-106632](#).

¹⁹Performance measures can be output or outcome focused. Outputs refer to the direct products and services of a program or activity (e.g., the completion of capacity assessments and action plans). Outcome measures articulate the desired results of products and services delivered by a program or activity.

Figure 1: Office of Management and Budget’s Performance Framework for Assessing Customer Experience Cross-Agency Priority Goals, 2022—2025



Source: GAO presentation of information provided by the Office of Management and Budget and published on Performance.gov. | GAO-25-107652

^aHigh impact service providers, designated by the Office of Management and Budget, are federal entities that provide or fund customer-facing services, including federal services administered at the state or local level, that have a high impact on the public, whether because of a large customer base or a critical effect on those served.

^bThe term “human-centered design” refers to the methodology of putting people, including those who will use or be impacted by what one creates, at the center of any process aiming to solve challenging problems.

OMB Obtained Capacity Assessments and Action Plans from High Impact Service Providers

Capacity Assessments Provided Information on Practices and Resources Related to Customer Experience

Through annual capacity assessments, OMB obtained a summary of each high impact service provider’s current customer experience practices and available resources to support related improvements. OMB developed an assessment tool for completion by these providers each fiscal year. The capacity assessment templates evolved from year to year as OMB added, removed, or revised requested content (see table 1 for excerpts from OMB’s capacity assessment template for 2024).

Table 1: Excerpts from the Office of Management and Budget’s High Impact Service Provider Capacity Assessment Template, Fiscal Year 2024

Examples of Questions for High Impact Service Providers, by Category	Response
LEADERSHIP: High Impact Service Provider Leader (e.g., Administrator, Director, etc. - if not in place / acting, please note)	<i>[Free response, name or barrier preventing the identification of an individual to fill this role]</i>
LEADERSHIP: Customer Experience Lead	<i>[Free response, name or barrier preventing the identification of an individual to fill this role]</i>
LEADERSHIP: The leader of our High Impact Service Provider could articulate that we are a High Impact Service Provider and describe/defend why the designated services were selected.	<i>[Option to add free response as context to Yes/No answer]</i>
ORGANIZATION AND CULTURE: Customer experience measures are integrated into Senior Executive Service performance plans.	<i>[Option to add free response as context to Yes/No answer]</i>
ORGANIZATION AND CULTURE: Our organization provides training to employees on Customer Experience.	<i>[Option to add free response as context to Yes/No answer]</i>
BASELINE QUESTIONS: Total number of Full Time Equivalents (agency staff) dedicated to Customer Experience work.	<i>[Count, feel free to disaggregate if there are teams under a Chief Technology Officer and teams under a Customer Experience Officer]</i>
TALENT AND SKILLS: For each of the identified skillsets/areas of expertise, please identify whether you have access to the adequate amount of support needed to do Customer Experience work: Customer experience strategists	<i>[Option to add free response as context to Yes/No answer]</i>
TALENT AND SKILLS: For each of the identified skillsets/areas of expertise, please identify whether you have access to the adequate amount of support needed to do Customer Experience work: User Experience designers / researchers	<i>[Option to add free response as context to Yes/No answer]</i>
DATA AND FEEDBACK: We have the ability to design, conduct, and use customer feedback formats (e.g., focus groups, observational sessions, long-form interviews, etc.) to improve our designated services.	<i>[Option to add free response as context to Yes/No answer]</i>

Source: GAO presentation of excerpts from the Office of Management and Budget’s annual capacity assessment, as posted on Performance.gov as of April 2025. | GAO-25-107652

We identified the following highlights from our review of the 37 high impact service providers’ fiscal year 2024 capacity assessments:

- **Leadership.** Twenty-nine providers shared customer feedback data and other information about customer experiences with leadership to inform decision-making.
- **Organization and culture.** Twenty-six providers reported that they offered training to employees on customer experience. Twenty-two providers reported that they integrated customer experience measures into performance plans for their senior executives.
- **Talent and skills.** Thirty-one providers reported having at least one full-time equivalent staff dedicated to customer experience.
- **Data and feedback.** Thirty-one providers reported that they regularly reviewed web analytics to better understand how their customers were interacting with websites and mobile applications.

High impact service providers also responded to questions in the fiscal year 2024 capacity assessments about the designated services they selected in consultation with OMB.²⁰ For example, the Department of State responded to questions about “improvements in the process for applying for a U.S. passport.”²¹ Of the assessments we reviewed:

- **Customer access.** Thirty providers reported that their designated services could be carried out entirely online.
- **Service management and improvement.** Twenty-five providers reported that their designated services had developed a map of the process a customer uses to access a service. According to OMB, these process maps helped to ensure that decisions made by high impact service providers are “rooted in the lived experience” of their customers.²²
- **Service metrics.** Twenty-two providers reported that their designated services collected data about the average time it took for customers to complete a service.

Customer Experience Action Plans Described Anticipated Service Improvements

High impact service providers described their plans for improving services for customers in annual action plans, using templates provided by OMB for each fiscal year (see table 2 for excerpts from OMB’s action plan template for fiscal year 2024). Executive Order 14058 identified options for these providers to consider when developing these plans, such as by improving forms and digital experiences, reducing administrative burden, and increasing the accessibility of services.²³

Table 2: Excerpts from the Office of Management and Budget’s High Impact Service Provider Action Plan Template, Fiscal Year 2024

Title of Action	Title of Action information
Type of Improvement	Service Improvement (e.g., digitizing a paper form or analog task, redesigning or improving a service, website, or digital service, piloting a new program, conducting customer research to inform service improvement prioritization, etc.)
Type of Improvement	Capacity Building (e.g., establishing a program or team, expanding or sustaining staff, delivering internal training, investing in testing or feedback tools, investing in IT systems or solutions, etc.)
Brief Action Description and Desired Impact	[Free response] (For action descriptions: if a service improvement, what are you improving and how? Desired impact should be framed in plain language, e.g., “if successful, we will reduce the time to apply by XX minutes.”)
Current State	[Free response] (What problem are you solving? What data/customer feedback informed the shaping of this opportunity for improvement? What resources (if any) are currently dedicated to this effort?)

²⁰See appendix II for a list of all designated services as of January 2025.

²¹For more information about the Department of State’s efforts in this area, please see GAO, *Passport Processing: State Department Should Identify Milestones and Resource Needs for Its Plans to Avoid Future Delays*, [GAO-25-107164](https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-25-107164) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 27, 2025).

²²Office of Management and Budget, “Celebrating Five Years of HISP Progress,” accessed January 13, 2025, <https://www.performance.gov/cx/blog/celebrating-five-years-of-hisp-progress/>.

²³Exec. Order No. 14058, 86 Fed. Reg. 71357 (Dec. 16, 2021).

Title of Action	Title of Action information
What Will You Do to Accomplish This Action?	Milestone/Activities
What Will You Do to Accomplish This Action?	Date/Quarter
What Will You Do to Accomplish This Action?	Notes
Key Operational Performance Measures	[Free response] (What does success look like for this action? E.g., X% of services completed in XX minutes or less, X% of applications completed using the online app, etc.)
How Will You Know this Action Worked?	[Free response]

Source: GAO presentation of excerpts from the Office of Management and Budget’s customer experience action plan template provided to high impact service providers for completion in fiscal year 2024, as posted on Performance.gov as of April 2025. | GAO-25-107652

Our review found that many high impact service providers focused on digital improvements. Plans for these types of improvements accounted for between 67 and 71 percent of all planned actions in each year from 2023 to 2025.²⁴ Service providers detailed plans to create new digital resources (such as websites and applications) and to improve existing digital resources.

For example, according to the fiscal year 2023 action plan we reviewed, the Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency launched an online version of the direct farm loan application. As part of this change, the provider stated that the loan application was streamlined to reduce its total length from 29 to 13 pages, improving the average completion time by about 50 percent.²⁵

Other high impact service providers targeted non-digital improvements in their action plans, such as:

- **Addition of customer feedback channels.** The Transportation Security Administration provided opportunities for passengers to share feedback in person at airports.
- **Streamlining non-digital processes.** The Office of Personnel Management’s Retirement Services consolidated a variety of resources into a single “Quick Guide” for retirees.
- **Improving information available to customers.** The Veterans Health Administration created informative materials for patient discharge.

²⁴The 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act, which was enacted in 2018, requires agencies to identify non-digital services with the greatest impact that could be made available through an online, mobile-friendly, digital service option in a manner that decreases costs, increases digital conversion rates, and improves customer experience, among other requirements. Pub. L. No. 115-336, 132 Stat. 5025 (2018) (44 U.S.C. § 3501 note). In September 2023, OMB released Memorandum M-23-22, “Delivering a Digital-First Public Experience,” providing guidance for the implementation of this act and setting requirements and expectations for the digitization of forms and services. See our prior work on agencies’ implementation of the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act: GAO, *Digital Experience: Agency Compliance with Statutory Requirements*, [GAO-24-106764](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 27, 2024).

²⁵Executive Order 14058 emphasized paperwork reduction as a means for improving customer experience: “Agencies should continually... reduce administrative hurdles and paperwork burdens to minimize time taxes...” 86 Fed. Reg. 71357, 71358 (Dec. 16, 2021). For more information on the federal government’s efforts to reduce administrative burden, see GAO, *Administrative Burden: OMB Should Update Instructions to Help Agency Assessment Efforts*, [GAO-25-107239](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 21, 2025).

OMB Could Not Use Information It Obtained from Service Providers to Assess Progress on their Customer Experience Improvements

OMB could not use the information it gathered from service providers to assess progress on their customer experience improvements because it did not define its short-term goal for these improvements in a way that supported the assessment of progress. According to practices for federal performance management identified in our prior work, when defining goals, organizations should communicate the results an organization seeks to achieve.²⁶ This communication should be accomplished by:

- identifying goals with long-term outcomes for planned activities, and
- clarifying results expected in the short term through performance goals with quantitative targets and time frames.

Such goals communicate what is to be achieved and support the comparison of planned and actual results.

Goals for Improving Federal Services and Customer Experience

Long-Term Cross-Agency Priority Goal: Improve the service design, digital products, and customer-experience management of high impact service providers by reducing customer burden, addressing inequities, and streamlining processes.

Short-Term Goal 1.2: By the end of fiscal year 2024, all high impact service providers will have the talent required to gather ongoing qualitative customer feedback, conduct user testing for all communications, digital products and other service components, and apply human-centered design research methods.

Source: Information published by the Office of Management and Budget on Performance.gov. | GAO-25-107652

We found that OMB’s goals for improving federal services and customer experience did not establish clear expectations for what was to be achieved. (See sidebar for goals.) The long-term CAP goal established for improving federal customer experience included the expected outcome of: “[Improving] the service design, digital products, and customer-experience management of High Impact Service Providers.” OMB’s short-term performance goal supporting this outcome aimed to improve talent within service providers by fiscal year 2024. Although this short-term goal included a time frame for improving talent (by fiscal year 2024), it did not communicate what was to be achieved.

In the past, OMB has communicated performance goals more clearly. For example, a 2012 CAP goal aimed to, “Increase energy productivity (amount of real gross domestic product in dollars/energy demand) 50 percent by 2030.” This goal included a time frame, a definition of energy productivity, and a quantitative target. In contrast, OMB did not define talent, nor did it include a quantitative target in its short-term goal for improving customer experience capacity.

OMB provided a general description of actions taken by these providers in its final reporting for this CAP goal period. In its January 2025 report, OMB included examples of what actions had been taken during the CAP goal period: “Nearly three-quarters of high impact service providers train employees on customer experience

²⁶[GAO-23-105460](#).

practices and skills,” and “dozens of customer experience strategists have joined the federal workforce.”²⁷ However, the report did not address whether this information represented changes within agencies during the CAP goal period, or if these numbers represented an achievement of goals.

Without well-defined goals and measures for monitoring and reporting on progress toward its goals, OMB did not have the means to assess whether and what federal customer experience improvements were achieved across the service providers over the CAP goal period. OMB could better target its efforts to improve services to the public by developing goals with quantitative targets and timeframes, and related performance measures, for the level of improvements it expects. With clear expectations established in goals and measures, OMB and the service providers would be able to better target their improvement efforts and, in turn, create a more satisfying customer experience.

Conclusions

Given the breadth and critical importance of services provided to the public by federal agencies, ongoing efforts have been made to improve the customer service provided by federal agencies and the customer experience of those interacting with agencies. OMB and agencies made considerable efforts from 2022 through 2025 to help improve the customer experience capacity of high impact service providers, in part by the providers’ completion of annual capacity assessments and action plans. OMB issued a final report in January 2025 that shared examples of these efforts. However, OMB was not well positioned to report on overall progress made because it did not define its goal and performance measures for improvement of customer experience capacity at the outset in a way that supported the assessment of progress.

The Government Service Delivery Improvement Act, enacted in January 2025, requires OMB to coordinate government-wide efforts to improve service delivery by agencies.²⁸ OMB’s responsibilities under the law include developing and overseeing the implementation of government-wide service delivery standards, policies, and guidelines and establishing related performance metrics. By defining goals for these improvements with quantitative targets and time frames, and related performance measures, OMB could better target its efforts to improve services to the public.

Recommendation for Executive Action

The Director of OMB should, in consultation with federal agencies, establish goals for federal customer experience and service delivery activities. These should include quantitative targets and time frames for the expected level of improvements, and related performance measures. (Recommendation 1)

²⁷Office of Management and Budget, *The Biden-Harris President’s Management Agenda Impact Report*, (Washington D.C.: Jan. 17, 2025).

²⁸Pub. L. No. 118-231, §2, 138 Stat. 2829 (2025), passed by voice vote in the House and by unanimous consent in the Senate, codified at 5 U.S.C. § 322(a)(1).

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to the Office of Management and Budget, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of Education, the General Services Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Labor, the Office of Personnel Management, the Small Business Administration, the Social Security Administration (SSA), the Department of State, the Department of the Treasury, and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

We received written comments from DOD, SSA, and VA—reproduced in appendixes II, III, and IV. DOD and VA both supported our recommendation that OMB improve its methods for assessing progress toward improving federal customer experience and service delivery. VA further proposed that OMB consider requiring customer experience metrics in a number of areas, including annual agency performance reports. DHS and SSA provided technical comments, which we incorporated. The other 13 agencies informed us that they had no comments. OMB did not provide comments on our draft report.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Administrator of the Agency for International Development, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Education, the Administrator of the General Services Administration, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Labor, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <https://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at locked@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff members who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix V.

//SIGNED//

Dawn G. Locke
Director, Strategic Issues

List of Committees

The Honorable Rand Paul, M.D.
Chairman
The Honorable Gary C. Peters
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman
The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable James Lankford
Chairman
The Honorable John Fetterman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Border Management, Federal Workforce
and Regulatory Affairs
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable James Comer
Chairman
The Honorable Robert Garcia
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
House of Representatives

The Honorable Pete Sessions
Chairman
The Honorable Kweisi Mfume
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
House of Representatives

Appendix I: High Impact Service Providers Covered Under Our Review and Their Designated Services

Figure 2a: High Impact Service Providers and Their Designated Services



Source: Information published by the Office of Management and Budget to Performance.gov. | GAO-25-107652

Part 1 of 2

Accessible Data for Figure 2a: High Impact Service Providers and Their Designated Services

U.S. Department of Agriculture

- **Farm Service Agency:** Applying for direct and guaranteed real estate and operating loans to start, maintain, and expand a family farm.
- **Food and Nutrition Service:** Using WIC food benefits
- **Forest Service:** Getting a recreation special use permit
- **Natural Resources Conservation Service:** Participating in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- **Rural Development (RD)**
 - Filing an application under the OneRD Guarantee Loan Initiative
 - Receiving technical assistance for broadband deployment
- **Recreation.gov**
 - Reserving a campsite on Recreation.gov
 - Entering a lottery for a high-demand activity

Department of Commerce

- **International Trade Administration (ITA)**
 - Beginning and growing international sales through Trade.gov
 - Working with ITA to do business with foreign buyers and investors
- **United States Census Bureau**
 - Responding to a Census Bureau administered survey
 - Obtaining Census Bureau statistics online
- **United States Patent and Trademark Office**
 - Applying for a patent
 - Applying to register a trademark

Department of Defense: Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency: Navigating the application process for a federal background investigation

Department of Education

Federal Student Aid

- Applying for federal student aid
- Applying for Public Service Loan Forgiveness
- Applying for Income Driven Repayment Plans

General Service Administration

Public Experience Portfolio

- Finding government information quickly (in English and Spanish)
- Determining eligibility and referrals

Department of Health and Human Services

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

- Getting started with Medicare
- Understanding eligibility results and next steps after the application
- Checking eligibility and applying for Medicaid

Indian Health Service: Accessing Purchased/Referred Care

Department of Homeland Security

Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

- Completing TSA passenger screening
- Getting help from TSA

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

- Enabling trusted travelers to enter the country quickly with Global Entry

- Improving import-related data sharing and transfers through CBP's Automated Commercial Environment

Federal Emergency Management Agency

- Applying for and receiving disaster assistance
- Filing a claim under the National Flood Insurance Program

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

- Increasing naturalization for eligible legal permanent residents
- Enabling increased self-service through an expansion of digital customer service tools

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Agency is a High Impact Service Provider

- Seeking information about Federal Housing Administration loan programs and loss mitigation services
- Engaging in the housing discrimination complaint process
- Inspecting HUD-assisted housing

Department of the Interior

Bureau of Indian Affairs

- Inquiring about a probate order
- Receiving trust fund assets

Bureau of Trust Funds Administration

- Managing Tribal Trust Funds accounts
- Managing Individual Indian Monies accounts

Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS): Planning a trip to a national wildlife refuge or public fish hatchery using fws.gov

National Park Service (NPS)

- Planning trips and exploring National Parks using the NPS Digital Experience

- Discovering and applying to volunteer service opportunities on Volunteer.gov

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

Agency is a High Impact Service Provider

- Improving the partner experience for business and industry (i.e., the private sector)
- Simplifying the USAID partnership process

Department of Labor

Employee Benefits Security Administration

- Using website resources to maximize retirement and health benefits
- Using website resources to assist organizations with compliance

Employment and Training Administration

- Searching for careers, training, and workforce services using CareerOneStop
- Using CareerOneStop APIs to integrate into web content

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

- Applying for Voluntary Protection Programs recognition for exemplary safety systems
- Seeking reapproval for maintaining Voluntary Protection Programs-level safety systems

Office of Workers' Compensation Programs

- Applying for compensation benefits under EEOICPA
- Applying for medical benefits related to accepted conditions under EEOICPA
- Filing a workers' compensation claim under the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA)

Office of Personnel Management

USAJOBS

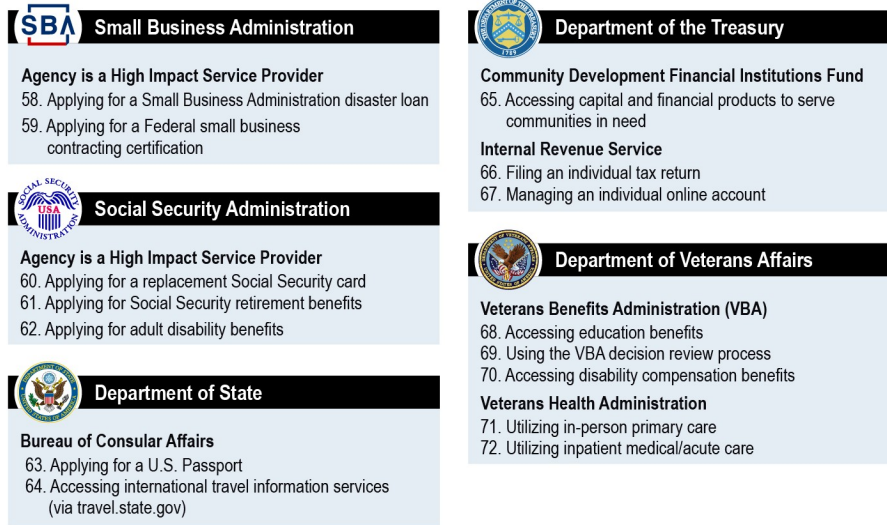
- Applying to Federal job opportunities
- Seeking assistance with the Federal job application process from the USAJOBS help desk

Retirement Services

- Applying for federal civilian retirement
- Managing a federal annuitant retirement account

Source: Information published by the Office of Management and Budget to Performance.gov. | GAO-25-107652 Part 1 of 2

Figure 2b: High Impact Service Providers and Their Designated Services



Source: Information published by the Office of Management and Budget to Performance.gov. | GAO-25-107652 Part 2 of 2

Accessible Data for Figure 2b: High Impact Service Providers and Their Designated Services

Small Business Administration

Agency is a High Impact Service Provider

- Applying for a Small Business Administration disaster loan
- Applying for a Federal small business contracting certification

Social Security Administration

Agency is a High Impact Service Provider

- Applying for a replacement Social Security card
- Applying for Social Security retirement benefits
- Applying for adult disability benefits

Department of State

Bureau of Consular Affairs

- Applying for a U.S. Passport
- Accessing international travel information services (via travel.state.gov)

Department of the Treasury

Community Development Financial Institutions Fund: Accessing capital and financial products to serve communities in need

Internal Revenue Service

- Filing an individual tax return
- Managing an individual online account

Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

- Accessing education benefits
- Using the VBA decision review process
- Accessing disability compensation benefits

Veterans Health Administration

- Utilizing in-person primary care
- Utilizing inpatient medical/acute care

Source: Information published by the Office of Management and Budget to Performance.gov. | GAO-25-107652 Part 2 of 2

Note: The Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families was designated in fiscal year 2025 as a high impact service provider and was not part of our review. High impact service providers are federal entities that provide or fund customer-facing services, including federal services administered at the state or local level, that have a high impact on the public, whether because of a large customer base or a critical effect on those served.

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense



INTELLIGENCE
AND SECURITY

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
5000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-5000

Ms. Heather MacLeod
Director, Homeland Security and Justice
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington DC 20548

Dear Ms. MacLeod,

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report GAO-25-107652, Federal Customer Experience: OMB Can Better Assess the Improvement Efforts of High Impact Service Providers, dated June 10, 2025 (GAO Code 107652).

The Department provides no additional comments in response to the Draft Report. The DoD supports the GAO's recommendation that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) improve its methods for assessing progress toward improving federal customer experience and will continue to coordinate with OMB on these efforts to improve federal service delivery.

The point of contact for this matter is Mr. Adam Lowenstein at (703) 695-4843 and adam.c.lowenstein.civ@mail.mil.

Sincerely,

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.1253658548
Date: 2025.06.30 16:29:24
04709

Jill S. Baker
Director for Integrated Vetting
Counterintelligence, Law Enforcement,
& Security

Accessible Text for Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
5000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-5000

INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY

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U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington DC 20548

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The point of contact for this matter is Mr. Adam Lowenstein at (703) 695-4843 and adam.c.lowenstein.civ@mail.mil.

Sincerely,

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Date: 2025.06.30 16:29:24
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Jill S. Baker
Director for Integrated Vetting
Counterintelligence, Law Enforcement, & Security

Appendix III: Comments from the Social Security Administration



SOCIAL SECURITY
Office of the Commissioner

June 27, 2025

Dawn Locke
Director of Strategic Issues
United States Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Director Locke,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Draft Report, "Federal Customer Experience: OMB Can Better Assess the Improvement Efforts of High Impact Service Providers" (GAO-25-107652). We have no comments.

Please contact me at (410) 274-0654 if I can be of further assistance. Your staff may contact Amy Gao, Director of the Audit Liaison Staff, at (410) 966-1711.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chad Poist".

Chad Poist
Chief of Staff

Accessible Text for Appendix III: Comments from the Social Security Administration

SOCIAL SECURITY
Office of the Commissioner

June 27, 2025

Dawn Locke
Director of Strategic Issues
United States Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Director Locke,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Draft Report, "Federal Customer Experience: OMB Can Better Assess the Improvement Efforts of High Impact Service Providers" (GAO-25- 107652). We have no comments.

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Sincerely,

Chad Poist
Chief of Staff

Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Veterans Affairs



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

July 16, 2025

Ms. Dawn G. Locke
Director
Strategic Issues
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Locke:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reviewed the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report: ***Federal Customer Experience: OMB Can Better Assess the Improvement Efforts of High Impact Service Providers (GAO-25-107652)***.

A technical comment to the draft report is enclosed. VA appreciates the opportunity to comment on your draft report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Syrek".

Christopher D. Syrek
Chief of Staff

Enclosure

Enclosure

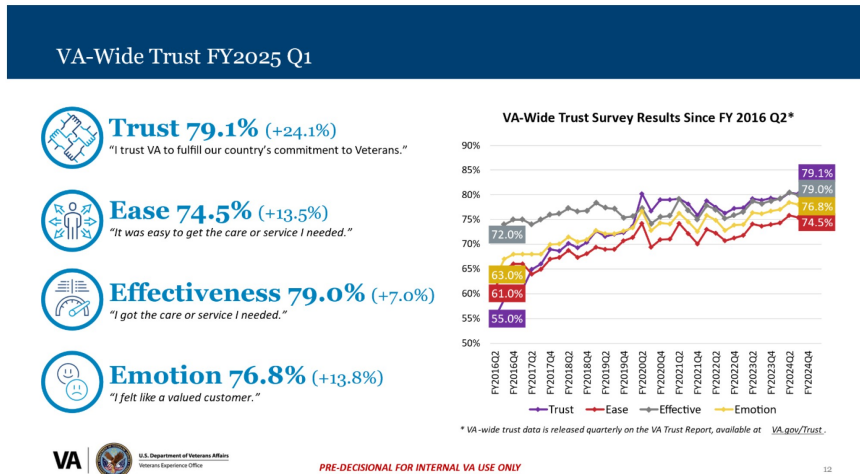
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Comment to the
Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report
**Federal Customer Experience: OMB Can Better Assess the Improvement Efforts
of High Impact Service Providers**
(GAO-25-107652)

Technical Comment:

The Veterans Experience Office (VEO) concurs with GAO's recommendation to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to require concrete, qualitative customer experience metrics/targets as key measures of agency performance. Note that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has utilized trust, ease, effectiveness, and emotion as VA's key performance indicators (KPI) starting in 2016, with all 4 metrics improving over time. See VA Trust Report available at: <https://www.va.gov/initiatives/veteran-trust-in-va/>. Also, see graphic below.

To drive service delivery improvements across Federal agencies, VEO also recommends that OMB/Executive Office of the President consider requiring Customer Experience KPIs/metrics in the following areas:

- President's Management Agenda deliverables;
- Agency priority goals;
- Annual agency performance reports;
- Budget narratives and justifications; and
- All Senior Executive Service performance requirements in coordination with the Office of Personnel Management.



Accessible Text for Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Veterans Affairs

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

July 16, 2025

Ms. Dawn G. Locke
Director
Strategic Issues
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Locke:

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A technical comment to the draft report is enclosed. VA appreciates the opportunity to comment on your draft report.

Sincerely,

Christopher D. Syrek
Chief of Staff

Enclosure

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Comment to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report

Federal Customer Experience: OMB Can Better Assess the Improvement Efforts of High Impact Service Providers

(GAO-25-107652)

Technical Comment:

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- President's Management Agenda deliverables;
- Agency priority goals;
- Annual agency performance reports;
- Budget narratives and justifications; and
- All Senior Executive Service performance requirements in coordination with the Office of Personnel Management.

Appendix V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Dawn G. Locke, locked@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, key contributors to this report were Sarah E. Veale (Assistant Director), Karen L. Cassidy (Analyst in Charge), Nicole Annunziata, and Michael A. del Campo II. In addition, Michael Bechetti, Youjin Chung, Benjamin T. Licht, Steven Putansu, and Clarette Yen made significant contributions to this report.

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