



June 2024

FEDERAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

OMB Has Taken Actions to Implement Cross-Agency Priority Goals

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-24-106632](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The 2021 President’s Management Agenda identified federal customer experience as a priority area for improvement. To implement the priority area, OMB set two CAP goals, which are 4-year outcome-oriented federal priority goals required by the Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act of 2010.

The first CAP goal focuses on improving customer experience for services designated by HISPs. The second CAP goal involves improving five key life experiences—e.g., retirement—that require members of the public to navigate services across multiple federal agencies.

GAO was asked to review OMB and selected federal agencies’ efforts to improve federal customer experience. This report addresses (1) actions taken by OMB and selected HISPs to implement federal customer experience improvements; (2) how well OMB facilitated interagency collaboration related to the five customer life experiences; and (3) the extent to which OMB has overseen and assessed progress on CAP goals to improve federal customer experience.

GAO reviewed data and documentation obtained from OMB and selected agencies, and from Performance.gov, a federal website. GAO also interviewed OMB staff and selected agency officials. GAO used leading practices identified in prior GAO work to assess OMB efforts.

View [GAO-24-106632](#). For more information, contact Dawn G. Locke at (202) 512-6806 or locked@gao.gov.

June 2024

FEDERAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

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What GAO Found

The current administration’s President’s Management Agenda prioritizes improvements in federal customer experience, which is the public’s perceptions of and overall satisfaction with interactions with an agency, product, or service. To pursue this priority, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) designated and worked with numerous High Impact Service Providers (HISPs)—federal entities that provide or fund high-impact customer facing services. According to OMB, 27 HISPs have reported customer feedback data. OMB staff said they continue to work with the remaining HISPs to support their efforts to collect and report customer experience feedback data. OMB also reported that 38 HISPs have completed assessments of their internal capacity for improving customer experience and will identify priority areas for improvement later this year.

OMB prioritized five customer life experiences for improvement—for example, the experiences of approaching retirement or recovering from a disaster. It then developed cross-agency teams to identify and implement related pilot projects for improving these customer life experiences. OMB generally addressed leading practices identified in GAO’s prior work to support collaboration among these cross-agency teams.

OMB also generally addressed key considerations for implementing Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) goals (see figure) identified in prior GAO work. For example, as part of addressing the key consideration of identifying resources to support implementation, a federal customer experience management team was established within OMB. To use performance information, OMB developed a performance framework to assess progress toward CAP goals. It is also developing baseline data to measure customer trust, HISP capacity, and lessons learned from customer life experience pilot projects. OMB’s performance framework can support its efforts to assess whether it is on track to improve federal customer experience by the end of the 4-year CAP goal period.

Assessment of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Actions on Customer Experience Against Key Considerations to Implement Cross-Agency Priority Goals (CAP) in the President’s Management Agenda

| Actions to implement CAP goals | Key considerations | Did OMB address these key considerations? |
|--|---|---|
| Establish the goal  | Establish a balanced set of outcome-oriented mission and management- focused goals that reflect the government’s highest policy priorities. | ✓ |
| Identify goal leaders and contributors  | Identify co-leaders and sub-goal leaders to facilitate leadership, continuity, and agency buy-in. | ✓ |
| Identify resources to support implementation  | Dedicate resources to goal implementation, including funding, staffing, and technology. | ✓ |
| Use performance information  | Focus on improving the quality and use of data to routinely assess goal progress and a shared commitment to continuous improvement. | ✓ |
| Report results  | Assess and report progress on goal achievement at the end of the goal periods. | ✓ |

Source: GAO analysis of agency interviews and documents, GAO reports, and information published by the Office of Management and Budget on Performance.gov. GAO illustrations. | GAO-24-106632

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Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| CAP | Cross-Agency Priority |
| DOL | Department of Labor |
| ETA | Employment and Training Administration |
| FHEO | Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity |
| FNS | Food and Nutrition Service |
| GPRA | Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 |
| GPRAMA | GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 |
| GSA | General Services Administration |
| HISP | High Impact Service Provider |
| HUD | Department of Housing and Urban Development |
| OES | Office of Evaluation Sciences |
| OMB | Office of Management and Budget |
| PMA | President's Management Agenda |
| PRA | Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 |
| TMF | Technology Modernization Fund |
| TTS | Technology Transformation Services |
| USDA | U.S. Department of Agriculture |
| USDS | U.S. Digital Service |
| WIC | Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children |
| VA | Department of Veterans Affairs |

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June 6, 2024

Congressional Requesters

Federal agencies serve the public in a vast number of ways, such as providing medical benefits to veterans, managing border security, and educating visitors within national parks and forests. Providing a positive customer experience is one way federal agencies can help build citizens' trust in their government.¹ Natural disasters, economic uncertainty, and a variety of other challenges currently face our nation. The COVID-19 pandemic in particular has changed agency operations, and as a result, their interactions with customers. The manner in which agencies provide services to the public has shifted toward digital service delivery, including video conferencing and web-based forms.

In November 2021, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released the Biden administration's President's Management Agenda (PMA), which includes a priority to deliver "excellent, equitable, and secure federal services and customer experience."² Customer experience is defined as "the public's perceptions of and overall satisfaction with interactions with an agency, product, or service."³ As the agency responsible for overseeing federal improvements in customer experience, OMB designated certain strategies in this priority area as Cross-Agency

¹The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has done work on the various ways governments can strengthen trust, and has found that government responsiveness, reliability, and fairness in delivering public services are crucial for boosting trust in institutions. OECD, *Building Trust to Reinforce Democracy: Main Findings from the 2021 OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions*. (Paris, France: July 13, 2022).

²Office of Management and Budget, *The Biden-Harris Management Agenda Vision*, (Washington, D.C.: November 2021). The 2021 PMA includes an additional strategy under the customer experience priority area. The strategy focuses on the design and development of digital experience standards, tools, and resources that empower agencies to deliver better federal websites and digital services to meet their statutory obligations. This strategy is part of an ongoing GAO review. As such, we do not discuss progress in this area as part of this report.

³See Exec. Order No. 14058, *Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government*, 86 Fed. Reg. 71357 (Dec. 16, 2021).

Priority (CAP) goals. CAP goals are 4-year, outcome-oriented federal priority goals developed by OMB, in coordination with federal agencies.⁴

The OMB Director is also responsible for designating High Impact Service Providers (HISPs), which are federal entities that provide or fund customer-facing services that have a high impact on the public, whether because of a large customer base or a critical effect on those served. These include federal services administered at the state or local level.⁵ (See app. I for a list of the 38 HISPs, as of May 2024). OMB is then responsible for coordinating with these service providers to assess and improve the experience of their customers, including by designating specific services that should be prioritized for improvement.⁶

OMB also worked with the President's Management Council to identify five customer life experiences for priority improvement.⁷ These experiences relate to important points in a person's life during which they interact with one or more government entities, such as when one approaches retirement, or during recovery from a disaster. OMB convened cross-agency teams to oversee pilot projects designed to improve these five prioritized life experiences.

You asked us to review how OMB and selected federal agencies are working to improve federal customer experience. This report addresses (1) actions OMB and selected HISPs have taken to implement federal customer experience improvements; (2) how well OMB facilitated interagency collaboration related to the five customer life experiences;

⁴For more detail on the PMA and its CAP Goals, see GAO, *Government Performance Management: Actions Needed to Improve Transparency of Cross-Agency Priority Goals*, [GAO-24-106248](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 4, 2023).

⁵See Exec. Order No. 14058. 86 Fed. Reg. 71357 (Dec. 16, 2021).

⁶According to Exec. Order No. 14058. 86 Fed. Reg. 71357 (Dec. 16, 2021), the identification of designated services should be based on the moments that matter most to the individuals served, and on those services' public-facing nature, the number of individuals served, the volume of transactions, the total federal dollars spent, the safety and protection of lives, or the critical nature of the services provided in the lives of the individuals they serve.

⁷The President's Management Council advises the President and OMB on government reform initiatives, provides performance and management leadership throughout the Executive Branch, and oversees implementation of government-wide management policies. OMB's Deputy Director for Management chairs the President's Management Council. It includes the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, the Administrator of the General Services Administration (GSA), the White House Cabinet Secretary, and Deputy Secretaries/Chief Operating Officers from major federal agencies.

and (3) the extent to which OMB has overseen and assessed progress on CAP goals to improve federal customer experience.

To address all three objectives, we reviewed recent relevant customer experience authorities and guidance.⁸ We reviewed information related to federal customer experience posted on Performance.gov in 2023 and 2024. Performance.gov is a federal website that provides relevant information related to the PMA and CAP goals, in addition to other federal performance information.⁹ We also reviewed documentation and interviewed staff and officials from federal customer experience leadership agencies in the PMA: OMB, the General Services Administration (GSA), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the Department of Agriculture (USDA).¹⁰

To provide illustrative examples for the first objective, we selected three HISPs—federal entities that provide or fund high-impact services to the public—and five of their designated services—services selected for prioritized improvement—to review (see fig. 1). To select the three HISPs, we first identified federal agencies that committed to provide support to at least four of the five customer life experience priorities—identified by OMB and the PMC and representing important points in a person’s life during which they interact with multiple government entities.¹¹ Among the three agencies we identified (USDA, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Department of Labor (DOL)), we then selected the HISPs within USDA and DOL with the highest

⁸Exec. Order No. 14,058. 86 Fed. Reg. 71357 (Dec. 16, 2021). Office of Management and Budget, *Preparation, Submission, and Execution of the Budget*, Circular No. A-11, Sections 200 and 280 (2023).

⁹The creation of Performance.gov was required by GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA) as a platform for communicating government-wide and agency performance information.




¹⁰GSA, VA, and USDA are designated as priority area leaders in the PMA and are responsible for approving multi-year action plans for CAP goals, monitoring progress, and providing updates to the President’s Management Council.

¹¹These agencies were identified by their signatures on charter documents that describe the overall life experience effort and the cross-agency team overseeing improvements. As signatories to these documents, officials from these agencies committed to provide talent, expertise, and other relevant support for the improvement of life experiences. GSA and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) were also signatories to at least four life experience projects. GSA was not selected because they were already scoped into our engagement and we did not select HHS because we had other work underway at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the focus of HHS’ customer experience improvement efforts.

estimated budget for fiscal year 2023: the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), respectively. HUD itself is designated as a HISP.

We reviewed documentation concerning customer experience improvements from each of the selected HISPs, such as customer experience capacity assessments and action plans. We also interviewed officials within each selected HISP to discuss their customer experience assessment and improvement efforts. To provide information on the number of HISPs that reported customer experience data, we analyzed HISPs' customer feedback survey results from fiscal years 2021 through 2023, which can be found on Performance.gov.

Figure 1: Selected Agencies, High Impact Service Providers, and Designated Services

| Agency | Number of Life Experience portfolios agency committed to support ^a | High Impact Service Provider ^b | Designated service(s) of selected High Impact Service Provider, as published on Performance.gov ^c |
|---|---|---|---|
|  Department of Agriculture | 4 | Food and Nutrition Service | Using Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children food benefits |
|  Department of Housing and Urban Development | 5 | Department of Housing and Urban Development | Seeking information about Federal Housing Administration loan programs and loss mitigation services Filing a fair housing discrimination complaint with the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity |
|  Department of Labor | 4 | Employment and Training Administration | Searching for careers, training, and workforce services using CareerOneStop ^d Using CareerOneStop application programming interfaces to integrate into web content ^e |

Source: GAO analysis of agency documents, GAO reports, and information published by the Office of Management and Budget on Performance.gov. | GAO-24-106632

^aLife Experience portfolios refer to sets of projects related to the five customer life experience priorities identified by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the President's Management Council. These life experiences represent important points in a person's life during which they interact with one or more government entities.

^bA High Impact Service Provider (HISP) is a federal entity, as designated by OMB, that provides or funds customer-facing services, including federal services administered at the state or local level, that have a high impact on the public, whether because of a large customer base or a critical effect on those served. A HISP may be a federal department or component of a department.

^cA designated service is selected by HISP leadership, in consultation with OMB, based on factors, such as the public-facing nature of the service, volume of transactions, and expenditures. The HISP then prioritizes customer experience improvements for this service.

^dCareerOneStop is a website sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration that aggregates information about employment and training opportunities for job seekers.

^eAn application programming interface is a type of software interface that allows two or more software applications to communicate with each other. This facilitates the exchange of information between CareerOneStop and other websites for jobseekers. For example, CareerOneStop's application programming interfaces allow other websites to automatically include its information on job postings, salaries, and trainings.

To address the second objective, we reviewed documentation on the five customer life experience priorities, such as charter documents describing challenges and goals related to each life experience and related progress reports. We also interviewed OMB about its efforts to facilitate interagency collaboration on related projects. We then made qualitative determinations about the extent to which OMB's efforts to facilitate interagency collaboration addressed leading practices identified in our prior work.¹²

To address the third objective, we reviewed documentation of OMB's oversight and assessment of progress on the customer experience CAP goals—for example, organizational charts, documentation of performance measures, and progress updates published on Performance.gov. We also interviewed OMB officials about their related efforts. We then made qualitative determinations about the extent to which OMB's efforts addressed GAO's key considerations for implementing CAP goals.¹³ For the analysis supporting the second and third objectives, the assessment was completed by one analyst on the team, and then a second analyst reviewed and validated each determination.

We conducted this performance audit from February 2023 to June 2024 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that

¹²GAO, *Government Performance Management: Leading Practices to Enhance Interagency Collaboration and Address Crosscutting Challenges*, [GAO-23-105520](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 24, 2023).

¹³GAO, *Government Performance Management: Key Considerations for Implementing Cross-Agency Priority Goals and Progress Addressing GAO Recommendations*, [GAO-21-104704](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 28, 2021).

the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Federal Customer Experience Improvement Efforts Over Time

For more than 30 years, both Congress and the executive branch have taken actions to improve federal customer service, or agencies' individual interactions with customers, through the assistance and advice provided by the agency to people who use its services.¹⁴ In recent years, the focus has shifted to a more comprehensive view of the public's perceptions of and overall satisfaction with interactions with an agency, product, or service (customer experience).¹⁵

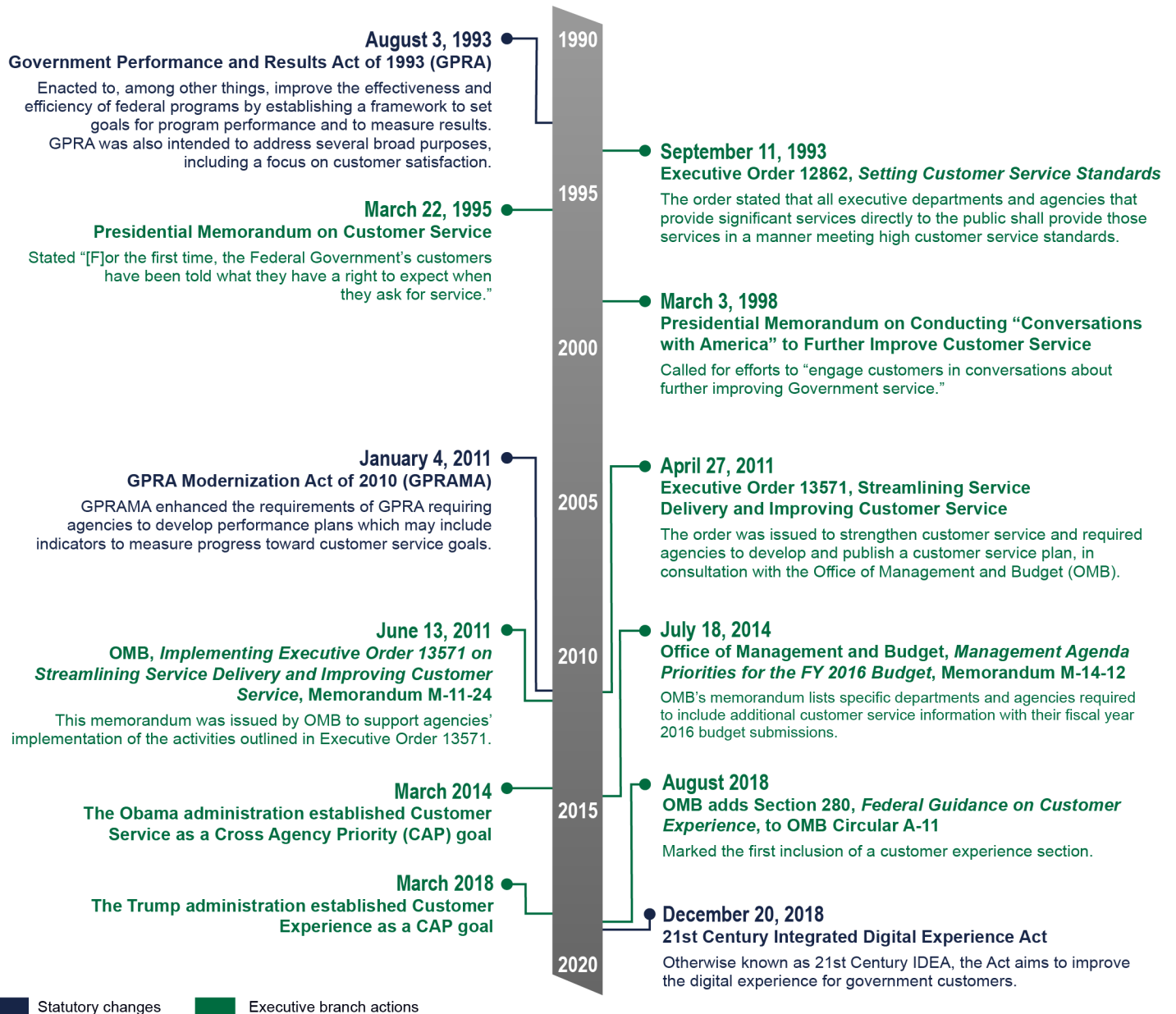
The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) was enacted to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of federal programs by establishing a system to set goals for program performance and to measure results.¹⁶ Since then, GPRA has also promoted a new focus on service quality and customer satisfaction. Further actions taken by Congress and the executive branch to improve federal customer service and customer experience, including in the prior two administrations, are detailed in figure 2.

¹⁴Is There a Difference between Customer Service and Customer Experience?" U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Mar. 28, 2022. <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/03/28/there-difference-between-customer-service-and-customer-experience>.

¹⁵Exec. Order No. 14058, 86 Fed. Reg. 71357 (Dec. 16, 2021).

¹⁶See Pub. L. No. 103-62, § 2, 107 Stat. 285 (1993).

Figure 2: Selected Legislation, Executive Orders, and Other Actions Involving Federal Customer Service, 1990 –2020.



Source: GAO summaries of relevant federal laws, executive orders, and other executive actions. | GAO-24-106632

Note: Executive orders and presidential memoranda continue in effect even after the president who issued them is no longer in office unless they are subsequently rescinded.

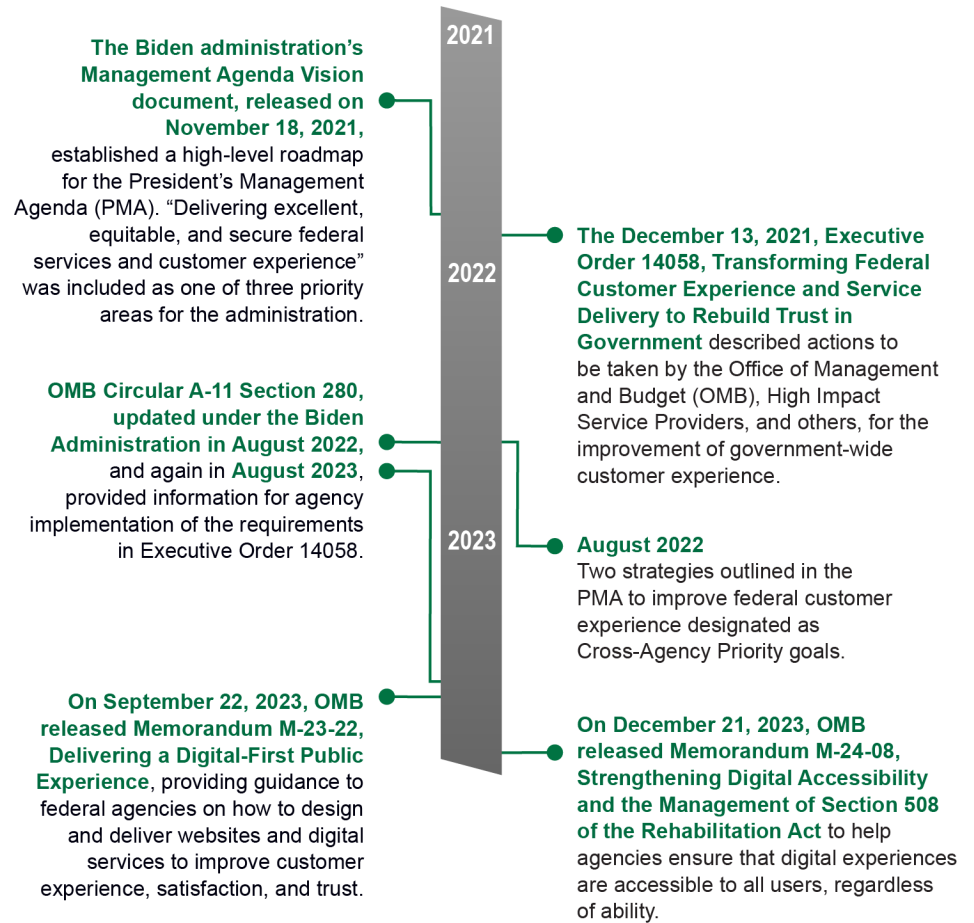
Current Customer Experience
Priorities

Most recently, the Biden administration's PMA established customer experience as a priority area and supported its implementation through several executive actions.¹⁷ (See fig. 3). Executive Order 14058 and guidance outlined in OMB Circular A-11, Section 280 support this PMA priority by detailing specific actions OMB is to take to improve customer experience, in consultation with the President's Management Council. The circular also describes actions to be taken by HISPs, as well as executive agencies.¹⁸

¹⁷Other priority areas include "Strengthening and Empowering the Federal Workforce" and "Managing the Business of Government," the latter of which entails making improvements to federal, acquisitions, and financial management programs.

¹⁸The timeline in figure 3 includes guidance focused on the design and delivery of improved websites and digital services (OMB Memoranda M-23-22 and M-24-08). These topics are part of the focus of an ongoing GAO review. As such, we do not discuss them as part of this report.

Figure 3: Timeline of Biden Administration’s Customer Experience Actions, 2021 – 2023

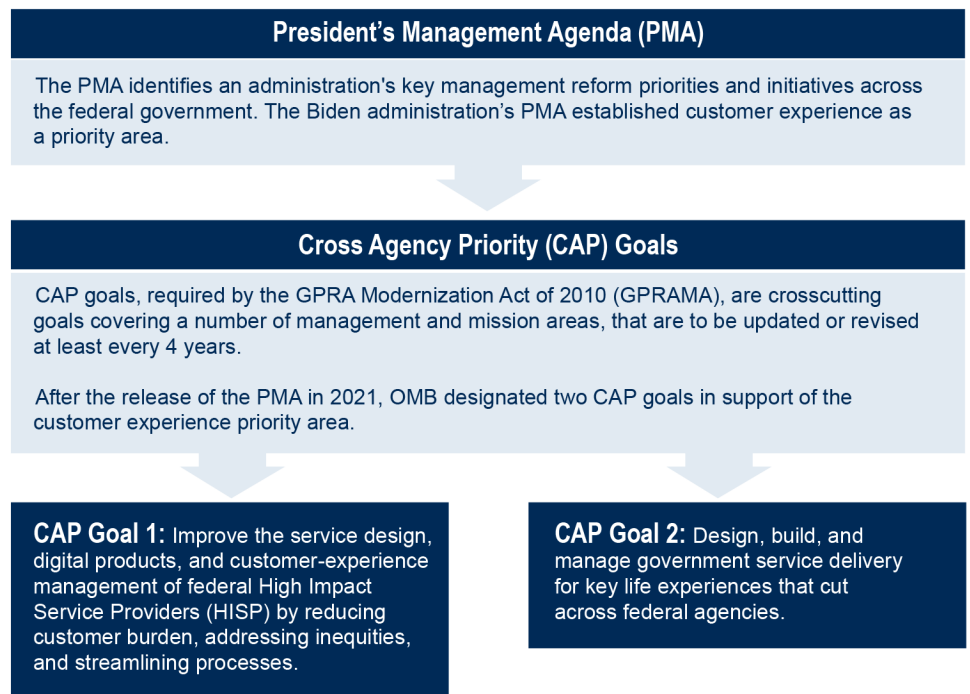


Source: GAO summaries of relevant executive branch actions. | GAO-24-106632

To further customer experience priorities, OMB designated two related CAP goals in the PMA to guide its efforts to improve customer experience (see fig. 4). OMB must review progress toward achieving CAP goals each quarter, including overall trend data, and the likelihood of meeting the planned level of performance. OMB works with the Performance

Improvement Council to assess quarterly progress on priority areas in the PMA, including for the CAP goals.¹⁹

Figure 4: Customer Experience in the 2021 President’s Management Agenda and Related Cross-Agency Priority Goals



Source: GAO analysis of OMB Circular A-11, Section 220, GPRAMA, and information published by OMB on Performance.gov. | GAO-24-106632

See appendix II for a summary of broader themes we identified related to customer experience in federal agencies from a selected literature review.

¹⁹31 U.S.C. §§ 1121(a)(1), 1124. The Performance Improvement Council assists OMB with improving the performance of the federal government and achieving CAP goals. This assistance may include facilitating the exchange of useful practices and developing recommendations to streamline and improve agency performance management. The OMB Deputy Director for Management chairs the Performance Improvement Council. Performance Improvement Officers from 24 major federal agencies make up the Performance Improvement Council.

OMB and HISPs Have Collected Feedback Data and Assessed Capacity for Improving Customer Experience

OMB Worked with HISPs to Improve Collection and Reporting of Customer Feedback Data

OMB and the HISPs have begun to implement the first CAP goal of improving customer experience, including by selecting at least one designated service for each of 35 HISPs and by collecting and reporting customer feedback data for many of these designated services.²⁰ As mentioned above, the HISPs were designated because of the scale and

Cross-Agency Priority Goal 1

Improve the service design, digital products, and customer-experience management of federal High Impact Service Providers by reducing customer burden, addressing inequities, and streamlining processes.

Source: Biden administration's President's Management Agenda on Performance.gov. | GAO-24-106632

²⁰OMB Circular A-11, Section 280 directed HISPs to select two or more services for targeted customer experience improvement efforts. Office of Management and Budget, *Preparation, Submission, and Execution of the Budget*, Circular No. A-11, Section 280 (2023). However, OMB allowed some HISPs to designate one service initially. For example, OMB staff told us in March 2024 that they gave USDA the ability to start with one designated service at each of the department's HISPs due to limitations in internal capacity to conduct more work.

As of the end of fiscal year 2023, 35 HISPs across 17 executive agencies were working toward the first CAP goal of improving customer experience. OMB designated three new HISPs in December 2023. These HISPs have not yet selected designated services for customer experience assessment and improvement. According to Performance.gov, these HISPs will select designated services in fiscal year 2024. They will then be expected to report customer feedback data for designated services within 365 days of selecting the services. See appendix I for a list of all current HISPs.

impact of their public-facing services. See the text box below for an example of the work HISPs have done to improve designated services.

Example of Efforts to Improve Customer Experience through Research and Redesign—Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

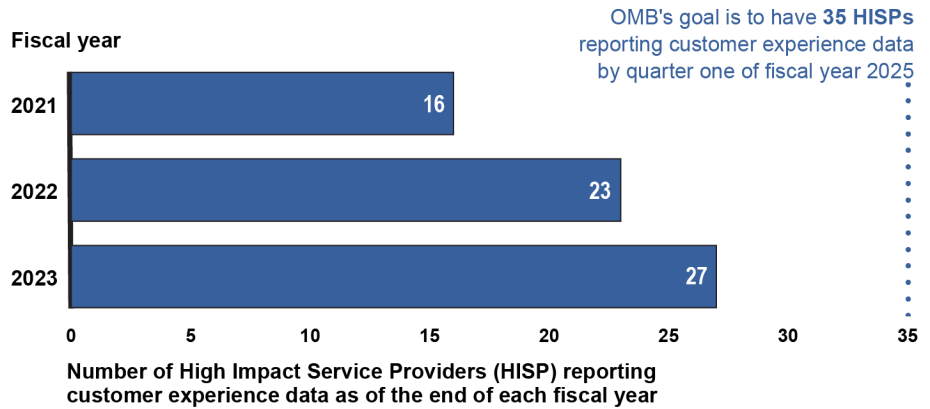
HUD chose “filing a fair housing discrimination complaint” as one of its two designated services. HUD’s research on understanding their customer needs found that customers filing a housing discrimination complaint faced vulnerabilities such as eviction, homelessness, and fear of retaliation from landlords. As a result of this research, the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO)—the office within HUD which handles these complaints—developed a plan to train staff to incorporate trauma-informed practices into their interactions with customers to help ensure sensitivity to the needs of vulnerable people. FHEO is also developing a trauma-informed counseling service for customers filing a fair housing discrimination complaint. According to HUD’s fiscal year 2023 customer experience capacity assessment, it plans to begin reporting customer feedback data for this service in fiscal year 2024.

HUD officials we spoke with said that their designation as a High Impact Service Provider has been beneficial for their customer experience work. For example, they said that training provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs—a Cross-Agency Priority goal priority area leader—helped to expand their employees’ capacity for customer experience related work within their agency.

Source: GAO analysis of HUD documents, interviews with agency officials, and content posted on Performance.gov. | GAO-24-106632

The number of HISPs reporting customer experience feedback data has steadily increased since efforts began in fiscal year 2021. As shown in figure 5, 27 of the 35 HISPs that were directed by OMB to report this information did so in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2023. OMB has supported this increase by working directly with HISPs that have faced challenges in reporting customer feedback data, including the eight HISPs that did not report these data, and by providing HISPs with customer feedback survey guidelines and technical assistance.

Figure 5: Summary of High Impact Service Provider Customer Feedback Data Reporting, as of the End of Fiscal Years 2021- 2023



Source: GAO analysis of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) data. | GAO-24-106632

Note: This graphic shows the number of HISPs that reported customer experience feedback data in the fourth quarter of each fiscal year. OMB's goal to have 35 HISP reporting customer experience data by quarter one of fiscal year 2025 applies to the 35 HISP designated as of the end of fiscal year 2023. The three new HISP designated in December 2023 have not yet chosen designated services. OMB Circular A-11, Section 280 directs HISP to begin reporting these data within 365 days of selecting a designated service.

For the remaining eight HISP that did not report this information, OMB staff cited the following challenges to data collection:²¹

- Obtaining and aggregating data from state and local agencies that implement services;
- Updating surveys that are managed or distributed by external vendors; and

²¹As of May 2024, the eight HISP that have not reported customer survey data to OMB on Performance.gov are the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Department of the Interior), the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (Department of the Treasury), Departmental Offices at the Treasury Department, the Employee Benefits Security Administration (DOL), the Farm Service Agency (USDA), the Food and Nutrition Service (USDA), and the Forest Service (USDA), and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA). Three other HISP, the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (Department of Defense), the Indian Health Service (Department of Health and Human Services), and the International Trade Administration (Department of Commerce) were designated as HISP for fiscal year 2024 and have one year before they must begin reporting these data, according to requirements outlined in OMB Circular A-11, Section 280.

-
- Distributing surveys for services that are paper-based or administered in person.

OMB staff said they continue to work with these eight HISPs to support their efforts to collect and report customer experience feedback data. According to OMB staff, this support includes reviewing HISP survey drafts and data submissions, providing targeted training, and holding regular office hours to address questions and troubleshoot issues (see the text box below for an example of OMB's support to one HISP to improve collection and reporting of customer feedback data).

Example of Efforts to Improve Collection and Reporting of Customer Feedback Data—Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

FNS chose using the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) food benefits as a designated service. FNS has taken steps to assess and improve customer experience for this service, including by identifying challenges for vulnerable customers and by testing the use of online shopping with WIC benefits. However, FNS has not yet reported customer feedback data for its designated service. According to FNS officials, they have not reported because the many state, local, territorial, and tribal agencies that administer WIC vary in whether and how they collect customer feedback data.

To address this challenge, FNS officials told us they developed a survey in consultation with the Office of Management and Budget to learn how their WIC implementation partners collect and use customer experience data, as well as the challenges the partners face in collecting these data. In March 2024, FNS officials told us that they had received this information and will use it to inform the path forward for collecting, aggregating, and reporting customer feedback data.

Source: GAO analysis of FNS documents, interviews with agency officials, and content posted on Performance.gov. | GAO-24-106632

OMB staff said they also work with HISPs to improve the overall quality and consistency of the customer feedback data they collect and report. OMB provided an updated customer survey template for use by all HISPs in the August 2023 update to Circular A-11, Section 280.²² According to OMB staff, this template attempts to simplify and standardize questions across all HISPs, in contrast to the prior version of the template, which allowed for variation in the wording and scope of questions.

²²Office of Management and Budget, *Preparation, Submission, and Execution of the Budget*, Circular No. A-11, Section 280 at 9-12. (August 2023).

HISPs Assessed their Capacity to Measure and Improve Customer Experience and Completed Plans to Address Gaps

According to information posted on Performance.gov, as of the end of fiscal year 2023, 35 HISPs conducted assessments of their internal capacity for customer experience work and developed action plans for addressing capacity gaps.²³ OMB directed these service providers to describe their current capacity across broad categories related to customer experience. Capacity assessments we reviewed from our three selected HISPs identified gaps in staffing and skills for implementing customer experience improvements, and in reporting customer experience feedback data. These capacity assessments also described whether and how the service providers' designated services met the needs of vulnerable and underserved customers, such as those with disabilities or those who lack broadband access.

OMB staff said that they used capacity assessments as a baseline to identify the strengths and growth opportunities for each HISP. OMB staff said they supported agencies with less capacity and experience in multiple ways, such as by providing tailored technical assistance and support through regular office hours, and by connecting HISPs to other support, such as training, within and outside the federal government.

The HISPs' customer experience capacity assessments informed their action plans (see the text box below for a related example). The action plans focused on steps the service providers intended to take to assess and improve customer experience. For example, action plans we reviewed included steps to address gaps in data collection and relevant training for staff. OMB staff said they worked with each HISP to ensure that their capacity needs were articulated in these action plans, as part of an annual review process. For a list of all federal resources available to support HISPs and federal agencies in their customer experience efforts, see appendix III.

²³According to information published on Performance.Gov, as of May 2024, all 38 HISPs completed their fiscal year 2024 capacity assessments. According to goals established by OMB and also published on Performance.gov, all HISPs will identify priority areas for improvement by the end of the third quarter of fiscal year 2024.

Example of Efforts to Conduct Customer Experience Capacity Assessments and Action Plans—Employment and Training Administration (ETA)

For its customer experience work, ETA—a high impact service provider—chose to prioritize improving CareerOneStop, a website that aggregates information about employment and training opportunities for job seekers. ETA’s fiscal year 2022 customer experience capacity assessment for CareerOneStop indicated that it had not collected or reported customer feedback data or mapped the customer journey for CareerOneStop. Accordingly, ETA’s fiscal year 2022 action plan stated that the CareerOneStop team would use data collected from surveys to inform service improvement priorities and to better understand customers’ journeys through the CareerOneStop website.

After implementing these data collection activities and learning about challenges faced by their customers while using the site, ETA redesigned aspects of the website to improve navigability for customers. This included streamlining menus and eliminating redundant content. ETA also developed a framework to guide future redesign—articulated in its 2023 action plan—based on priorities identified through customer research.

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Labor documents, interviews with agency officials, and content posted on Performance.gov. | GAO-24-106632

OMB Identified Cross-Agency Teams to Improve Customer Life Experiences, and Addressed Leading Collaboration Practices to Manage Them

OMB Identified Cross-Agency Teams to Lead Pilot Projects for Improving Five Key Life Experiences

OMB and the President's Management Council identified five key life experiences for priority action, as shown in figure 6, and assigned cross-agency teams to lead related pilot projects for their improvement as part of their implementation of the second customer experience CAP goal. The individual cross-agency life experience teams collaborate to identify and implement customer-driven approaches.

Cross-Agency Priority Goal 2

Design, build, and manage government service delivery for key life experiences that cut across federal agencies.

Source: Biden administration's President's Management Agenda on Performance.gov. | GAO-24-106632

Figure 6: The Five Customer Life Experiences Designated for Priority Action in Fiscal Year 2022, According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)



RECOVERING FROM A DISASTER

More than 20 million individuals and families survive a federally recognized disaster each year. To receive disaster assistance, these survivors must manage multiple bureaucratic processes with competing guidance and repetitive applications.



FACING FINANCIAL SHOCK

Because of complex and burdensome application and payment systems, millions of American families miss out on help getting food, health insurance, and other supports to build better lives for themselves and their children when facing a financial shock like an unexpected medical bill, the loss of income, a rise in rent, or loans coming out of deferment.



HAVING A CHILD AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

With almost a quarter of all workers having a child under five, this life experience impacts millions of Americans. However, many eligible low-income families are not enrolled in the combination of federal support services that exist to help them thrive after a baby is born due to a lack of access to physical resources, a burdensome application process, and barriers to maintaining benefits.



APPROACHING RETIREMENT

Many older people in the United States struggle to understand when or if they can retire. Difficult decisions and sometimes overwhelming complexities accessing retirement programs make for a stressful transition.



NAVIGATING TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN LIFE

Separating service members must reorient their civilian lives around key domains, including education, employment, health, finance, and housing. Around half of recently separated veterans may not connect with available resources to support this transition for several years after separation.

Dedicated staff from the Office of Management and Budget and General Services Administration work with the following agency partners to plan and implement projects to address challenges associated with the customer life experiences identified above.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Consumer Financial Protection Bureau | Department of Housing and Urban Development |
| Department of Agriculture | Department of Labor |
| Department of Commerce | Department of the Interior |
| Department of Education | Small Business Administration |
| Department of Health & Human Services | Social Security Administration |
| Department of Homeland Security | U.S. Department of the Treasury |

Source: Office of Management and Budget, as published on Performance.gov. GAO illustrations. | GAO-24-106632

According to OMB staff, the focus of efforts to improve prioritized customer life experiences starting in 2023 was mainly on 12 distinct pilot projects designed to build and test possible solutions to issues experienced by customers. These pilot projects were developed after initial research conducted in 2022 to understand customers' experiences and associated opportunities for improvement. For example, the

OMB Addressed Leading
Interagency Collaboration
Practices to Manage Cross-
Agency Customer Life
Experience Teams

“Navigating Transition to Civilian Life” life experience team is implementing one of the 12 projects. The team built a prototype of a digital resource for military personnel that provides training and planning support for their transition to civilian life, with content integrated from the various agencies involved in the process.²⁴ According to information posted on Performance.gov in May 2024, this prototype was tested in the Spring of 2024. Information posted on Performance.gov in May 2024 also indicated that teams leading the 12 pilot projects related to the five customer life experiences will look for opportunities to scale the approaches that worked in fiscal year 2024.









OMB’s ongoing role in the five customer life experiences is to provide leadership, policy consultation, reporting, a governance structure, and support to cross-agency teams that implement the portfolio of pilot projects associated with each life experience.²⁵ We found that OMB generally addressed leading interagency collaboration practices identified in our prior work to manage cross-agency life experience teams responsible for implementing related pilot projects.²⁶ Figure 7 summarizes the results of our assessment, including examples of how OMB addressed each of the eight practices.

²⁴For our recent work related to the transition from military to civilian life, see GAO, *Service Members Transitioning to Civilian Life: Agencies Can Improve Warm Handovers for Additional Assistance*, [GAO-24-106248](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 21, 2024).

²⁵Each of the five life experiences has between one and three pilot projects underway. OMB refers to the group of pilot projects associated with each life experience as a portfolio.

²⁶[GAO-23-105520](#).

Figure 7: Assessment of OMB Efforts to Manage Cross-Agency Life Experience Teams Against Leading Practices for Interagency Collaboration

| Collaboration practices | Selected key considerations | Did OMB address this practice? | Highlights |
|---|---|--------------------------------|--|
|  Define common outcomes | <p>Have short- and long-term outcomes been clearly defined?</p> <p>Have the outcomes been reassessed and updated, as needed?</p> | ● | The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has defined short- and long-term performance goals and associated measures in charter documents, the President’s Management Agenda, and in content published on Performance.gov. The expected outcomes are updated, as needed, in quarterly reports developed by OMB. |
|  Ensure accountability | <p>What are the ways to monitor, assess, and communicate progress toward the short- and long-term outcomes?</p> | ● | OMB monitors progress on customer experience measures and communicates updates through Performance.gov and regular stakeholder meetings. |
|  Bridge organizational cultures | <p>Have participating agencies established compatible policies, procedures, and other means to operate across agency boundaries?</p> | ● | <p>OMB has taken steps to support cross-agency teams in bridging organizational barriers on customer life experience pilot projects.</p> <p>OMB staff said they identify ongoing concerns within interagency teams and work to address them through (1) meetings and regular office hours with agency officials who work on life experience projects, and (2) through the ongoing outreach conducted by OMB’s team of Portfolio Leads who oversee the life experience projects.</p> |
|  Identify and sustain leadership | <p>Has a lead agency or individual been identified?</p> <p>If leadership will be shared between one or more agencies, have roles and responsibilities been clearly identified and agreed upon?</p> | ● | <p>OMB’s customer experience oversight team includes a Life Experience Program Lead and Portfolio Leads for each of the five priority customer life experiences.</p> <p>Project charter documents also identify a lead individual from each participating agency.</p> |
|  Clarify roles and responsibilities | <p>Have the roles and responsibilities of the participants been clarified?</p> | ● | Pilot project milestones have identified agencies responsible for overseeing progress. |
|  Include relevant participants | <p>Have all relevant participants been included?</p> | ● | Agencies selected for participation in each customer life experience have an established role in the processes targeted for improvement. |
|  Leverage resources and information | <p>How will the collaboration be resourced through staffing?</p> <p>How will the collaboration be resourced through funding? If interagency funding is needed, is it permitted?</p> <p>Are methods, tools, or technologies to share relevant data and information being used?</p> | ● | <p>OMB Portfolio Leads, agency leadership, and staff support customer life experience pilot projects along with dedicated staff from the General Services Administration’s Office of Evaluation Services.</p> <p>Outside of annual agency appropriations, customer experience efforts are funded through Cross-Agency Priority goal funding and the American Rescue Plan of 2021.</p> <p>OMB staff said they maintain a page on MAX.gov for interagency partners involved in customer life experience pilot projects to share progress, tools, and templates to facilitate learning across the various pilot projects.</p> |
|  Develop and update written guidance and agreements | <p>If appropriate, have agreements regarding the collaboration been documented?</p> <p>Have ways to continually update or monitor written agreements been developed?</p> | ● | <p>Agreements are documented in life experience charter documents.</p> <p>OMB has also released regular updates to relevant guidance for teams involved in pilot projects related to the prioritized life experiences.</p> |

Generally addressed— All considerations generally met
 Partially addressed— Some but not all considerations met
 Not yet addressed— None of the considerations met

Source: GAO analysis of OMB interviews, agency documents, information published by OMB on Performance.gov, and prior GAO reports. GAO illustrations. | GAO-24-106632

OMB Has Overseen and Assessed Progress on its Customer Experience CAP Goals by Addressing Key Considerations for Implementing CAP Goals

We found that OMB has overseen and assessed progress on its customer experience CAP goals, including generally addressing five key considerations we identified in 2021 to help facilitate the implementation of CAP goals.²⁷ OMB generally addressed these key considerations by setting goals, identifying leaders and contributors, supporting implementation with needed resources—including for oversight purposes—and using and reporting performance results on a regular basis (see fig. 8).






Implementation of Cross Agency Priority (CAP) Goals

CAP goals are designed to focus on longer-term or complex outcomes involving multiple agencies, programs, or entities. The nature of the CAP goals makes managing their successful implementation challenging.

Source: GAO, "Government Performance Management: Key Considerations for Implementing Cross-Agency Priority Goals and Progress Addressing GAO Recommendations," [GAO-21-104704](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 28, 2021). | GAO-24-106632

²⁷GAO, *Government Performance Management: Key Considerations for Implementing Cross-Agency Priority Goals and Progress Addressing GAO Recommendations*, [GAO-21-104704](#) (Washington, D.C.: September 28, 2021).

Figure 8: Assessment of OMB Actions on Customer Experience against Key Considerations to Implement CAP Goals in the President’s Management Agenda

| Actions to implement Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) goals | Key considerations | Did the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) address these key considerations? | Highlights |
|--|--|---|--|
| Establish the goal  | Establish a balanced set of outcome-oriented mission and management-focused goals that reflect the government’s highest policy priorities. | ● | OMB led the development and implementation of the President’s Management Agenda and CAP goals, with support from the General Services Administration (GSA) and the President’s Management Council (PMC). |
| Identify goal leaders and contributors  | Identify co-leaders and sub-goal leaders to facilitate leadership, continuity, and agency buy-in. | ● | OMB identified GSA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Veterans Affairs officials as priority leads with oversight and coordination responsibilities. CAP goal teams are led by officials from OMB and the PMC. |
| Identify resources to support implementation  | Dedicate resources to goal implementation, including funding, staffing, and technology. | ● | OMB established a team dedicated to oversight of federal customer experience efforts. According to OMB, customer experience efforts in fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024, were supported by general agency appropriations, CAP Goal funds, and funding from the American Rescue Plan of 2021. ^a |
| Use performance information  | Focus on improving the quality and use of data to routinely assess goal progress and a shared commitment to continuous improvement. | ● | OMB has defined performance goals and associated measures in the President’s Management Agenda and in other content published on Performance.gov. OMB staff work to improve the quality of data used to measure performance. |
| Report results  | Assess and report progress on goal achievement at the end of the goal periods. | ● | OMB publishes quarterly updates on CAP goal progress on Performance.gov. ^b |

● Generally addressed—
All considerations generally met

◐ Partially addressed—
Some but not all considerations met

○ Not yet addressed—
None of the considerations met

Source: GAO analysis of OMB interviews, agency documents, information published by OMB on Performance.gov, and prior GAO reports. GAO illustrations. | GAO-24-106632

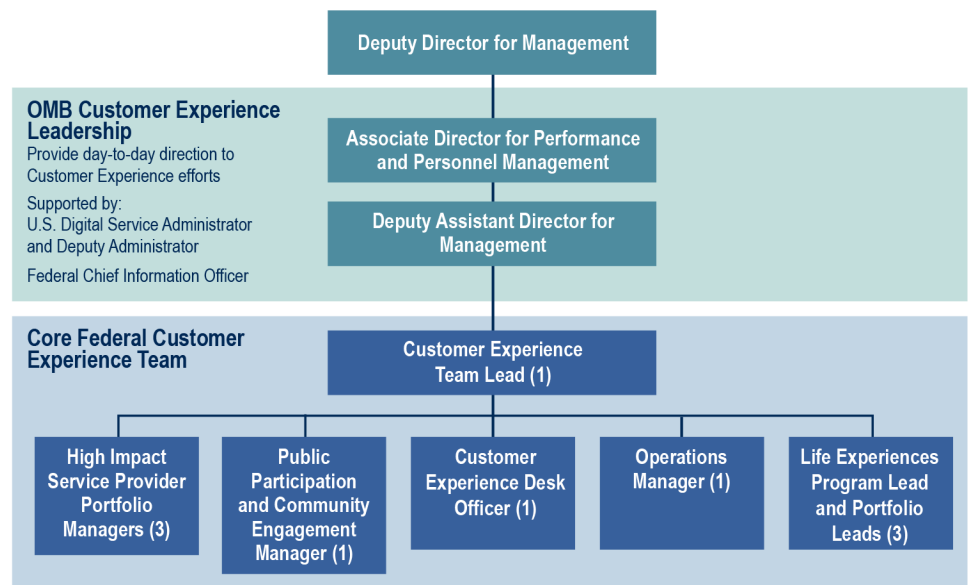
^aThe appropriations acts for fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024 authorized the use of funding for CAP Goals. See Pub. L. No. 117-103, div. E, tit. VII, § 721, 136 Stat. 49, 297 (2022); Pub. L. No. 117-328, div. E, tit. VII, § 721, 136 Stat. 4459, 4708 (2022); Pub. L. No. 118-47, div. B, tit. VII, § 721 (2024). Additionally, the American Recovery Plan Act of fiscal year 2021 provided funding for the Technology Modernization Fund which supports government-wide technology improvement efforts led by GSA. See Pub. L. No. 117-2, § 4011, 135 Stat. 4, 80 (2021).

^bPerformance.gov serves as the federal performance website required under the Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act of 2010. It is the source for available information on the performance goals, measures, leaders, and progress updates associated with each of the President’s Management Agenda priority areas and related CAP goals.

Oversight of CAP Goals for Customer Experience

In dedicating resources to support its CAP goals, OMB established a Federal Customer Experience Team responsible for oversight of customer experience efforts.²⁸ OMB staff within this team told us that they regularly consult with HISPs and cross-agency life experience teams, review and provide feedback on customer experience deliverables, and communicate on progress toward customer experience milestones (see fig. 9).

Figure 9: Office of Management and Budget, Federal Customer Experience Team



Source: Office of Management and Budget (OMB). | GAO-24-106632

According to OMB staff, prior to the establishment of the Federal Customer Experience Team in 2021, OMB had two full-time employees within their Office of Performance and Personnel Management dedicated

²⁸According to Sec. 6(e), of Executive Order 14058, the Director of OMB shall establish a team within OMB to lead and support agency customer experience initiatives as well as such initiatives that reach across agencies, including by facilitating the decision-making processes needed to achieve the objectives of the order, such as coordinating HISP activities. The Federal Customer Experience team was established in response to this Executive Order.

to federal customer experience.²⁹ OMB staff also said that during this period, additional support was provided by fellows and detailees from GSA and the Office of Personnel Management, among others.

The core customer experience team now comprises 10 full time employees, who support the efforts of HISPs and customer life experience projects. According to OMB, the team also provides subject matter expertise to inform federal customer experience initiatives across all of OMB, including agency budget development and government-wide policy and legislative proposals.

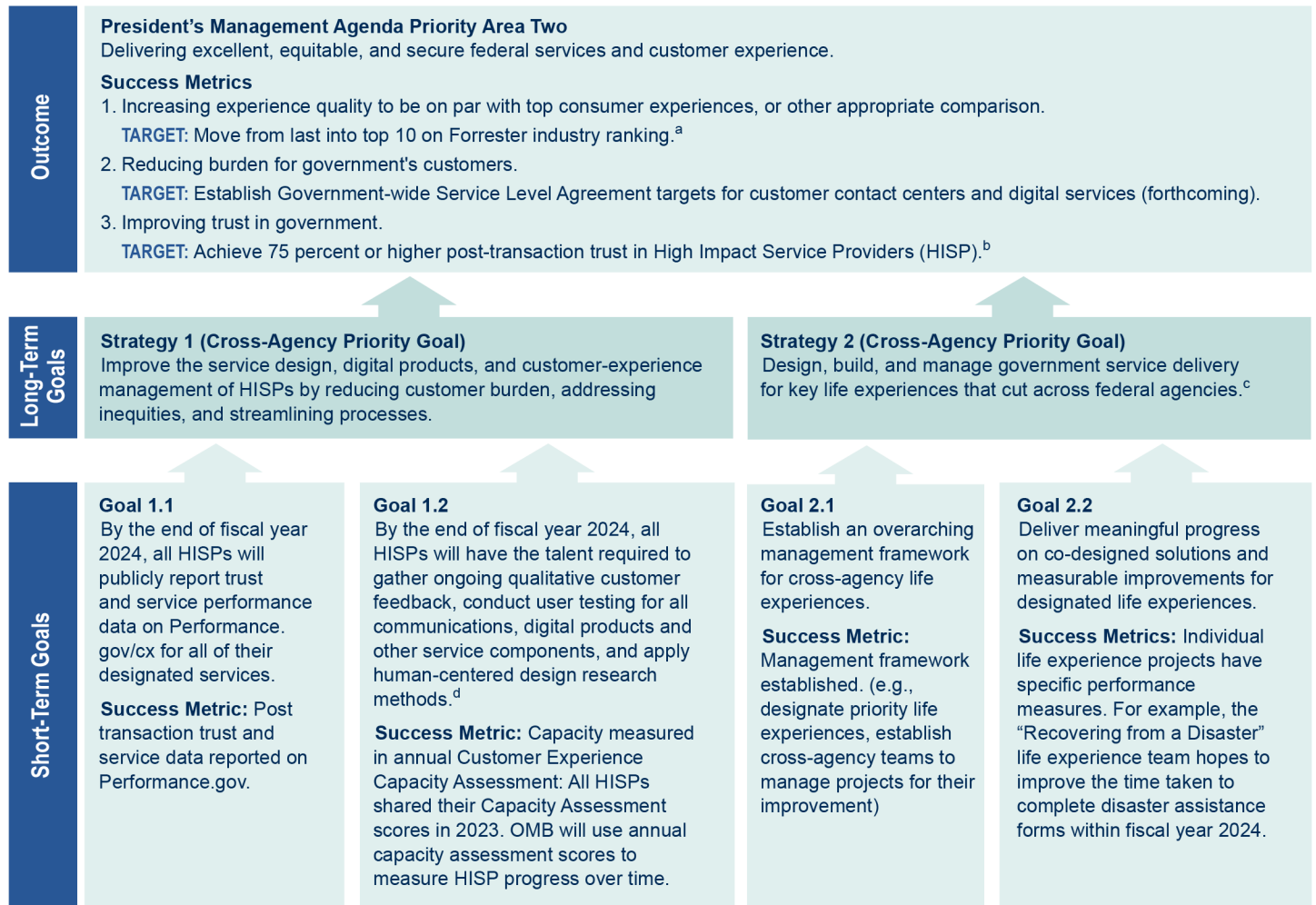
Assessment of Implementation Progress and Performance of CAP Goals

OMB also established goals and measures as part of a broader performance framework to assess progress toward the 4-year customer experience CAP goals. See figure 10 for our analysis of this framework based on information provided by OMB and presented on Performance.gov.

OMB is working with HISPs and cross-agency life experience portfolio teams to achieve various milestones. For example, OMB is supporting consistent reporting of high-quality customer feedback data and baseline capacity scores across HISPs. They are also testing new approaches to address specific problems experienced by customers for the life experience pilot projects. OMB has also reassessed and updated planned milestones and timeframes, as needed, as part of its quarterly reporting of progress on Performance.gov.

²⁹OMB's Office of Performance and Personnel Management is led by the Program Associate Director for Performance and Personnel Management. The Program Associate Director for Performance and Personnel Management reports to the Deputy Director for Management of OMB, who reports to the Director of OMB.

Figure 10: Office of Management and Budget’s Performance Framework for Cross-Agency Priority Goals for Customer Experience in the President’s Management Agenda



Source: GAO analysis of information provided by the Office of Management and Budget and published on Performance.gov. | GAO-24-106632

^aForrester is a private sector research firm that produces an annual survey of customer experience across industries using the Forrester Customer Experience Index. This index survey measures customer experience quality, customer loyalty, drivers of customer experience, and several other factors about the experience and customer. Forrester covers 14 industries, including the Federal Government and others such as Retailers, Banks, and Utilities.

^bHISPs are federal entities that provide or fund customer-facing services that have a high impact on the public, either due to a large customer base or a critical effect on those served. Post-transaction feedback is any feedback that is collected from customers after they have engaged with a provider at a moment in their service journey. According to OMB Circular A-11, Section 280, HISPs must include a question about trust in post transactions surveys, such as, “This [interaction/service] increased my trust in [name of HISP].”

^cCustomer life experiences involve specific scenarios that require the public to navigate across one or more federal programs, agencies, or levels of government to obtain services. OMB is tasked with the

selection of a limited number of these customer life experiences to prioritize for improvement, such as preparing for retirement.

^dThe term “human-centered design” refers to the methodology of putting people, including those who will use or be impacted by what one creates, at the center of any process aiming to solve challenging problems.

OMB staff told us in February 2024 that they used the information obtained through these efforts to track overall progress toward CAP goals and associated short-term goals and to target solutions to specific issues within HISPs and cross-agency pilot projects. For example, OMB staff said that in the process of developing and implementing cross-agency pilot projects to improve life experiences, they have worked with agencies to identify and address administrative, regulatory, and operational challenges, such as:

- A lack of common communication and scheduling platforms,
- limited means for collaboration on documents, or
- varied record keeping requirements and policies.

In response to some of these challenges, OMB staff told us in February 2024 that a team from the Office of the Federal Chief Information Officer is currently working with GSA on an effort that aims to enable agencies to better collaborate using common technology tools.

OMB has devoted resources and taken actions to implement the PMA and its CAP goals related to customer experience. Through implementation of customer experience CAP goals, OMB staff told us they are developing baseline data related to customer trust, HISP capacity assessments, and lessons learned through the implementation of customer life experience projects. We have previously found that it is difficult to discern CAP goal achievements at the end of the 4-year goal period. We recommended in 2023 that OMB develop guidance to ensure that the progress toward implementing the CAP goals is publicly reported at the end of each 4-year CAP goal period.³⁰ OMB’s performance framework can support its efforts to assess whether it is on track to meet its federal customer experience improvements by the end of the 4-year CAP goal period.

³⁰GAO, *Government Performance Management: Actions Needed to Improve Transparency of Cross-Agency Priority Goals*, [GAO-23-106354](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 4, 2023). In July 2023, OMB stated that it did not plan to take further action on this recommendation and considered the recommendation to be implemented. We consider this recommendation to be valid for the reasons stated in our 2023 report, and we will continue to monitor its implementation status.

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to OMB, USDA, GSA, HUD, DOL, and VA for review and comment. OMB's written comments are reproduced in appendix IV. OMB provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate. USDA provided an editorial comment, which we addressed. GSA, HUD, DOL, and VA informed us that they had no comments.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Administrator of the General Services Administration, the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of Labor, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and other interested parties. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <https://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-6806 or locked@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff members who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix V.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dawn Locke", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dawn G. Locke
Director, Strategic Issues

List of Requesters

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and
Government Innovation
Committee on Oversight and Accountability
House of Representatives

The Honorable Derek Kilmer
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Modernization
Committee on House Administration
House of Representatives

The Honorable Lisa Blunt Rochester
House of Representatives

The Honorable Angie Craig
House of Representatives

The Honorable Sara Jacobs
House of Representatives

The Honorable Doug LaMalfa
House of Representatives

The Honorable Lucy McBath
House of Representatives

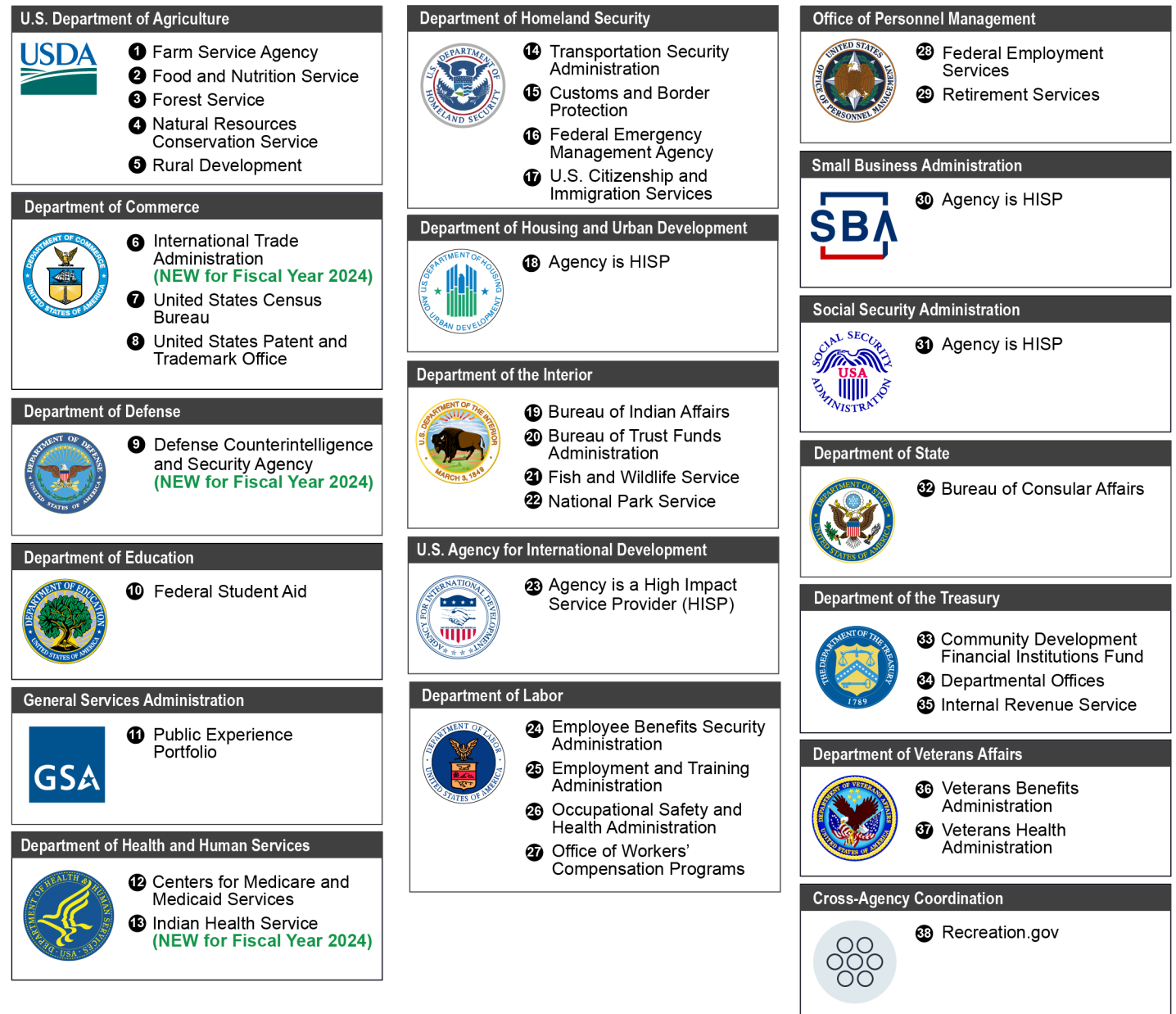
The Honorable Dan Newhouse
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jimmy Panetta
House of Representatives

The Honorable Scott Peters
House of Representatives

Appendix I: 38 High Impact Service Providers (HISPs), as of May 2024

Figure 11: 38 High Impact Service Providers (HISPs)



Source: Information published by the Office of Management and Budget to Performance.gov, as of May 2024. | GAO-24-106632

Note: HISPs, designated by the Office of Management and Budget, are federal entities that provide or fund customer-facing services, including federal services administered at the state or local level, that have a high impact on the public, whether because of a large customer base or a critical effect on those served.

Appendix II: Themes from Selected Literature on Customer Experience

The following studies address research conducted within organizations in the public and private sector on topics applicable to federal customer experience improvement efforts. The various themes and perspectives identified in this literature can be helpful for federal agencies to consider when developing customer experience improvements.

To determine what research has been done regarding customer experience, we conducted a literature search for studies that analyzed different strategies or summarized current efforts to improve public sector customer experience. To identify existing studies and research, we used the databases ProQuest, EBSCO, Scopus, ProQuest Dialog, and others, and searched for studies discussing customer service and customer experience in both federal and public sector contexts. We performed these searches in February 2023 and in January of 2024.

From these sources, we identified 76 studies that appeared in peer-reviewed journals, working papers, and conference papers from October of 2010 through December 2023.¹ We reviewed the 76 studies and determined that 31 were highly relevant, directly addressing federal public sector customer experience improvement efforts. A further 16 sources, while not explicitly referencing federal customer experience, discussed topics that could be relevant to the public sector. The sources we did not select either were not relevant to the public sector or to federal customer experience endeavors. Based on this information, we identified the following themes that agencies might consider as they work to improve customer experience. Additionally, we listed specific articles and studies for further information related to these themes.

Customer Experience Themes from Selected Literature

Understanding customer needs. According to the authors of the following reports, federal employees must take into account the diversity and vulnerability of the populations targeted by their services. The authors state that effective customer experience improvement is dependent on understanding the positions and needs of the specific customers targeted by the service and integrating that knowledge into program design early and on an ongoing basis.

¹We last conducted a review of federal agencies' customer service related topics in 2010. GAO, *Managing for Results: Opportunities to Strengthen Agencies' Customer Service Efforts*, [GAO-11-44](#) (Washington D.C.: Oct. 27, 2010).

- Hodge, Lashanda, and Aaron Stienstra. “Embedding equity in civic design to transform customer experience.” *Design Management Review* 33.2 (2022).
- The Partnership for Public Service. “Beating the Tax Rush: Providing Critical Information Early Improves the IRS Customer Experience.” (2018).
- Danzig, Lisa. “Delivering Cross-Agency Customer Service.” *Public Manager* (2015).

Technological improvements for customer experience advancement.

Some authors noted that while federal agencies may have made improvements in the adoption of technology for customer experience improvement, progress in this area is still potentially inhibited by regulations, poor or inconsistent data management, and funding issues.

- Meek, Teresa. “On the Front Lines: Why Governments Need to Improve Their Technology.” *CIO* (2022).
- Kaizer, Quimby J; Everson, Kirke E; Steinhoff, Jeffrey C. “Move the Needle on Customer Experience. *The Journal of Government Financial Management* 69.2 (Summer 2020): 12-17.
- Egan, Eric. “With Customer Satisfaction at a New Low, Federal Agencies Still Fail to Measure Customer Satisfaction Well or Provide Enough Digital Services.” *Information Technology & Innovation Foundation* (2022).

Comparability of private sector customer experience models with federal efforts. Authors of the following cited sources suggest that the private sector’s models are not always well-suited to public service due to essential differences in both the work and customer base. Specifically, public services face budgetary constraints the private sector may not, and the private sector uses quantitative methods aimed toward maximizing profitability, which do not align with the goals of the public sector.

Additionally, some of these authors argue that the relationship of government to its customers is different than in the private sector: Customers do not always engage voluntarily with the government, and the government is also more likely to interact with vulnerable populations. For both reasons, the authors add, a more nuanced approach to customer experience improvement is needed within the public sector.

- Esbenshade, Jill. Vidal, Mall. Fascilla, Gina, and Ono, Mariko. “Customer-driven Management Models for Choiceless Clientele?”

Business Process Reengineering in a California Welfare Agency.” *Work, Employment & Society* (2016).

- Mastracci, Sharon H. “Dirty Work and Emotional Labor in Public Service: Why Government Employers Should Adopt an Ethic of Care.” *Review of Public Personnel Administration* (2022) vol. 42 (3) 537-552.
- “Homeland Security Advisory Council Customer Experience and Service Delivery Subcommittee: Final Report.” *Federal Report* (2022).
- Morton, Barbara C. and Lee, Becker. “Building the Veterans Experience Office: CX and the Public Sector.” *Design Management Review* (2019).

Agency cultures’ impact on customer experience. Some authors discussed how successful agency customer experience efforts often include shifts in organizational culture to allow for the integration of human-centered design, employee-centered experience improvements, and other modern concepts for providing better customer service.² The authors discuss these cultural and organizational changes by highlighting examples of how agencies established new leadership roles for customer experience, provided resources and incentives for employee success, or trained existing leadership in customer experience topics.

While many of the agency success stories described the importance of access to resources in the form of budget and updated digital tools, the authors stated that overall, an employee culture shift was one of the most important elements to sustaining customer experience progress over time.

- Brooks, Sarah. “Customer Experience at Veterans Affairs.” *Design Management Review* (2016) Vol. 27, Issue 1.
- The Partnership for Public Service. “The Good Government Connection: Linking the Federal Employee and Customer Experience.” (2023).

Impact of regulatory barriers and administrative processes on federal customer experience. Some authors suggested that both regulatory barriers and administrative processes and procedures had

²As defined in Executive Order 14058, human-centered design is an interdisciplinary methodology of putting people, including those who will use or be impacted by what one creates, at the center of any process to solve challenging problems. See Exec. Order No. 14058. 86 Fed. Reg. 71357 (Dec. 16, 2021).

impeded federal agencies' efforts to improve customer experience. For example, the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 (PRA)—enacted to minimize the burden of information collection on the public—was mentioned as hindering federal customer experience improvements.³ OMB has taken steps to streamline the PRA clearance process by adding an umbrella clearance for the PRA in their 2020 update to OMB Circular A-11, Section 280.⁴ This clearance facilitates the collection of customer feedback data by High Impact Service Providers' (HISPs).

- Egan, Eric. "With Customer Satisfaction at a New Low, Federal Agencies Still Fail to Measure Customer Satisfaction Well or Provide Enough Digital Services." *Information Technology & Innovation Foundation* (2022).
- The Partnership for Public Service. "Profiles on the Customer Experience." (2019).

³The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, Pub. L. No. 96-511, 94 Stat. 2812 (1980), *codified, as amended, at 44 U.S.C. § 3501, et seq.*

⁴A recent report details actions taken to date to reduce the impact of administrative burden on citizens. Office of Management and Budget, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, *Tackling the Time Tax: How the Federal Government is Reducing Burdens to Accessing Critical Benefits and Services*, (Washington D.C.: July 2023). We also have ongoing work in this area.

Appendix III: Federal Customer Experience Resources

The table below shows available resources for federal agencies, identified through web searches and in consultation with agency personnel.

Table 1: Federal Customer Experience Resources

| Entity | Federal Customer Experience Resources Provided |
|---|---|
| Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) | |
| United States Digital Service (USDS) | USDS partners with federal agencies to leverage IT and design to improve program implementation and digital service delivery. USDS also provides staff support for cross-agency life experience portfolios and projects. |
| Customer Experience Team | <p>The Customer Experience Team at OMB provides oversight and coordination for the work of High Impact Service Providers (HISPs) and the life experience portfolios including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assessing HISP and life experience pilot project and team needs; - providing technical assistance to HISPs and life experience teams on customer experience topics and capabilities; - coordinating across OMB and within the HISP and life experience community to share leading practices to improve customer experience service delivery; - developing the A-11 Section 280 activity templates annually (service definition, capacity assessment, service blueprint, action plan templates); - analyzing HISP customer feedback data; - supporting assessment and evaluation of life experience pilot projects; - reviewing legislative and appropriations proposals that impact HISPs; - hosting HISP office hours and special topic conversations on a variety of relevant topics; - hosting monthly life experience stakeholder meetings and regular coordination meetings for life experience portfolios; - communicating externally; - analyzing feedback data and building public-facing dashboards; and - supporting HISPs with the design of their customer research activities; - coordinating public reporting of life experience project outputs, milestone, and timeline updates. |

Appendix III: Federal Customer Experience Resources

Office of the Federal Chief Information Officer (OFCIO)

OFCIO provides direction, develops policy, and conducts oversight on the use of IT across the federal government. Specific to federal customer experience, OFCIO sets requirements and expectations for federal websites and digital services, which are increasingly the primary way in which the public interacts with government and accesses services and information. OFCIO, alongside the General Services Administration (GSA), identifies and prioritizes the development of shared products, services, and standards that enable simple, seamless, and secure customer experiences across the federal government.

Evidence Team

OMB's Evidence Team develops and builds products and uses evidence and evaluation to improve government-wide effectiveness. The Evidence Team plays a consultative and evaluative role for the Federal Customer Life Experience initiative. They join stakeholder meetings and consult with project teams on developing success metrics and have made connections between the life experience teams and agency evaluation offices. They have also conducted workshops for project teams on measurement and evaluation approaches for cross-agency life experience projects and have advised the OMB Customer Experience Team on how to assess OMB's own effectiveness in running the life experience program.

General Services Administration (GSA)

Office of Evaluation Sciences (OES)

Located within GSA's Office of Governmentwide Policy, OES is an interdisciplinary team that works across the federal government to help agencies undertake evaluations of programs using administrative data. OES serves as the lead evaluator for several customer life experience projects and plays a consultative role by sharing approaches for evaluation and evidence building across the project teams. Partnering with the OMB Evidence Team, OES also supported measurement and theory of change workshops in the early stages of the life experience projects.

Technology Modernization Fund (TMF)

TMF funds projects for technology modernization, sometimes in support of customer experience improvements. The TMF is overseen by the Technology Modernization Board, comprised of government IT leaders representing proven expertise in technology, transformation, and operations. Agencies submit IT-related project proposals to the Board for review.

Technology Transformation Services (TTS)

Located within GSA's Federal Acquisition Service, TTS provides services, products, and resources that support digital transformation of the federal government by helping agencies build, buy, and share technology that allows them to provide more accessible, efficient, and effective products and services for the public. The customer experience offerings listed in the five table rows below are part of the TTS portfolio. TTS also offers products and services to help agencies improve delivery of information and services to the public through TTS solutions.

Appendix III: Federal Customer Experience Resources

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>18F</p> | <p>Located within TTS, 18F collaborates with other agencies to fix technical problems, build products, and improve public service through technology. Their services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- modernizing agency software development processes;- improving public facing services, like websites or applications; and- digitizing and streamlining internal systems. <p>A cross-functional team at 18F is working to streamline benefit management tools for states as part of the “Facing a Financial Shock” customer life experience.</p> |
| <p>Customer Experience Center of Excellence</p> | <p>Located within TTS, the Customer Experience Center of Excellence collaborates with agency stakeholders and staff to address complex challenges that impact the experiences of their customers. They use data-driven insights discovered through research to develop solutions to customer needs. The Center offers the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Customer Experience Strategy,- Human-Centered Design Tools and Processes,- Customer and Agency Research,- Service Design, and- Customer Insights. <p>The Customer Experience Center of Excellence provided support to a pilot project for the “Recovering from a Disaster” customer life experience.</p> |
| <p>Presidential Innovation Fellows</p> | <p>Located within TTS, the Presidential Innovation Fellows team identifies innovation opportunities of critical agency or national priority. The team recruits private-sector technologists, engineers, designers, and strategists, and then embeds them within agencies as yearlong entrepreneurs in residence. With agency partners, these fellows advise, prototype, and scale solutions using industry best practices across data science, design, engineering, product, and systems thinking. Fellows provided early support to cross-agency life experience projects.</p> |
| <p>Public Benefits Studio</p> | <p>Located within TTS, the Public Benefits Studio focuses on fostering a more cohesive, coordinated experience for the public, across programs. The team collaborates with benefits agencies to develop shared technology tools and best practices that can be used by multiple benefits programs simultaneously. For example, the Public Benefits Studio is currently piloting text messaging projects for cross-agency life experience projects.</p> |
| <p>United States Digital Corps</p> | <p>Located within TTS, the U.S. Digital Corps is a 2-year fellowship for early-career technologists who are assigned to specific projects within federal agencies, including in support of customer experience improvements.</p> |

Appendix III: Federal Customer Experience Resources

Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

[The Lab](#)

The Lab, formerly known as the OPM Innovation Lab, builds capacity for government organizations to transform their programs, processes, and people, including for customer experience improvements, through human-centered design.

President’s Management Agenda – Priority Area Leaders

General Services Administration

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Department of Veterans Affairs

GSA, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) have staff serving as Priority Area Leaders under the President’s Management Agenda. Priority Area Leaders set strategic direction, monitor progress, and report back to the President’s Management Council on actions taken on a quarterly basis.

USDA and VA have also taken a role in providing training, mentorship, and peer leadership to other federal agencies, given the relative maturity of their internal customer experience efforts.

Source: GAO analysis of information provided by GSA and OMB, and published on Performance.gov. | GAO-24-106632

Appendix IV: Comments from the Office of Management and Budget

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

May 22, 2024

Dawn Locke
Director, Strategic Issues
United States Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Ms. Locke,

The Office of Management and Budget appreciates the opportunity to review GAO's draft report, "Federal Customer Experience: OMB Has Taken Actions to Implement Cross-Agency Priority Goals," which seeks to document the Office of Management and Budget's oversight and coordination of Federal customer experience and service delivery efforts, in addition to the customer experience work of Federal agencies. We acknowledge the report's findings and remain committed to rebuilding the public's trust in government by improving service delivery.

Executive Order 14058 and the Biden-Harris President's Management Agenda articulate a clear mandate: to deliver excellent, equitable, and secure Federal services for all Americans. Since the start of the Administration, we have worked to maintain transparency and accountability by providing annual updates on Executive Order 14058 commitments, sharing quarterly updates on Life Experience project milestones and deliverables, and publishing quarterly customer feedback data from High Impact Service Providers. We also continue to build out policies to support agencies, including the release of M-23-22 "Delivering a Digital-First Public Experience," which provides guidance on implementing the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act and leading practices for agencies on launching and maintaining digital services.

Because of these efforts, agencies across government continue to tangibly improve service delivery for the American public. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture streamlined and digitized the application that farmers use to apply for loans; the Internal Revenue Service achieved call center hold times of 3 minutes, down from 28 minutes; and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security implemented online renewals and mobile-first forms that have reduced public burden by 21 million hours. Through these examples and others, we are proud to see meaningful changes in how the public experiences and perceives government services: according to the American Customer Satisfaction Index's *Federal Government Report 2023*, satisfaction with Federal government services continues to improve, increasing 4.8% since 2021.

The Office of Management and Budget is committed to driving Federal customer experience improvements by setting government-wide policies, providing a framework for service delivery standards and accountability, coordinating cross-agency efforts that are in the best interest of the American public, and sharing leading practices across agencies. Through these ongoing efforts, we will continue to identify successful strategies and areas needing attention to ensure the Federal government meets and exceeds the public's expectations. We appreciate GAO's recognition of these efforts and look forward to further collaboration.

**Appendix IV: Comments from the Office of
Management and Budget**

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

Sincerely,



Jason Miller
Deputy Director for Management

Appendix V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

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Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, key contributors to this report were Sarah E. Veale (Assistant Director), Karen L. Cassidy (Analyst in Charge), Conrad Belknap, Peter Kramer, Elana K. Maloul, and Zoe Ziliak Michel. In addition, Jacqueline Chapin, Shannon Murphy, Steven Putansu, Alicia White, and Clarette Yen made significant contributions to this report.

Related GAO Products

Government Performance Management: Leading Practices to Enhance Interagency Collaboration and Address Crosscutting Challenges. [GAO-23-105520](#). Washington, D.C.: May 24, 2023.

Government Performance Management: Actions Needed to Improve Transparency of Cross-Agency Priority Goals. [GAO-23-106354](#). Washington, D.C.: Apr. 4, 2023.

2022 Tax Filing: Backlogs and Ongoing Hiring Challenges Led to Poor Customer Service and Refund Delays. [GAO-23-105880](#). Washington, D.C.: Dec. 15, 2022.

Social Security Administration: Remote Service Delivery Increased During COVID-19 but More Could Be Done to Assist Vulnerable Populations. [GAO-23-104650](#). Washington, D.C.: Nov. 17, 2022.

Unemployment Insurance: Pandemic Programs Posed Challenges, and DOL Could Better Address Customer Service Emergency Planning. [GAO-22-104251](#). Washington, D.C.: June 7, 2022.

Government Performance Management: Key Considerations for Implementing Cross-Agency Priority Goals and Progress Addressing GAO Recommendations. [GAO-21-104704](#). Washington, D.C.: Sept. 28, 2021.

U.S. Postal Service: Customer Complaints Process. [GAO-21-465](#). Washington, D.C.: June 14, 2021.

USAJOBS Website: OPM Has Taken Actions to Assess and Enhance the User Experience. [GAO-21-31](#). Washington, D.C.: Oct. 13, 2020.

Taxpayer Service: IRS Could Improve the Taxpayer Experience by Using Better Service Performance Measures. [GAO-20-656](#). Washington, D.C.: Sept. 23, 2020.

USDA Administrative Services: More Could Be Done to Assess Effectiveness and Impact of Business Centers. [GAO-20-243](#). Washington, D.C.: Feb. 19, 2020.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: More Information on Promising Practices Could Enhance States' Use of Data Matching for Eligibility. [GAO-17-111](#). Washington, D.C.: Nov. 17, 2016.

Related GAO Products

Managing for Results: Selected Agencies Need to Take Additional Efforts to Improve Customer Service. [GAO-15-84](#). Washington, D.C.: Oct. 24, 2014.

Managing for Results: Opportunities to Strengthen Agencies' Customer Service Efforts. [GAO-11-44](#). Washington, D.C.: Oct. 27, 2010.

GAO also maintains a current list of related work on its Federal Customer Service Key Issues Page. [Federal Customer Service | U.S. GAO](#).

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