

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-22-106150](#), a statement for the record to the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

Since taking office in 2021, the President has issued several executive orders and a memorandum (executive directives) that expressed policy commitments to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) in the federal workforce, domestically, and in U.S. foreign assistance. In response, State and USAID have committed to incorporating DEIA into their strategies, policies, and practices.

This statement summarizes findings from GAO's (1) 2020 reports on [State's](#) and [USAID's](#) workforce demographics and efforts to identify barriers to diversity, (2) [July 2022 report](#) on State's efforts to improve workplace diversity and inclusion, and (3) [July 2022 report](#) on State and USAID actions to advance equity abroad. This statement also includes updates on State's and USAID's efforts to address the recommendations GAO made in its 2020 reports. Detailed information on GAO's objectives, scopes, and methodologies can be found in the issued reports.

What GAO Recommends

In its July 2022 report on State's efforts to improve workplace diversity and inclusion, GAO recommended that State establish performance measures, enhance accountability for workplace DEIA goals, create a plan to improve its barrier analysis process, and improve its statistical methodology for identifying potential barriers to workforce diversity. State agreed with these recommendations.

View [GAO-22-106150](#). For more information, contact Jason Bair at (202) 512-6881 or bairj@gao.gov, or Latesha Love at (202) 512-4409 or lovel@gao.gov.

July 26, 2022

STATE AND USAID

Efforts to Advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

What GAO Found

In 2020, GAO found that the Department of State's and U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) workforces grew more diverse overall from fiscal year 2002 to fiscal year 2018. However, promotion outcomes were generally lower for historically disadvantaged racial or ethnic groups than for Whites. State also identified some indicators of potential barriers to diversity, such as underrepresentation of Hispanic employees. GAO recommended that State and USAID take additional steps to improve workforce diversity. State and USAID took some actions in response. For example, State launched four working groups to identify, investigate, and eliminate barriers to diversity.

In July 2022, GAO reported that State needs to take additional actions to improve workplace diversity and inclusion. For example, State has taken some steps to investigate and eliminate barriers, but GAO found that State's analyses vary in depth and have methodological weaknesses. State needs to create a plan to improve its barrier analysis process and improve its methodology for identifying potential barriers. Otherwise, it risks using resources on solutions that do not address the root causes of disparities and risks leaving barriers unaddressed. In addition, State's actions address or generally address five diversity and inclusion leading practices, but gaps remain in accountability and measurement. Without better ways to measure progress and enhance accountability, State may not achieve its goal of fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace.

GAO Assessment of Department of State Actions Compared to Leading Practices for Diversity and Inclusion Management

Leading Practice	GAO Rating
Employee Involvement	●
Diversity Training	●
Leadership Commitment	◐
Recruitment	◐
Succession Planning	◐
Measurement	◑
Accountability	◑

Legend: ●—Address. ◐—Generally address. ◑—Partially address. ○—Do not address.

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State and GAO leading practices for diversity and inclusion management. | GAO-22-106150

A separate GAO report found that, in response to executive directives, State and USAID have begun and are planning several actions to advance equity and support for marginalized groups abroad. For example, State and USAID are updating strategies to more directly advance equity and are developing frameworks that will guide their global efforts at the highest levels and begin to define success in promoting equity. State and USAID are working to mitigate challenges, such as obtaining data for marginalized groups unavailable due to privacy laws, cultural sensitivities, or difficulties with self-reporting, according to agency officials. If implemented effectively, these actions could help State and USAID expand and sustain efforts to achieve the objectives of the executive directives.