

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105520](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Many of the meaningful results that the federal government seeks to achieve require the coordinated efforts of more than one federal agency. GAO's leading practices for collaboration can help address crosscutting challenges, such as infectious diseases, climate change, cybersecurity, and other areas identified in GAO's High-Risk List and those involving fragmentation, overlap, and duplication.

This report is part of a series of reports related to a provision in the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010. This report validates and updates GAO's 2012 leading interagency collaboration practices. It also provides illustrative examples from prior GAO work.

To validate and update these practices, GAO reviewed relevant prior reports and conducted reviews of scholarly and peer-reviewed literature related to collaboration. GAO also gathered the views of senior agency officials experienced in leading interagency collaborative efforts, subject matter specialists, Office of Management and Budget staff, and General Services Administration officials responsible for federal performance and collaboration issues. To identify examples of collaboration challenges and success, we conducted a content analysis of prior GAO work from fiscal years 2018 through 2022.

View [GAO-23-105520](#). For more information, contact Dawn G. Locke at (202) 512-6806 or locked@gao.gov.

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GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT







Leading Practices to Enhance Interagency Collaboration and Address Crosscutting Challenges

What GAO Found

Interagency collaboration involves collaboration or coordination between two or more federal entities, or within components of the same entity. Collaboration can be broadly defined as any joint activity that is intended to produce more public value than could be produced when the entities act alone.

GAO's eight leading practices for interagency collaboration (below) include key considerations for collaborating entities to use when implementing them. This report also includes examples illustrating how the leading practices apply to a number of different collaboration challenges and successes in areas such as foreign aid, cybersecurity, and the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementing these practices is critical to achieving important interagency outcomes, such as addressing long-standing challenges facing the federal government.

GAO's Leading Interagency Collaboration Practices and Selected Key Considerations

Collaboration Practices	Selected Key Considerations
 Define Common Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the crosscutting challenges or opportunities been identified? • Have the short- and long-term outcomes been clearly defined?
 Ensure Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the ways to monitor, assess, and communicate progress toward the short- and long-term outcomes? • Have the means to recognize and reward accomplishments related to collaboration been established?
 Bridge Organizational Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have strategies to build trust among participants been developed? • Have participating agencies agreed on common terminology and definitions?
 Identify and Sustain Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a lead agency or individual been identified? • How will leadership be sustained over the long term?
 Clarify Roles and Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the roles and responsibilities of the participants been clarified? • Has a process for making decisions been agreed upon?
 Include Relevant Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have all relevant participants been included? • Do participants represent diverse perspectives and expertise?
 Leverage Resources and Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the collaboration be resourced through staffing and funding? • Are methods, tools, or technologies to share relevant data and information being used?
 Develop and Update Written Guidance and Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If appropriate, have agreements regarding the collaboration been documented? • Have ways to continually update or monitor written agreements been developed?

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