



Highlights of [GAO-05-90](#), a report to the Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

A high-performance organization relies on a dynamic workforce with the requisite talents, multidisciplinary knowledge, and up-to-date skills to ensure that it is equipped to accomplish its mission and achieve its goals. Such organizations typically (1) foster a work environment in which people are enabled and motivated to contribute to mission accomplishment and (2) provide both accountability and fairness for all employees. To accomplish these objectives, high-performance organizations are inclusive, drawing on the strengths of employees at all levels and of all backgrounds—an approach consistent with diversity management. For purposes of our review, diversity management is defined as a process intended to create and maintain a positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals are valued, so that all can reach their potential and maximize their contributions to an organization's strategic goals and objectives.

As part of a request that GAO report on the federal government's performance in managing its diverse workforce, GAO was asked to identify (1) leading diversity management practices and (2) examples of the identified practices in the federal government.

This report contains no recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-90.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact George H. Stalcup on (202) 512-9490 or at stalcupg@gao.gov.

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Expert-Identified Leading Practices and Agency Examples

What GAO Found

Of the experts in the field of diversity management we spoke with or whose publications we reviewed to identify leading diversity management practices, a majority cited the following nine practices as leading.

- **Top leadership commitment**—a vision of diversity demonstrated and communicated throughout an organization by top-level management.
- **Diversity as part of an organization's strategic plan**—a diversity strategy and plan that are developed and aligned with the organization's strategic plan.
- **Diversity linked to performance**—the understanding that a more diverse and inclusive work environment can yield greater productivity and help improve individual and organizational performance.
- **Measurement**—a set of quantitative and qualitative measures of the impact of various aspects of an overall diversity program.
- **Accountability**—the means to ensure that leaders are responsible for diversity by linking their performance assessment and compensation to the progress of diversity initiatives.
- **Succession planning**—an ongoing, strategic process for identifying and developing a diverse pool of talent for an organization's potential future leaders.
- **Recruitment**—the process of attracting a supply of qualified, diverse applicants for employment.
- **Employee involvement**—the contribution of employees in driving diversity throughout an organization.
- **Diversity training**—organizational efforts to inform and educate management and staff about diversity.

Experts and the literature generally agree that a combination of the identified practices should be considered when an organization is developing and implementing diversity management. We selected 10 agencies with the highest summary rankings from a 1999 governmentwide survey of federal agencies' diversity management programs to review for examples of the implementation of the identified practices. The implementation of the leading practices by these agencies may provide insights to other agencies as they undertake or attempt to strengthen or improve their own diversity management initiatives.

We provided a draft of this report to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management for review and comment. In their comments, agency officials generally agreed with the findings of the draft report.