



Performance Plans: Selected Approaches
for Verification and Validation of
Agency Performance Information:
GGD-99-139

U.S. Government
Accountability Office (GAO)

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Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on the approaches that agencies have proposed or adopted to verify and validate performance information. GAO noted that: (1) GAO found examples illustrating a wide range of possible approaches for increasing the quality, validity, and credibility of performance information (2) these approaches included a variety of senior management actions, agencywide efforts, and specific program manager and technical staff activities (3) these approaches can be organized into four general strategies (4) management can seek to improve the quality of performance data by fostering an organizational commitment and capacity for data quality (5) managers are ultimately responsible for the quality of performance information (6) GAO found examples of management communications and actions to encourage the needed coordination, resource allocation, and attention to data quality issues (7) reporting efforts to build organizational commitment to obtaining, maintaining, and using good information and to developing the organizations capacity to do so can help improve the credibility of performance information (8) verification and validation can include assessing the quality of existing performance data (9) assessments might target specific measures in the performance plan or more broadly assess major data systems to identify problems that may affect the use of performance data (10) assessments were conducted internally, built into ongoing work processes and data systems, or involved independent verification and external feedback (11) assessments of data quality are of little value unless agencies are responding to identified data limitations (12) communicating significant data limitations and their implications allows stakeholders to judge the datas credibility for their intended use and to use the data in appropriate ways (13) in addition to examples of reporting data limitations and their implications in performance plans or other formats, GAO saw examples of efforts to improve, supplement, or replace existing data (14) building quality into the development of performance data may help prevent future errors and minimize the need to continually fix existing data (15) GAO found examples of efforts to build in data quality, including involving stakeholders, providing feedback on data quality problems, and using accepted practices in planning, implementing, and reporting performance data and (16) within these general strategies are more specific approaches that agencies may choose to adopt.

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