

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-747](#), a report to congressional addressees

Why GAO Did This Study

GAO has long reported that agencies are better equipped to address management and performance challenges when managers effectively use performance information for decision making. However, GAO's periodic surveys of federal managers indicate that use of performance information has not changed significantly.

GAO was mandated to evaluate the implementation of the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010. GAO assessed agencies' use of performance information from responses to GAO's surveys of federal managers at 24 agencies. To address this objective, GAO created an index to measure agency use of performance information derived from a set of questions from the most recent surveys in 2007 and 2013, and used statistical analysis to identify practices most significantly related to the use of performance information index.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making recommendations in this report. Office of Management and Budget staff generally agreed with the report. Four agencies (the Departments of Commerce and the Treasury, the General Services Administration (GSA), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)) provided comments that are addressed. Commerce and GSA agreed with the report. Treasury and NASA raised concerns about the findings and conclusions in this report, including the design of the surveys. GAO continues to believe its findings and conclusions are valid as discussed in the report. Twenty other agencies did not have comments.

View [GAO-14-747](#). For more information, contact J. Christopher Mihm at (202) 512-6806, or mihmj@gao.gov.

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MANAGING FOR RESULTS

Agencies' Trends in the Use of Performance Information to Make Decisions

What GAO Found

Agencies' reported use of performance information, as measured by GAO's use of performance information index, generally did not improve between 2007 and 2013. The index was derived from a set of survey questions in the 2007 and 2013 surveys that reflected the extent to which managers reported that their agencies used performance information for various management activities and decision making. GAO's analysis of the average index score among managers at each agency found that most agencies showed no statistically significant change in use during this period. As shown in the table below, only two agencies experienced a statistically significant improvement in the use of performance information. During the same time period, four agencies experienced a statistically significant decline in the use of performance information.

Federal Agencies' Average Scores on Use of Performance Information Index—2007 and 2013

Agency	2007 average score	2013 average score	Statistically significant increase or decrease between 2007 and 2013
Government-wide	3.46	3.41	▼
Office of Personnel Management	3.38	3.66	▲
Department of Labor	3.37	3.58	▲
Department of Veterans Affairs	3.71	3.49	▼
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	3.71	3.49	▼
Department of Energy	3.52	3.34	▼
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	3.70	3.32	▼

Source: GAO-08-1036SP and GAO-13-519SP | GAO-14-747

Legend

▼ statistically significant decrease ▲ statistically significant increase

Note: The other 18 federal agencies did not experience either a statistically significant increase or decrease between 2007 and 2013 (based on agencies' scores on the 2013 use index).

GAO has previously found that there are five leading practices that can enhance or facilitate the use of performance information: (1) aligning agency-wide goals, objectives, and measures; (2) improving the usefulness of performance information; (3) developing agency capacity to use performance information; (4) demonstrating management commitment; and (5) communicating performance information frequently and effectively. GAO tested whether additional survey questions related to the five practices were significantly related to the use of performance information as measured by the index. GAO found that the average use of performance information index for agencies increased when managers reported their agencies engaged to a great extent in these practices as reflected in the survey questions. For example, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) was one of the two agencies that experienced an increase in use of performance information from 2007 to 2013, as measured by the GAO index. In 2013, OPM managers responded more favorably than the government-wide average on several of the survey questions related to these practices.