



Highlights of [GAO-06-612](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

HOMELAND SECURITY

Guidance and Standards Are Needed for Measuring the Effectiveness of Agencies' Facility Protection Efforts

Why GAO Did This Study

The protection of U.S. federal facilities has become an important concern due to the ongoing threat of terrorism. The General Services Administration (GSA), U.S. Postal Service (USPS), and the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Interior (Interior) hold the most domestic, nonmilitary property. Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is responsible for the protection of GSA facilities. DHS chairs the Interagency Security Committee (ISC), which is tasked with coordinating federal agencies' facility protection efforts. The need to better protect federal facilities, as well as federal budget constraints, have prompted the need for these agencies to measure the performance of their facility protection efforts. GAO's objectives were (1) to identify examples of performance measures for facility protection being used by selected organizations outside of the federal government; and (2) to determine the status of U.S. federal agencies' efforts to develop and use performance measures as a part of their facility protection programs.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that the Secretary of DHS direct ISC to establish guidance and standards for measuring performance in federal government facility protection. DHS agreed with the findings and recommendations in this report.

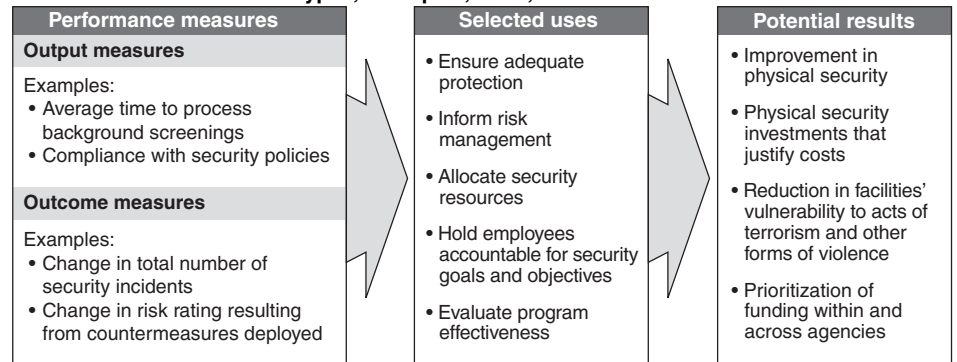
www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-612.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Mark Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or goldsteinm@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

GAO found a range of examples of performance measures that organizations outside the U.S. government—including private-sector entities, state and local governments, and foreign government agencies—have developed that, collectively, indicate whether facility protection efforts are achieving results (see figure below). These organizations use security-related performance measures to help improve security, make decisions about risk management and resource allocation, and hold employees accountable for whether a program meets its security goals and objectives. However, many of the organizations said that developing and using these measures can be challenging and that they look to the U.S. government for assistance and leadership in developing standards and guidance for facility protection.

Performance Measurement Types, Examples, Uses, and Results



Source: GAO

Note: Output measures focus on the direct product/services delivered by a program. Outcome measures provide information on the results of products/services.

We found that some bureaus and services within DHS (for GSA properties), USPS, and Interior are using security performance measures, while the VA and other bureaus and services within the three agencies collect data that could be used to measure security performance. Agencies that have performance measures use them to ensure adequate protection at individual facilities, make risk management decisions, and evaluate program effectiveness. However, agencies face challenges—similar to those cited by nonfederal entities—in further developing and using security performance measures. Currently, there is no governmentwide guidance or standards on measuring facility protection performance to help federal agencies address these challenges. This differs from information technology security, where agencies have detailed, governmentwide guidance for developing and using performance measures. Without effective performance measurement data, decision makers may have insufficient information to evaluate whether their investments have improved security or reduced federal facilities' vulnerability to acts of terrorism or other forms of violence. ISC is uniquely positioned to develop and disseminate guidance and standards for measuring the performance of federal government facility protection efforts.