

## Federal government making progress in showing results, study finds

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A new study by La Follette School of Public Affairs public management expert Donald P. Moynihan describes the evolution of the federal performance management system since the passage of the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993.

"The federal [government](#) has made progress recently in achieving meaningful performance results within targeted programs," says the University of Wisconsin-Madison professor. "While citizens hear a lot about the dysfunction of politics, [federal employees](#) have quietly constructed [management](#) tools that ensure real attention to results."

Moynihan's study, *The New Federal Performance System: Implementing the New GPRA Modernization Act*, describes changes as a result of the new requirements of the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, which significantly amended the earlier law.

The IBM Center for The Business of Government released the report today, April 15. The report offers a series of recommendations for how to get the most out of the new system.

Moynihan calls for the federal government to link [performance goals](#) to the altruistic desire of employees to make a difference and to find ways to build collaborative links centered on goal improvement. He argues that federal organizations need to develop a learning culture that emphasizes risk-taking and improvement, rather than worry that any new initiative runs the risk of being branded a failure.

"The new system provides an opportunity for greater attention to outcomes that matter to citizens, or it could become a paperwork exercise," says Moynihan. "Much depends on how stakeholders engage."

Moynihan calls for political appointees to be selected based on their ability to manage programs and on Congress to engage more directly with the White House in identifying shared goals. "If political actors don't take [performance management](#) seriously, federal bureaucrats are not likely to either," he says.

The report grew out of a December 2012 forum on the future of the federal performance management system. The IBM Center for The Business of Government and the National Academy of Public Administration sponsored the original forum. Participants represented a wide range of stakeholders and perspectives in the system, including key staff members from the Office of Management and Budget, Congress and federal agencies. Participants discussed their perspectives and insights on key components of the Modernization Act, including strategic planning, program management, program evaluation, financial and performance reporting, and budgeting.

The IBM Center for The Business of Government connects public management research with practice. Since 1998, the center has helped public sector executives improve the effectiveness of government with practical ideas and original thinking.

Moynihan's research examines the application of organization theory to public management issues such as performance, budgeting, homeland security, election administration, and employee behavior. In particular, he studies the selection and implementation of public management reforms. He is the author of the 2008 book "The Dynamics of [Performance](#) Management: Constructing Information and Reform" and a member of the National Academy of Public Administration.

**More information:** [www.businessofgovernment.org/r...ra-modernization-act](http://www.businessofgovernment.org/r...ra-modernization-act)

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