

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105299](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

GAO and other entities have reported on challenges related to NNSA's management and governance since the agency's establishment. As a result, GAO and other entities have recommended that NNSA enact organizational changes to address these management and governance challenges.

The House report accompanying a bill for the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2020 included a provision for GAO to assess aspects of NNSA's organization. Among other objectives, this report (1) describes why NNSA changed its organizational structure and the benefits of those changes; and (2) examines the extent to which NNSA's policy for organizational change aligns with selected key practices for agency reform, and whether NNSA's most recent reorganization followed the agency's policy.

GAO reviewed NNSA documentation and other entities' reports related to organizational structure. GAO assessed NNSA's policy on organizational change against selected key practices for agency reform. GAO also interviewed NNSA officials from 12 headquarters and 7 field offices.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making two recommendations: NNSA should (1) update its organizational change policy to fully align with key practices for agency reform and (2) establish specific outcome-oriented goals and performance measures for its July 2022 reorganization. NNSA agreed with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-23-105299](#). For more information, contact Allison Bawden at (202) 512-3841 or bawdena@gao.gov.

January 2023









NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Fully Incorporating Key Practices for Agency Reform Would Benefit Any Future Organizational Changes

What GAO Found

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has changed its high-level organizational structure numerous times since its establishment in 1999, in part to address concerns about its management and governance. NNSA created new offices to add or elevate certain agency functions, such as an office focused on infrastructure management. NNSA also flattened its organizational structure to remove reporting layers between the Administrator and field-based offices. NNSA officials identified benefits, such as increased effectiveness in mission performance, which the organizational structure that existed prior to July 2022 had provided to NNSA. In July 2022, NNSA began to further reorganize the offices responsible for contract and project management and for infrastructure management.

GAO found that NNSA's policy and procedures governing organizational change partially align with four categories of key practices for successful agency reform. For example, consistent with key practices related to developing reforms, NNSA's policy states that those proposing an organizational change must analyze whether the proposed change is the most efficient way to fulfill the agency's strategic goals. However, inconsistent with key practices related to developing reforms, NNSA's policy does not require an assessment of whether data or analyses support that a proposed change is the most efficient way to fulfill its goals. Updating its policy to fully align with key practices would help NNSA better ensure the effectiveness of any future organizational changes.

Extent to Which NNSA's Policy Aligns with Key Practices for Agency Reform			
Goals and Outcomes	Process for Developing Reforms	Implementing the Reforms	Strategically Managing the Federal Workforce
 	 	 	 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● – NNSA's policy and procedures fully aligned with key practice category. ◐ – NNSA's policy and procedures partially aligned with key practice category. ○ – NNSA's policy and procedures do not align with key practice category. 			

Source: GAO analysis of National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) information. | GAO-23-105299

NNSA's policy requires that any proposed organizational change include goals for the change. NNSA set high-level goals for its July 2022 reorganization but did not establish specific outcome-oriented goals and performance measures, as called for by key practices for agency reform. As NNSA continues to implement its July 2022 reorganization, the agency has the opportunity to establish specific goals and performance measures that would help it assess whether the reorganization achieved its intended purposes.