OPEN DATA

Additional Action Required for Full Public Access

What GAO Found

The Open, Public, Electronic and Necessary Government Data Act of 2018 (OPEN Government Data Act) codifies and expands on existing open data policy. It requires, among other things, agencies to publish information as open data by default, as well as develop and maintain comprehensive data inventories. However, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has not issued statutorily-required implementation guidance to agencies on making data open by default and comprehensive data inventories. GAO previously recommended that OMB issue inventory guidance, but that recommendation has not been implemented.

Despite the lack of guidance, selected agencies—AmeriCorps, the Departments of Justice (DOJ) and State, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)—made progress developing data inventories. Specifically, DOJ, the Department of State, and FDIC are at varying stages of updating their data inventories as required under the act. Further, although AmeriCorps lacks a comprehensive data inventory of all of its data assets, it has developed a searchable open data portal.

Regarding engaging with the public, GAO found that the selected agencies had mixed results in addressing all requirements of the act (see figure below). For example, while most of the agencies were assisting the public in expanding use of data assets, none were fully addressing the requirement to publish information on such use.

Selected Agencies’ Efforts to Address Requirements to Engage with the Public on Open Data

Federal data users spanning the public, private, and nonprofit sectors reported that they use and value a variety of data from across the federal government, such as demographic, spending, economic, and law enforcement data. Data users suggested that creating more comprehensive, standardized, accessible, and curated government data could increase the overall value and usefulness of open data. Full implementation of the public engagement requirements in the act could help address issues identified by federal data users.