

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-19-299](#), a report to congressional addressees

Why GAO Did This Study

The DATA Act required OMB or a designated federal agency to establish a pilot program to develop recommendations for reducing recipient reporting burden for federal grantees and contractors. The grants portion of the pilot tested six ways to reduce recipient reporting burden while the procurement portion focused on testing a centralized reporting portal for submitting reporting requirements. This report follows a 2016 GAO review on the design of the pilot.

This report assesses the extent to which (1) the pilot met the statutory requirements set out in the DATA Act, (2) the grants portion of the pilot demonstrated changes in reporting burden, and (3) the procurement portion demonstrated changes in reporting burden. GAO reviewed statutory requirements, pilot plans, agency data and reports and interviewed OMB staff and officials from HHS and GSA.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Director of OMB ensure that information is collected regarding how centralized reporting of procurement requirements might reduce recipient reporting burden—including input from stakeholders such as contractors through an iterative and ongoing process—to inform OMB’s planned expansion of the Central Reporting Portal. OMB neither agreed nor disagreed with the recommendation but provided technical comments, which GAO incorporated as appropriate.

View [GAO-19-299](#). For more information, contact Michelle Sager at (202) 512-6806 or sagem@gao.gov.

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DATA ACT

Pilot Effectively Tested Approaches for Reducing Reporting Burden for Grants but Not for Contracts

What GAO Found

In response to requirements of the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) led implementation of a pilot program, known as the Section 5 Pilot, aimed at developing recommendations for reducing recipient reporting burden for federal grantees and contractors.

The pilot program met many, but not all, of its statutory requirements. For example, the act required OMB to issue guidance to agencies for reducing reporting burden for federal award recipients (including both grantees and contractors) based on the pilot’s findings. OMB partially met this requirement because the guidance it issued only applied to grants.

The pilot program consisted of two parts, which differed considerably in both design and results: The grants portion, administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), examined six approaches for reducing grantee reporting burden and found positive results related to reductions in reporting time as well as reduced duplication. HHS incorporated ongoing stakeholder input during the pilot, and its findings contributed to government-wide initiatives related to federal reporting and reducing grantee-reporting burden.

The procurement (contracts) portion of the pilot, led by OMB with assistance from the General Services Administration (GSA), did not collect sufficient evidence to determine whether centralizing procurement reporting through a single web-based portal would reduce contractor reporting burden—a key objective of the pilot. The pilot planned to test the portal by collecting weekly Davis-Bacon wage data from a minimum of 180 contractors, potentially resulting in thousands of submissions over a year. However, in the end, the pilot did not result in any Davis-Bacon data due to lack of contractor participation and the absence of iterative and ongoing stakeholder engagement. Subsequently, OMB expanded the pilot to include hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) reporting but received only 11 HFC submissions. (See figure.) In addition, HFC reporting was not suited for assessing changes in reporting burden because it was a new requirement and thus no comparative data existed. OMB plans to expand its use of the portal for additional procurement reporting requirements but still does not have information from stakeholders that could help inform the expansion.

Davis-Bacon and HFC Data Submissions during the DATA Act Pilot

2017												2018	Total Submissions	
Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.			
Davis-Bacon Submissions														
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) Submissions														
▣	▣	▣	▣	▣	▣	▣	▣	▣	▣	▣	8	1	2	
													11	

Number of Davis-Bacon submissions # Number of HFC submissions ▣ HFC data not collected

Source: GAO analysis of Central Reporting Portal data submission documents from General Services Administration (GSA). | GAO-19-299