

March 1995

# Federal Management Issue Area Plan

## Fiscal Years 1995-96





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# Foreword

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The Federal Management issue area is one of the General Accounting Office's 35 issue areas. Relying heavily on consultation with congressional committees, agency officials, and other experts, GAO develops strategic plans to ensure that its limited resources are directed toward the most important concerns of the Congress. The Federal Management issue area reviews a broad range of cross-cutting federal management and statistical policy issues that include the Government Performance and Results Act; the National Performance Review; regulatory reform; privatization and other public-private mix alternatives; and the examination of the quality, reliability, and usefulness of leading social and economic statistical data series.

GAO serves as a source of timely, accurate information and unbiased analysis for decisionmakers in the Congress and executive agencies. For each issue area, GAO's strategic plan describes the significance of the issues, our objectives, and the focus of our work. Our work results in such products as reports, briefings, and testimonies.

GAO's work on federal management issues is focused on the following principal issues:

- the integration of management requirements, improvement strategies, and tools into a consistent management framework;
- use of strategic planning and outcome-oriented performance measurements to continually improve agencies' effectiveness;
- the management reform initiatives that are being or can be implemented;
- the mix of program implementation strategies, including expanding the use of the private sector and its delivery methods, that can be used to improve effectiveness and efficiency;
- federal statistical programs as a source of accurate, adequate, and timely measures of social and economic activity and government performance; and
- the federal government's role as a provider of useful and readily accessible data at reasonable cost.

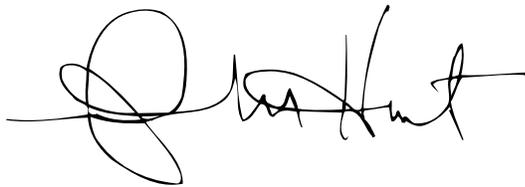
In the pages that follow, we describe our key planned work on these pivotal issues.

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**Foreword**

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Because events may significantly affect even the best of plans, our planning process allows for updating the plan and responding quickly to emerging issues. If you have any questions or suggestions about this plan, please call either me or Charles I. Patton, Associate Director, on (202) 512-8676.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William M. Hunt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

William M. Hunt  
Director  
Federal Management Issues

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# Table I: Key Issues

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Issue	Significance
<b>Integrated management framework:</b> How can current management requirements, improvement strategies, and tools be integrated into a management framework to accomplish agencies' goals in a results-oriented environment?	In the next several years, a wide array of government reinvention and reform initiatives will be undertaken by both the legislative and executive branches. Many of these initiatives will affect the management of agencies and programs. These efforts will follow recent reforms, including the Chief Financial Officers Act, the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), and the first phase of the National Performance Review (NPR) as well as earlier reforms, such as the Federal Managers Financial Integrity Act and the Paperwork Reduction Act. The success of these new initiatives will rest in part on how well they can be integrated into a management framework to leverage current and earlier improvement initiatives as well as ongoing management processes. The administration also is planning to introduce its own set of initiatives that need to be considered in any management framework.
<b>Managing for results:</b> How can agencies use strategic planning and outcome-oriented performance measurements to continually improve effectiveness and responsiveness within given resource levels?	The landmark GPRA seeks to fundamentally change the orientation of federal management and accountability away from a preoccupation with inputs and rigid adherence to prescribed processes to a greater focus on outcomes and results. Outcome-oriented strategic planning and performance measurement and reporting are the core elements of GPRA. Many of the current management initiatives in the Congress and the administration (e.g., Senator Roth's Blueprint for Reform, efforts to shift responsibility for many federal programs to states and local governments, NPR, and the administration's streamlining efforts) require agreement on the desired outcomes of federal programs and the existence of systematic methods and measures to assess their progress.
<b>Management reform initiatives:</b> What management reform initiatives are being or can be implemented to improve government operations and effectiveness?	A number of plans have been proposed or are under way to reform the way federal programs are managed and implemented, including NPR, OMB 2000, and congressional initiatives to restructure government and reduce the burden of federal regulations. Taken together, these efforts have the potential to significantly improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of government.

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**Table I: Key Issues**

Objectives	Focus of work
<p>— Describe key management laws and requirements and their linkage points and identify opportunities to align and streamline requirements that enhance management capacity while ensuring accountability.</p> <p>— Describe how requirements are communicated to and function at the agency and program operating levels.</p> <p>— Identify and describe effective strategies and tools that can support and integrate management improvement efforts.</p> <p>— Determine how federal agencies manage and integrate recent and ongoing changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify major requirements contained in laws and regulations that govern federal managers and their rationale, underlying assumptions, and applicability to current conditions.</li><li>• Assess key requirements to determine gaps and overlaps between various laws and regulations and to identify the impact on agency operations and opportunities to better integrate and align requirements.</li><li>• Describe the linkage among the major management processes created through law and case studies that describe and analyze the various strategies and tools used in linking requirements and systems to achieve program results.</li><li>• Identify and assess practices that provide agency managers greater capacity to manage and integrate recent and ongoing changes in their agencies.</li></ul>
<p>— Identify major challenges and opportunities in institutionalizing strategic planning and performance measurement.</p> <p>— Provide tools and methodologies for implementing and improving strategic planning and performance measurements.</p> <p>— Help agencies to implement GPRA by transferring knowledge, helping them to build skills, and providing lessons learned from related public and private efforts.</p> <p>— Expand the understanding of GPRA-related concepts and principles across GAO and facilitate their use in GAO assignments and in other federal audit organizations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assess agencies' efforts to implement and institutionalize GPRA concepts.</li><li>• Identify the critical steps necessary for the Congress and agencies to implement outcome-oriented strategic planning and performance measurement systems.</li><li>• Facilitate work on strategic planning and performance measurement by program issue areas across GAO.</li><li>• Support OPM's GPRA training efforts, as required by GPRA.</li><li>• Provide agencies with tools to assess their progress in implementing GPRA.</li></ul>
<p>— Describe agencies' initiatives to reinvent their work processes and lessons learned from those initiatives.</p> <p>— Describe OMB's efforts to integrate management into its budget process and to improve its relations with other federal agencies.</p> <p>— Identify opportunities for the Congress and agencies to improve federal regulatory management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monitor reinvention lab issues, processes, and accomplishments, describing certain labs in detail.</li><li>• Describe OMB 2000 goals and implementation strategies within OMB and selected agencies.</li><li>• Develop case studies of businesses' regulatory burdens, problematic regulations, and possible solutions.</li><li>• Assess the second phase of NPR.</li></ul>

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**Table I: Key Issues**

Issue	Significance
<b>Implementation strategies:</b> What mix of program implementation strategies, including expanding the use of the private sector and its delivery methods, can be used to improve effectiveness and efficiency?	As congressional and executive branch leaders seek to make fundamental reforms in the role of government and the way it delivers programs, these leaders must have current information on the options available and the degree of success others have had in implementing these options.
<b>Federal statistics:</b> Do federal statistical programs provide accurate, adequate, and timely measures of social and economic activity and government performance?	Decisionmakers in both the public and private sectors need to rely on federal statistics to understand current economic and social conditions and to estimate the likely effects of their decisions. The accuracy and timeliness of these statistics are frequently questioned, most notably in the recent debate over the reliability of the Consumer Price Index for adjusting federal taxes and expenditures for inflation. Successful GPRA implementation, furthermore, will increase the demand for federal statistics to improve their capability to measure the outcomes of federal programs. Inaccurate or incomplete data inherently limit the ability of decisionmakers to plan, evaluate, and improve programs. These needs must be balanced against the costs of statistical programs, particularly the paperwork burden.
<b>Information policy:</b> How can the federal government improve its role as a provider of useful and readily accessible data at reasonable cost?	Government-generated information is the lifeblood of the federal government and is essential to agency missions as well as to an informed public debate. The government's ability to provide the public with useful, accurate, and timely information in a cost-effective manner has been the subject of considerable debate, especially with the emergence of various electronic technologies. Conflicting proposals have been made on how best to reform the methods the government uses to meet its basic responsibility for informing the nation about its activities.

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**Table I: Key Issues**

Objectives	Focus of work
<p>— Assist the Congress by assessing alternative approaches to carry out governmental and quasigovernmental functions.</p> <p>— Develop criteria for identifying alternatives to public sector roles.</p> <p>— Describe lessons learned from other jurisdictions in expanding market mechanisms to make them more effective.</p> <p>— Assist the Congress in assessing the District of Columbia's fiscal crisis and the options available for resolving it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describe uses and accountability of government corporations.</li><li>• Survey other governments' use of the private sector.</li><li>• Identify alternative guidelines for public sector roles.</li><li>• Analyze U.S. cities' experiences in resolving fiscal crises to improve the District of Columbia's management and operations.</li><li>• Assist the Congress in drafting legislation for a D.C. oversight board.</li><li>• Provide the D.C. oversight board with needed information on other oversight boards and related issues.</li></ul>
<p>— Identify improvements that the Bureau of Labor Statistics should make in order to enhance the analytical soundness, popular understanding, and acceptance of the Consumer Price Index as a measure of inflation.</p> <p>— Assist federal statistical agencies in improving the accuracy, completeness, and cost-effectiveness of international transaction statistics so that those statistics can be more useful to government policymakers and business users.</p> <p>— Assist the Congress in determining whether the current dispersion of statistical production among 70 agencies best serves the nation's need for accurate, timely, and usable statistical data in the most cost-effective manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assess the quality of federal statistics that underlie federal program decisions and evaluations.</li><li>• Analyze and assess measurement issues in the Consumer Price Index.</li><li>• Recommend improvements in reporting data on international transactions that are to increase their reliability in a cost-effective manner.</li><li>• Analyze potential benefits and costs of greater consolidation or privatization of federal statistical programs for the Congress.</li></ul>
<p>— Improve the coverage, accuracy, timeliness, and cost-effectiveness of sociodemographic data used to formulate public policy.</p> <p>— Identify measures that the Bureau of the Census can take to improve the effectiveness and reduce the cost of the 2000 Census.</p> <p>— Assist in developing a framework for publishing and electronically disseminating government information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve the accuracy and reduce the cost of the decennial census and other sociodemographic surveys.</li><li>• Suggest ways the federal government can obtain printing services in order to increase efficiency and economy.</li><li>• Review federal guidance for providing government information electronically.</li></ul>

# Table II: Planned Major Work

Issue	Planned major job starts
<b>Integrated management framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Develop a comprehensive inventory of the major legislative requirements for federal managers.</li> <li>— Identify and describe management strategies and tools for integrating statutory requirements.</li> <li>— Assess how agencies' use management tools to manage changes being introduced.</li> </ul>
<b>Managing for results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Provide agencies with tools to assess their progress in meeting GPRA requirements.</li> <li>— Continue assessing efforts to implement GPRA.</li> <li>— Evaluate agencies' implementation of GPRA as required by law.</li> </ul>
<b>Management improvement initiatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Monitor and assess the status of the administration's "NPR II" initiative.</li> <li>— Identify ways to refocus federal regulatory management from an emphasis on procedural compliance to an emphasis on outcomes.</li> <li>— Assess the Office of Management and Budget's oversight and coordination of federal regulatory policies.</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Conduct a survey of public-private mix options.</li> <li>— Identify criteria and oversight capability for establishing government corporations.</li> </ul>
<b>Federal statistics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Identify ways for improving the Consumer Price Index.</li> <li>— Identify and assess ways for improving the accuracy and usefulness of international transaction statistics.</li> <li>— Identify opportunities for improving coordination of data gathering and streamlining the organization of federal statistical production.</li> </ul>
<b>Information policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Identify opportunities to improve the accuracy and reduce the cost of the decennial census and other sociodemographic surveys.</li> <li>— Suggest ways the federal government can obtain printing services in order to increase efficiency and economy.</li> <li>— Review federal guidance for providing government information.</li> <li>— Develop a framework for publishing government information electronically.</li> <li>— Review federal agencies' electronic data dissemination policies and practices.</li> </ul>

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# Table III: GAO Contacts

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