



Highlights of [GAO-03-693](#), a report to congressional committees and subcommittees

Why GAO Did This Study

The Federal Payment Reauthorization Act of 1994 (Pub. L. 103-373) requires the District of Columbia to submit to the Congress a performance accountability plan with goals for the upcoming year, and after the end of the fiscal year, a performance accountability report on the extent to which the District achieved the goals in the plan. The 1994 act further requires that GAO review and evaluate the District's performance accountability report.

What GAO Recommends

To improve the usefulness of the performance reports, the District agreed with our recommendations to do the following:

- (1) Prioritize the development of data collection standards and distribute guidelines to all city agencies. Data limitations should also be documented and disclosed in the report.
- (2) Expand its coverage to include goals and measures for all of its major activities as well as related expenditures.
- (3) Include more complete information on the steps taken to comply with court orders during the year. The District should also consider monitoring the costs of complying with court orders.
- (4) Conduct additional analysis of information captured in the reports to assist in managing overall performance and achieving strategic goals.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-693.

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

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Performance Report Shows Continued Progress

What GAO Found

The District of Columbia has made substantial progress in its performance accountability reports over the last 4 years. The 2002 Performance Accountability Report provided a more comprehensive review of its performance than prior reports and generally complied with the statutory reporting requirements.

The report included almost all of the District's significant activities by covering 74 agencies representing about 90 percent of the total fiscal year 2002 expenditures of nearly \$5.9 billion. In addition, the 2002 report included the level of performance achieved toward almost all of the goals in the performance plan and was issued on time. As required, it provided the titles of managers and their supervisors responsible for each of the goals, and described the status of court orders based on selected criteria. Specifically, it reported the following:

- Performance results for six agencies that had not been reported on last year, including the District of Columbia Public Schools and the Child and Family Services Agency, which together amount to nearly 19 percent of the city's total 2002 expenditures. However, the report does not include agencies and funds that amount to approximately 10 percent of the city's expenditures. Among the activities not included are the Public Charter Schools, representing about 1.7 percent of the city's expenditures, and selected special purpose funds, representing about 1.3 percent of the city's expenditures.
- The status of selected court orders based on criteria developed in response to a 2002 GAO recommendation. The District has also developed a risk tracking system to monitor agency responsiveness to compliance with court orders. Although the report contains updated information for selected court orders, it does not provide complete information on the progress made and steps taken to comply with court orders.

The District has also undertaken initiatives, such as implementing performance based budgeting, creating a performance management council, and developing data collection standards, that could assist in improving overall performance management. In addition, the District's performance reports could serve as a tool for identifying and addressing long-standing management challenges. However, using performance management as a strategic planning tool requires analyzing performance data, using the analysis to maintain a focus on outcomes, and providing information that is complete and well-presented so that it is useful to managers and decision makers. In this context, there are some areas in which additional analysis of the measures, related targets, and data contained in the performance reports may be useful to the District in planning and making decisions about resource allocation as well as improving management in the future.