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MANAGING FOR RESULTS

Implementation Approaches Used to Enhance Collaboration in Interagency Groups

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, level of government, or sector. The GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA) takes a more crosscutting and integrated approach to improving government performance. GPRAMA requires that GAO periodically review implementation of the law. As a part of a series of reports responding to this requirement, GAO assessed how interagency groups addressed the central collaboration challenges identified in its prior work of 1) defining outcomes; 2) measuring performance and ensuring accountability; 3) establishing leadership approaches; and 4) using resources, such as funding, staff, and technology.

GAO selected four interagency groups that met its key practices for enhancing and sustaining collaboration to learn about the approaches they used and found to be successful. These groups addressed issues of homelessness, reentry of former inmates into society, rental housing policy, and the education of military dependent students. To identify successful approaches, GAO reviewed agency documents, and interviewed agency officials that participated in these groups. Additionally, GAO convened recipients of the Presidential Distinguished Rank Award, who had experience with interagency collaboration. GAO is not making any recommendations in this report. GAO shared a draft of this report with key agencies that participated in the interagency groups GAO reviewed. The agencies either had no comments or provided technical comments, which GAO incorporated as appropriate.

View GAO-14-220. For more information, contact J.Christopher Mihm at (202) 512-6806 or mihmj@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

The interagency groups GAO selected and expert practitioners—including those who received the Presidential Distinguished Rank Award—have used a range of approaches to address some of the key considerations for implementing interagency collaborative mechanisms, related to defining outcomes; measuring performance and ensuring accountability; establishing leadership approaches; and using resources, such as funding, staff, and technology.

Implementation Approaches Used by Select Interagency Groups

Key Considerations for Implementing Interagency Collaborative Mechanisms	Implementation Approaches from Select Interagency Groups
Outcomes • Have short-term and long-term outcomes been clearly defined?	• Started group with most directly affected participants and gradually broadened to others. • Conducted early outreach to participants and stakeholders to identify shared interests. • Held early in-person meetings to build relationships and trust. • Identified early wins for the group to accomplish. • Developed outcomes that represented the collective interests of participants. • Developed a plan to communicate outcomes and track progress. • Revisited outcomes and refreshed interagency group.
Accountability • Is there a way to track and monitor progress?	• Developed performance measures and tied them to shared outcomes. • Identified and shared relevant agency performance data. • Developed methods to report on the group's progress that are open and transparent. • Incorporated interagency group activities into individual performance expectations.
Leadership • Has a lead agency or individual been identified? • If leadership will be shared between one or more agencies, have roles and responsibilities been clearly identified and agreed upon?	• Designated group leaders exhibited collaboration competencies. • Ensured participation from high-level leaders in regular, in-person group meetings and activities. • Rotated key tasks and responsibilities when leadership of the group was shared. • Established clear and inclusive procedures for leading the group during initial meetings. • Distributed leadership responsibility for group activities among participants.
Resources • How will the collaborative mechanism be funded? • How will the collaborative mechanism be staffed?	• Created an inventory of resources dedicated towards interagency outcomes. • Leveraged related agency resources toward the group's outcomes. • Pilot tested new collaborative ideas, programs, or policies before investing resources.