

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105297](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Oversight and Accountability, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

USPS has long faced challenges meeting its universal postal service mission, and its financial viability has been an ongoing area of concern. The changes proposed in USPS's 2021 Strategic Plan touch every aspect of USPS operations. USPS's success in achieving its goals depend, in part, on how well the plan is implemented.

GAO was asked to review USPS's implementation of its Strategic Plan. This report examines the progress USPS has made towards meeting the plan's primary goals and the extent to which USPS policies for implementing Strategic Plan projects incorporate GAO leading practices for project management, among other objectives.

GAO reviewed the Strategic Plan and additional USPS reports and policy documents. GAO assessed USPS policies governing Strategic Plan projects against 11 selected GAO leading practices for project management. In addition, GAO interviewed USPS officials and postal stakeholders about the Strategic Plan and its implementation.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making six recommendations, including that USPS revise its Strategic Plan project implementation guidance to incorporate five project management leading practices, including identifying and disseminating lessons learned. USPS agreed with four of the six recommendations, and partially agreed with the other two recommendations. GAO maintains that fully implementing all of the recommendations will benefit USPS's implementation of its Strategic Plan.

View [GAO-23-105297](#). For more information, contact David Marroni at (202) 512-2834 or [MarroniD@gao.gov](mailto:MarroniD@gao.gov).

July 2023

## U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

### Better Incorporating Leading Practices for Project Management Could Benefit Strategic Plan Implementation

#### What GAO Found

In March 2021, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) published a new 10-year strategic plan called *Delivering for America* with the primary goals of improving its service performance and financial sustainability. Since implementation of this Strategic Plan started, USPS has reported improved service reliability and some progress towards its financial targets. For example, USPS reported that it had met the fiscal year 2022 on-time delivery performance target of 91 percent for First-Class Mail, an improvement over the previous year's 83 percent. This improvement is, in part, due to changes that USPS adopted in October 2021 to adjust the performance targets and service standards for First-Class Mail and First-Class Packages. USPS also reported in April 2023 that its projected losses decreased by more than half—from \$160 billion to \$70 billion—in the first two years of the Strategic Plan's implementation.

USPS's policies for implementing Strategic Plan projects fully or substantially met six of 11 selected GAO leading practices for project management. However, GAO found that USPS's implementation policies partially or minimally met five leading practices (see figure).

GAO's Assessment of U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Policies against Leading Practices

GAO's leading practices for project management	GAO assessment of USPS policies
1 Establish an execution plan with policies and procedures to manage and control project planning.	
2 Define the scope of the project so that its performance can be measured.	
3 Develop a cost estimate using GAO best practices.	
4 Develop and maintain an integrated master schedule for the project using GAO best practices.	
5 Establish a performance baseline and track it from the beginning to the end of the project.	
6 Establish project-reporting system/databases to provide a clear picture of project performance to management and to keep the project accountable.	
7 Conduct monitoring and controlling activities to measure performance at regular intervals.	
8 Conduct a root cause analysis and develop corrective action plans to identify and address the underlying causes of cost overruns, schedule delays, and performance shortcomings, when a cost or schedule overrun occurs.	
9 Capture lessons learned throughout the continuum of a project and disseminate them among projects.	
10 Conduct risk assessments throughout the life cycle of the project and prioritize risks in a risk register, develop risk mitigation strategies, and determine contingency.	
11 Conduct independent reviews throughout the life of a project, including at key decision points, and on multiple aspects of the project, such as the mission need, cost, and baseline review.	

**Fully Met:** GAO found evidence that completely satisfied the leading practice.
 **Substantially Met:** GAO found evidence that satisfied a large portion of the leading practice.
 **Partially Met:** GAO found evidence that satisfied about half of the leading practice.
 **Minimally Met:** GAO found evidence that satisfied a small portion of the leading practice.
 **Not Met:** GAO found no evidence that satisfied the leading practice.

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and GAO information. | GAO-23-105297

For example, GAO found that although USPS collects information that could be relevant to a lessons-learned process, it does not have a system to identify or disseminate such information. Given that USPS plans to implement over 100 projects in the coming years, it is especially important to collect and disseminate lessons learned to benefit future projects. By further incorporating leading practices into its policies and guidance, USPS could better realize benefits for its current and future strategic plan projects.