

The Federal Program Inventory Provides Visibility, but with Limitations

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On May 31st, the administration took another step forward in implementation of the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 by releasing Federal Program Inventories on the Performance.gov website. Centralizing program inventories on Performance.gov will provide greater visibility into federal programs with the intent to improve program outcomes, efficiencies, and root out duplication and waste.

Significant amounts of information currently exist about federal programs, such as the President's Budget, Congressional Budget Justifications, USAspending.gov, the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance. However to date, the information has been decentralized and difficult to analyze. The new Federal Program Inventories will provide greater visibility for Congress and the general public regarding government operated programs.

Since the beginning of his administration, the president has waged a campaign against federal waste, fraud and abuse. To that end, eliminating duplication in federal programs has the potential to save billions of dollars. The 2014 President's Budget proposes 215 cuts, consolidations, and savings proposals, which are projected to save more than \$25 billion in 2014, a number of which are achieved by reducing duplication. For example, the budget includes proposals to streamline Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) programs, and training and employment services.

Program inventories on Performance.gov are a step in the right direction. However, their current usefulness is limited. To date, 24 departments and agencies present links to program information via the website. Agencies chose to present program information in various formats and organizational structures. Most of the agency links lead to formal program inventories in a pdf document format. Others lead to agency web pages with links to budget documents and justifications. At present, it is difficult to spot overlap and duplication of programs across agencies. Centralization of the information is helpful, but I'm hopeful that future iterations of the information will contain consistent formats and tools to analyze the program data across varying departments and agencies.