

Why GAO Did This Study

PMIAA requires OMB to adopt program management standards and guidelines government-wide; OPM is to establish new—or revise existing—occupational standards for program and project management. PMIAA includes a provision for GAO, no later than 3 years after the enactment of the act, to issue a report examining the implementation and effectiveness of certain provisions of the act on federal program and project management.

This report (1) describes steps taken by OMB, OPM, and agencies to implement PMIAA; (2) assesses OMB's efforts to address issues on GAO's High-Risk List using PMIAA; and (3) examines the extent to which OMB provided methods for agencies to measure and assess the results of PMIAA.

GAO reviewed documents from and conducted interviews with OMB and OPM. GAO surveyed all 24 CFO Act agencies, and selected five agencies to illustrate implementation efforts. GAO also interviewed subject matter specialists from academia and the private sector regarding their views on how program and project management practices applied to PMIAA.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making eight recommendations that OMB further develop the standards to include more detail, create a governance structure for program management standards, hold meetings on all High-Risk List areas, and establish measures to track agencies' progress in program management. OMB neither agreed nor disagreed with the recommendations and stated that it would consider them when making future updates to its program management policies and guidance.

View [GAO-20-44](#). For more information, contact Yvonne D. Jones at (202) 512-6806 or jonesy@gao.gov.

IMPROVING PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Key Actions Taken, but Further Efforts Needed to Strengthen Standards, Expand Reviews, and Address High-Risk Areas

What GAO Found

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has begun to implement all requirements of the Program Management Improvement Accountability Act of 2016 (PMIAA), but further efforts are needed to fully implement the law. OMB released its 5-year strategic plan for PMIAA and developed program management standards. However, the standards are not detailed compared with accepted program and project management standards, and OMB's governance structure is insufficient for developing and maintaining these standards over time. In 2019, OMB conducted ten reviews of agency program portfolios—organized groupings of programs whose coordination in implementation enables agencies to achieve their objectives. Each review addressed one or two portfolios per agency. Further, OMB's required portfolio reviews of high-risk areas were limited to only five out of 35 areas on GAO's High-Risk List. OMB could establish measures to track agencies' progress. Although not required by PMIAA, this is a good practice for demonstrating improvement.

As required by PMIAA, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) developed competencies for program and project managers and updated the program management job series. Further, OPM is developing a career path for program and project managers by the end of 2019. OPM also plans to create a unique job identifier code in 2020 so that agencies can more completely identify their program management workforce.

The Program Management Policy Council (PMPC), established by PMIAA and chaired by OMB's Deputy Director for Management, met for the first time in September 2018 and met twice in 2019 to discuss PMIAA implementation with Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Act agencies. All CFO Act agencies designated a Program Management Improvement Officer to participate in the PMPC. However, the PMPC has neither addressed GAO high-risk areas nor advised OMB on how to address high-risk areas, as required by the PMIAA.

Actions to Implement the Program Management Improvement Accountability Act (PMIAA)

Agency/ Council	PMIAA Requirements	Assessment
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)	Issue 5-year strategic plan	Issued; met relevant strategic planning criteria
	Adopt government-wide standards for program management	Standards lack detail; governance structure needed
	Conduct portfolio reviews of agency programs	Conducted portfolio reviews with ten of the 24 CFO Act agencies
Office of Personnel Management	Conduct portfolio reviews of GAO high-risk areas	Conducted meetings for five out of 35 high-risk areas
	Identify skills and competencies	Completed
	Establish or update job series	Completed
Program Management Policy Council	Establish career path	To be completed by the end of 2019
	Meet twice each fiscal year	Requirement met for 2019
CFO Act Agencies	Review programs in GAO high-risk areas and give recommendations to OMB	Not done
	Designate Program Management Improvement Officer	Completed

Source: GAO analysis of agency information. | GAO-20-44.