

Highlights of [GAO-12-782](#), a report to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

## Why GAO Did This Study

The E-Government Act of 2002 was enacted to promote the use of the Internet and other technologies to improve citizen access to government information and services, improve government decision making, and enhance accountability and transparency. The act established an Office of Electronic Government within OMB to oversee the act's implementation and required executive branch agencies to take a number of actions aimed at, among other things, using technology to better organize, maintain, and make information about the operations of the federal government available.

With the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the act's passage approaching, GAO was asked to (1) assess OMB's and agencies' efforts to fulfill the act's requirements to establish leadership and organizational responsibilities and (2) evaluate agencies' progress in meeting the act's requirements to enhance public access to government information and services. To do this, GAO reviewed and analyzed the requirements of the act and OMB and agency reports on compliance with these requirements, administered a questionnaire to responsible officials at 24 major agencies, and interviewed agency and OMB officials.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that OMB identify in its annual report to Congress the provisions of the act that are not included and why, establish a federal research and development repository and website, and issue guidance on agency participation in this site. In reviewing a draft of the report, OMB indicated that it had no comment.

View [GAO-12-782](#). For more information, contact Valerie C. Melvin at (202) 512-6304 or [melvinv@gao.gov](mailto:melvinv@gao.gov)

September 2012

# ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT ACT

## Agencies Have Implemented Most Provisions, but Key Areas of Attention Remain

## What GAO Found

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and other agencies have taken steps to carry out leadership and organizational responsibilities as called for by the E-Government Act. Specifically, OMB's Office of Electronic Government has issued key guidance for agencies on complying with the requirements of the act and coordinated annual reporting to Congress on agency compliance with the act. In addition, the Federal Chief Information Officers Council has taken actions, such as publicizing best practices and recommendations for more efficient use of information technology and assisting in the implementation of the act's requirements. Further, executive branch agencies have made significant progress in carrying out leadership responsibilities under the act, including designating officials with responsibility for ensuring compliance with the act, issuing internal policy and guidance, and developing performance measures. However, while OMB and agencies have reported annually on their compliance with the act as required, OMB did not always require agencies to report on all of the act's provisions and has not been explicit in communicating to Congress provisions that it is not reporting on and the reasons why. For example, from fiscal year 2006 to fiscal year 2009, OMB did not require agencies to report on how they enhanced public participation by electronic means for development and issuance of regulations. OMB officials stated that each year's reporting requirements reflected particular administration priorities and were tailored to reduce the reporting burden on agencies.

Agencies have taken numerous actions to address specific requirements for enhancing public access to government information. For example:

- The General Services Administration has established, and agencies are using, a framework for electronic signatures.
- A federal Internet portal was established to provide a consolidated point of public access to government information, although challenges remain in streamlining federal web operations.
- Agencies have taken steps to ensure the availability of government information and services to individuals with diminished access to the Internet and those with disabilities.
- A website was established to provide the public with information and the ability to comment on proposed federal regulations.
- OMB and agencies have taken steps to improve the accessibility, usability, and preservation of government information through, for example, organizing website content and electronic records management.
- OMB has issued policies on protecting the privacy of individuals' personal information on government websites.

However, OMB has yet to fully establish a repository and website for providing public access to information on government investments in research and development as required or issued guidance to agencies on participating in the site.