



Highlights of [GAO-05-77](#), a report to congressional committees

## U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

# Management Could Benefit from Improved Strategic Planning and Increased Oversight

### Why GAO Did This Study

The Chairmen of the Senate and House Committees on the Judiciary asked GAO to determine (1) the extent of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights' compliance with the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993, (2) what federal oversight is provided to the Commission, and (3) the status of the implementation of recommendations from GAO's past reviews of the Commission.

### What GAO Recommends

To enhance oversight of the Commission, the Congress should consider legislation directing the Commission to obtain the services of an existing Inspector General.

To strengthen the Commission's management practices, GAO recommends that the Commission (1) update its strategic plan and ensure that its performance plans and reports include all elements required under GPRA; (2) implement OPM's and GAO's recommendations; and (3) seek the services of an existing Inspector General to conduct necessary audits and investigations.

In responding to our draft report, the Commission did not comment on our recommendations and disagreed with most of our findings and conclusions. We continue to believe that our findings, conclusions, and recommendations are sound and necessary for strengthening the Commission's management practices.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-77](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-77).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Bob Robertson at (202) 512-9889 or [robertsonr@gao.gov](mailto:robertsonr@gao.gov).

### What GAO Found

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights—an independent federal agency that monitors and reports on the status of civil rights in the United States—has not fully complied with the requirements of GPRA. Under this act, agencies are required to submit strategic plans and annual performance plans that detail their long-term and annual goals as well as information on how they plan to meet these goals. GPRA also requires agencies to submit annual performance reports that provide information on their progress in meeting the goals. However, the Commission has not updated or revised its strategic plan since 1997. Without revisiting its strategic goals, the Commission lacks a firm basis on which to develop its annual goals and evaluate its performance. In addition, its most recent annual performance plan and annual performance report contain weaknesses that limit the agency's ability to effectively manage its operations and communicate its performance. For example, the performance plan does not discuss the Commission's strategies or resources for achieving its goals, does not provide budgetary information for its programs, and does not provide performance indicators for some annual goals. Similarly, the performance report does not account for the Commission's performance for many of the annual goals set forth in its performance plan and does not provide plans, schedules, or recommendations for addressing each of the Commission's unmet goals.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) have provided oversight for the Commission's budgetary and human capital operations in recent years. OMB's oversight has focused on the Commission's budget requests and GPRA plans and reports. OPM conducted two reviews of the Commission's human capital management systems in the 1990s and made recommendations for improvement, including improvements to its grievance and performance appraisal systems. Although the Commission has implemented some of OPM's earlier recommendations, it has not implemented five of six broader, systemic recommendations made in 1999 for improvement to its human capital management systems. Unlike many other executive agencies, the Commission does not have an Inspector General to provide oversight of its operations beyond OMB and OPM.

GAO has conducted several reviews of the Commission's management operations in recent years. The Commission took some actions in response to the recommendations in GAO's 1994 and 1997 reports. However, the Commission has not implemented three of the four recommendations in GAO's October 2003 report for improving the agency's management and procurement practices.