



Highlights of [GAO-03-428](#), a report to Congressional Requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Congressional requesters asked GAO to provide information on actions that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has taken to facilitate the effective use of human capital flexibilities throughout the federal government and what additional actions OPM might take in this regard. These flexibilities represent the policies and practices that an agency has the authority to implement in managing its workforce.

What GAO Recommends

To better facilitate the effective use of human capital flexibilities throughout the federal government and consistent with OPM's ongoing efforts in this regard, GAO recommends that the Director of OPM

- review existing OPM regulations and guidance to determine whether they provide agencies with needed flexibility,
- more thoroughly research, compile, and analyze information on the effective and innovative use of flexibilities, and
- identify and build consensus for legislation to authorize new flexibilities that would help agencies better manage their human capital.

OPM commented on a draft of this report and agreed with the conclusions and recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-428.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact J. Christopher Mihm at (202) 512-6806 or mihmj@gao.gov.

HUMAN CAPITAL

OPM Can Better Assist Agencies in Using Personnel Flexibilities

What GAO Found

OPM Has Taken Several Actions to Assist Agencies

OPM has an important leadership role in identifying, developing, applying, and overseeing human capital flexibilities across the federal government. OPM has taken several actions to assist federal agencies in effectively using the human capital flexibilities that are currently available to agencies. For example, OPM has issued a handbook for agencies that identifies the various flexibilities available to help manage their human capital. Also, OPM has taken various actions to assist agencies in identifying additional flexibilities that might be helpful to agencies in managing their workforces.

Human Resources Directors Gave Mixed Views on OPM's Role

To yield indications of the progress that OPM has made in its important role related to assisting agencies in the use of human capital flexibilities, GAO surveyed the human resources directors of the federal government's 24 largest departments and agencies in fall of 2001 and again in the fall of 2002. There was little change in the directors' level of satisfaction with OPM's role in assisting agencies in using available flexibilities, which remained mixed. For example, one director said OPM had effectively facilitated the use of work-life flexibilities, but others thought that OPM had placed its own restrictive interpretation on the use of other personnel flexibilities. The level of satisfaction with OPM's role in identifying additional flexibilities was greater in 2002 than in 2001, but still remained below the satisfaction level for assistance with existing flexibilities. Several directors said that OPM had not worked diligently enough in supporting authorization of governmentwide use of new flexibilities that have been sufficiently tested and deemed successful.

Additional OPM Actions Could Further Facilitate Use of Flexibilities

Although OPM has recently taken numerous actions, OPM could more fully meet its leadership role to assist agencies in identifying, developing, and applying human capital flexibilities across the federal government. In its ongoing internal review of its existing regulations and guidance, OPM could more directly focus on determining the continued relevance and utility of its regulations and guidance by asking whether they provide the flexibility that agencies need in managing their workforces while also incorporating protections for employees. In addition, OPM can maximize its efforts to make human capital flexibilities and effective practices more widely known to agencies by compiling, analyzing, and sharing information about when, where, and how the broad range of flexibilities are being used, and should be used, to help agencies meet their human capital management needs. OPM also needs to more vigorously identify new flexibilities that would help agencies better manage their human capital and then work to build consensus for the legislative action needed.