

GAO Highlights

Highlights of GAO-19-35, a report to Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

Managing employee performance has been a long-standing government-wide issue and the subject of numerous reforms since the beginning of the modern civil service. Without effective performance management, agencies risk not only losing the skills of top talent, they also risk missing the opportunity to effectively address increasingly complex and evolving mission challenges.

GAO was asked to examine federal non-Senior Executive Service performance management systems. This report examines (1) government-wide trends in employee perceptions of performance management as measured by the results of selected FEVS statements, (2) practices that selected agencies use to improve performance management, and (3) OPM's guidance and resources to support agency efforts to improve performance management government-wide.

GAO analyzed responses to selected FEVS statements related to the five performance management phases from 2010 through 2017; selected four agencies based on the highest average scores for the five phases, among other criteria, to identify practices which may contribute to improved performance management; reviewed OPM documents; and interviewed OPM and other agency officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations, including that OPM improve its website and share innovations in performance management with agencies. OPM agreed with GAO's recommendations.

View GAO-19-35. For more information, contact Robert Goldenkoff, (202) 512-2757, goldenkoff@gao.gov

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FEDERAL WORKFORCE

Opportunities Exist for OPM to Further Innovation in Performance Management

What GAO Found

GAO found that from 2010 through 2017, surveyed employees generally demonstrated positive responses to selected Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) statements related to four of the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) five performance management phases, including: planning and setting expectations, monitoring performance, developing the capacity to perform, and rating performance. Employees responded least positively to statements related to rewarding performance, with only 39 percent of employees, on average, agreeing with statements regarding this phase.

Results of Selected FEVS Statements Related to OPM's Performance Management Phases Government-wide, 2010 to 2017



Source: GAO analysis of Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) data, 2010-2017.
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Note: The margin of error for all estimates was within plus or minus 1 percent, except for 2010, when the margin was within plus or minus 2 percent.

Of the four agencies with among the highest average scores for the performance management phases (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Office of the Comptroller of the Currency), GAO identified practices that may contribute to improved performance management including strong organizational culture and dedication to mission; use of FEVS and other survey data; and a focus on training.

OPM provides guidance and opportunities for agencies to share promising practices on performance management; however, some of this information is not easily accessible on its performance management website. In addition, OPM does not leverage its leadership position to formally identify and share emerging performance management research and innovation with agencies. As a result, agencies, and therefore their employees, may not benefit from the best information available.