

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-106675](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

NNSA is the busiest it has been since the Cold War as it oversees a \$200 billion nuclear modernization effort. Recognizing the need to address the agency's increased demands, the NNSA Administrator established the Enhanced Mission Delivery Initiative team in January 2022. The team's report made recommendations to help NNSA better deliver on its national and global security missions. Several recommendations affect acquisition and program management at NNSA, which have been on GAO's High Risk List for decades.

A report accompanying the fiscal year 2023 consolidated appropriations act includes a provision for GAO to evaluate the Initiative's proposed implementation. This report (1) describes the Initiative report's findings and recommendations and examines (2) NNSA's plans for implementation and the status of the reforms, and (3) the extent to which NNSA's six reforms GAO identified as at high risk for fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement were aligned with selected leading practices for agency reform.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making eight recommendations to NNSA, including that it define how it will govern follow-on continuous improvement efforts; establish goals and processes to monitor reforms' progress against those goals; and monitor reforms to ensure they do not increase risks of fraud, waste, and abuse. NNSA concurred with all eight recommendations.

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NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Fully Incorporating Leading Practices for Agency Reform Would Benefit Enhanced Mission Delivery Initiative

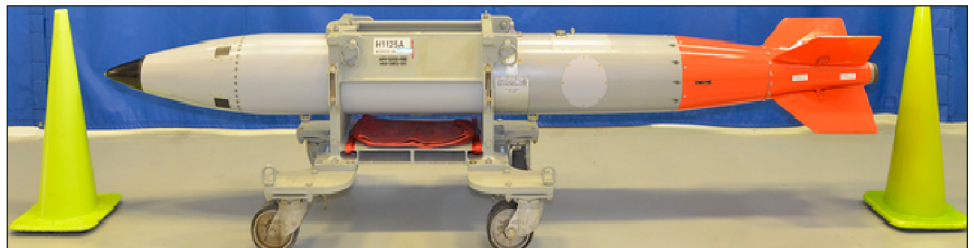
What GAO Found

To address the increased demands of its estimated \$200 billion nuclear weapon modernization effort, in September 2022, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) published a report titled *Evolving the Nuclear Security Enterprise: A Report of the Enhanced Mission Delivery Initiative*. The report had recommendations for reforming its agency and contractor operating environment that covered many aspects of NNSA's operations, including program and project management, employee recruitment and retention, and contracting.

NNSA used the results from the report to develop 15 reforms, which the agency has implemented through decentralized implementation teams under a central reporting structure. NNSA considers 11 reforms implemented and four ongoing. In addition to the continued development of the ongoing reforms, officials stated they will continue to monitor and modify the implemented reforms. However, the reporting structure that had been in use was disbanded by September 2024, and NNSA has not defined how it will govern follow-on continuous improvement efforts or monitor and report on their status.

Reforms Sought for Managing Weapon Modernization Programs

B-61 bomb, modernized under processes the National Nuclear Security Administration seeks to reform through the Enhanced Mission Delivery Initiative.



Source: Courtesy of Sandia National Laboratories. | GAO-25-106675

NNSA's implementation plans for six of the 15 reforms that GAO selected based on their relation to areas it previously identified as at risk for fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement partially aligned with relevant leading practices for successful agency reform. These plans were most in alignment with leading practices on leadership focus and attention. However, most of the plans for the six high-risk reform areas did not fully align with leading practices for setting goals, using data and evidence, monitoring, addressing longstanding management challenges, and engaging key stakeholders. Without establishing goals or processes to collect data and evidence, NNSA will not be able to monitor the effectiveness of implemented and ongoing reforms. Without this information, NNSA cannot assess whether the underlying issues identified in the Enhanced Mission Delivery Initiative report have been addressed. Further, by not monitoring the effects of relevant reforms on high-risk areas or the potential for fraud, waste, and abuse, NNSA will not know if reforms could potentially perpetuate longstanding challenges or increase risks of fraud, waste, and abuse.