

SECTION 280—FEDERAL PROGRAM INVENTORY

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Summary of Changes

Describes the requirement to include program information on a single, government-wide performance website. OMB is currently working with agencies to merge the implementation of the DATA Act and the Federal Program Inventory requirements to the extent possible to avoid duplicative efforts. While OMB and agencies determine the right implementation strategy, the initial Federal Program Inventory published 2013 remains available on Performance.gov.

280.1 To which agencies does this section apply?

This section applies to all agencies, as defined in the GPRA Modernization Act (see [200.1](#) for details); however, the Federal Program Inventory (FPI) focuses primarily on the program inventories of agencies that were required to identify Agency Priority Goals (APG) on Performance.gov. Agencies that were required to establish APGs established the initial Federal Program Inventory using this guidance.

280.2 What is the purpose of the Federal Program Inventory (FPI)?

A central program list has the potential to facilitate coordination across programs by making it easier to find programs that may contribute to a shared goal, as well as improve public understanding about what Federal programs currently operate and how programs link to budget, performance, and other information. These linkages also provide important context for agency activities. Congress also recognized this need, and passed the GPRA Modernization Act, requiring information for each program identified by agencies to be included on a single, government-wide website consistent with guidance provided by OMB.

280.3 For the purposes of the Federal Program Inventory, what is a program?

GAO defined program in the [Glossary of Terms Used in the Budget Process](#) as an organized set of activities directed toward a common purpose or goal that an agency undertakes or proposes to carry out its responsibilities. Within this broad definition, agencies and their stakeholders use the term “program” in different ways. Agencies have widely varying missions and achieve these missions through different programmatic approaches, so differences in the use of the term “program” are legitimate and meaningful. For this reason, this guidance does not prescribe a superseding definition of “program”; rather, consistent with the GPRA Modernization Act, agencies may identify programs consistent with the manner in which the agency uses programs to interact with key stakeholders and to execute its mission.

For instance, agency programs may be defined using one or more of the following approaches:

- **Outcomes.** Directly attributable to an end result the program is trying to achieve, such as increased exports. Can also be linked to specific functions to accomplish an objective, such as trade enforcement. Can cut across organizational units and/or budget accounts.
- **Customers.** Organized by the focus to provide a service or product to a specific entity or consumer group, such as women-owned small businesses or veterans. Can cut across organizational units and/or budget accounts.
- **Prominent products, services, outputs.** Produces major reports or studies, such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Producer Price Index. May group similar products, services or activities into one program.
- **Organizational structure.** Defined by agency office structure. Offices could focus on specific regions, functions or specialized subject matter such as U.S. Polar Research or Cyberinfrastructure.
- **Budget.** Links closely with the program activity lines in the President's Budget, such as Disaster Recovery or Patents. May align to other budget materials such as the Congressional Budget Justification or internal agency budget/accounting systems. In some instances, a program may be synonymous with its appropriation account title; although it is not presumed that an appropriation is the same as a program.

To meet the requirements of the GPRA Modernization Act, each agency worked with OMB to determine the appropriate primary approach, or mix of approaches, and level of aggregation/disaggregation which should be used as the basis for defining programs for the FPI.

When reviewing the list of programs, agencies considered identifying the following characteristics in determining what a program is:

- **Externally recognizable.** Agencies should use programs that are or relate to programs or objectives used in Congressional Budget Justifications, statute, are recognized by Congress and stakeholders, or are already publicly known; agencies should use program names that are known outside the agency, and generally not create new names.
- **Operationally Meaningful.** Agencies should use programs that are operationally meaningful to agency senior leadership and components of the agency. Programs should represent how the agency is managed and delivers on its mission.
- **Link to an organizational component(s),** such as headquarters, bureau or office. Programs should be operationally meaningful to the agency and agency senior leadership.
- **Persistent.** Generally, programs that persist over time should be included. However, agencies have the flexibility to identify short-term efforts as programs, such as activities related to the Recovery Act.

280.4 Must all components within an agency use the same approach?

No. There may be different valid perspectives for identifying programs within agency components. Agencies had the flexibility to define components' programs within the above guidelines, and discussed the approach with OMB.

280.5 Where can I access the FPI?

Agencies published a list of programs in May 2013 that are available on Performance.gov.

280.6 How should we address administrative functions or salaries & expenses?

Administrative functions and salaries & expenses are within the scope of the program inventory. Similar to other activities, agencies either:

- **Map to a program.** Associate with one or more programs, such as an HR office that hires specialists for specific program(s).
- **Designate as a program.** Group central office functions that support many or all agency programs, such as the Office of the Secretary.

To the extent possible, agencies mapped administrative functions or salaries & expenses to programs. For the purposes of the FPI, agencies did not have to identify administrative costs or salaries & expenses separate from other expenses.

280.7 When will the Federal Program Inventory be updated?

The initial Federal Program Inventory was published in May 2013. Since that time, Congress passed the DATA Act requiring new public reporting requirements, which impact the definition of program used in this guidance. OMB is currently working with agencies to merge the implementation of the DATA Act and the Federal Program Inventory requirements to the extent possible to avoid duplicative efforts. While OMB and agencies determine the right implementation strategy, the initial Federal Program Inventory remains available on Performance.gov.

280.8 What are the program types?

Agencies used one or more program types for defining each program. The program types are:

- **Direct Federal Programs:** Programs where services are provided primarily by employees of the Federal Government, such as the State Department's Consular Services program.
- **Direct Federal Benefits Programs:** Programs where the Federal Government provides benefits or other payments to individuals, such as the Veteran's Administration disability payment program.
- **State-Administered Benefit Programs:** Programs where the Federal Government provides funding to States for benefits, reimbursements, or other payments to recipients. Program examples include the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
- **Competitive Grant Programs:** Programs that provide funds to State, local and tribal governments, organizations, individuals and other entities through a competitive process, such as Health Centers at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
- **Block/Formula Grant Programs:** Programs that provide funds to State, local and tribal governments and other entities by formula or block grant, such as the Department of Energy's (DOE) Weatherization Assistance program and HHS' Foster Care program.

- **Regulatory-Based Programs:** Programs that accomplish their mission through rulemaking that implements, interprets or prescribes law or policy, or describes procedure or practice requirements, such as Small Business Administration’s Size Standards program.
- **Capital Assets and Public Works Programs:** Programs that achieve their goals through development, acquisition, and operation of capital assets (e.g., land, structures, equipment) or the purchase of services (e.g., maintenance, and information technology). Program examples include Navy Shipbuilding and the Bonneville Power Administration.
- **Information Assets Programs:** Programs that achieve their goals through the development, acquisition, analysis, and/or dissemination of information. Program examples include the Census.
- **Service Acquisition Programs:** Programs that achieve their goals through the purchase of services (e.g., maintenance, and information technology).
- **Credit Programs:** Programs that provide support through loans, loan guarantees and direct credit, such as the Export-Import Bank’s Long-Term Guarantees program.
- **Insurance Programs:** Programs where the Federal Government provides compensation against the risk of specified loss, damage, illness, or death in return for payment of premiums.
- **Research and Development (R&D) Programs:** Programs that focus on knowledge creation or its application to the creation of systems, methods, materials, or technologies, such as DOE’s Solar Energy and NASA’s Solar System Exploration programs.

280.9 What if our programs are already captured in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA)?

Agencies were encouraged to leverage existing program lists, including CFDA. However, agencies had the flexibility to identify their programs using a different approach.