

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-19-57](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government is the largest real property owner in the United States and spends billions of dollars to operate and maintain these assets, which include buildings, roads, bridges, and utility systems. Federal agencies are responsible for developing asset management policies, processes, and plans. In 2014, the ISO 55000 asset management standards were issued.

GAO was asked to examine federal agencies' real property asset management practices and the applicability of ISO 55000. This report discusses: (1) key characteristics of an effective asset management framework and how selected federal agencies' frameworks reflect these characteristics, and (2) whether government-wide asset management guidance and information reflect standards and key characteristics of an effective asset management framework, among other objectives.

To conduct this work, GAO reviewed the ISO 55000 standards, relevant studies and literature, and interviewed 22 experts and 10 practitioners. GAO selected six federal agencies as case studies, including agencies with the largest real property portfolio and some agencies that were using the ISO 55000 standards. GAO reviewed documentation and interviewed officials from these six agencies, GSA, and OMB.

## What GAO Recommends

OMB should take steps to improve information on asset management to reflect leading practices. OMB had no comments on this recommendation.

View [GAO-19-57](#). For more information, contact Lori Rectanus at (202) 512-2834 or [rectanusl@gao.gov](mailto:rectanusl@gao.gov).

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# FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY ASSET MANAGEMENT

## Agencies Could Benefit from Additional Information on Leading Practices

## What GAO Found

GAO identified six key characteristics of an effective asset management framework (see table 1) that can help federal agencies manage their assets and resources effectively. GAO identified these key characteristics through reviews of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 55000 standards—an international consensus standard on asset management—studies and articles on asset management practices, and interviews with experts. GAO reviewed the asset management practices of six federal agencies: the U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard); U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps); General Services Administration (GSA); National Park Service (Park Service); National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); and U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service). Each of the six federal-agency frameworks GAO reviewed included some of the key characteristics.

**Table 1: Key Characteristics of an Asset Management Framework**

Characteristic	Description
Establishing formal policies and plans	Define a governance regime and identify staff responsibilities.
Maximizing an asset portfolio's value	Develop a policy to identify the value of assets and to derive the greatest value.
Maintaining leadership support	Articulate leadership support and provide necessary resources.
Using quality data	Collect, analyze, and verify accuracy of asset data.
Promoting a collaborative organizational culture	Promote a culture of information sharing and enterprise-wide decision making.
Evaluating and improving asset management practices	Evaluate the performance of the asset management system and implement necessary improvements.

Source: GAO analysis of ISO 55000 standards, asset management literature, and comments from experts. | GAO-19-57

While the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has issued guidance to inform federal agencies' real property management efforts, the existing guidance does not reflect an effective asset management framework because it does not fully align with ISO 55000 standards and the key characteristics. For example, this guidance does not direct agencies to develop a comprehensive approach to asset management that incorporates strategic planning, capital planning, and operations, or maintaining leadership support, promoting a collaborative organizational culture, or evaluating and improving asset management practices. In addition, the guidance does not reflect information on successful agency asset management practices, information that officials from three of the six agencies GAO spoke with said would be helpful to them. OMB staff said that they did not plan to update existing government-wide guidance because OMB's real property management focus has shifted to the *Reduce the Footprint* initiative, which emphasizes efficiently managing and using buildings and warehouse space, rather than all assets. Without a more comprehensive approach, as described above, federal agencies may not have the knowledge needed to maximize the value of their limited resources.