United States Government Accountability Office

GAO

Report to Congressional Committees

December 2010

FEDERAL WORK/LIFE PROGRAMS

Agencies Generally Satisfied with OPM Assistance, but More Tracking and Information Sharing Needed

G A O

Accountability ★ Integrity ★ Reliability

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Why GAO Did This Study

To improve its ability to recruit and retain federal employees, agencies have implemented a wide range of work/life programs, such as flexible work schedules, child care, and employee assistance programs. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) plays a key role in guiding federal human capital initiatives, including the implementation of work/life programs. As requested, GAO determined the extent to which: (1) OPM provides assistance and guidance to federal agencies for establishing and enhancing work/life programs; (2) OPM or the federal agencies track, evaluate, or modify work/life programs; and (3) OPM has identified leading practices in the private sector for the implementation of work/life programs and shared this information with federal agencies. To do this, GAO reviewed OPM policy and guidance; surveyed 40 federal officials—20 Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) and 20 work/life managers; and interviewed officials from seven private sector companies recognized for the quality of their work/life programs.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that OPM assist agencies in implementing their work/life programs by more systematically tracking and evaluating data on the implementation and evaluation of work/life programs and sharing this information with federal agencies. OPM agreed with GAO's recommendations and suggested technical changes which GAO has incorporated as appropriate.

What GAO Found

OPM's Office of Work/Life/Wellness is available to federal agencies to provide assistance, guidance, and information as agencies develop and implement work/life programs. For example, OPM has established formal working groups, sponsored training for agency officials, promulgated regulations to implement work/life programs, and provided informal guidance to agencies that address issues related to these programs. Of the 33 agency officials who responded to GAO's survey, 24 indicated that OPM's assistance, guidance, and information sharing greatly helped or helped somewhat in implementing work/life programs. Another six agency officials indicated that OPM's assistance, guidance, and information sharing helped in some cases and hindered in others.

OPM tracks and collects information on a few work/life programs across the federal government, including health and wellness programs which it recently began tracking in response to a White House initiative. Some federal agencies independently provide OPM with evaluations on other work/life programs. However, when asked, OPM officials said that they did not track or maintain an inventory of these evaluations nor review these evaluations due to the lack of time and available resources. Tracking, analyzing, and sharing information among federal agencies on the effect of work/life programs on agency-intended goals could be helpful for individual agency decision making in a budget-constrained environment.

To follow up on the White House health and wellness initiative, OPM held several meetings and conferences with representatives from private sector companies to discuss their health and wellness programs and the effect of these programs on recruitment and retention. Although OPM has developed a health and wellness pilot program based on some of the information obtained from these meetings and conferences, OPM has not systematically shared with federal agencies other information about the private sector's health and wellness programs or other work/life programs. GAO also interviewed officials from seven private sector companies recognized for the quality of their work/life programs to identify leading practices in implementing private sector work/life programs. Private sector officials from four of the seven companies that GAO interviewed indicated that their programs have been effective in increasing employee job satisfaction, resulting in improved recruitment, retention, and workforce productivity. Systematically collecting and disseminating information on the implementation and evaluation of private sector work/life programs could help federal agencies compare their work/life programs with leading practices in the private sector.

United States Government Accountability Office

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Abbreviations

C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
CHCO	Chief Human Capital Officers
FY	fiscal year
HCAAF	Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
U.S.C.	United States Code

United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

December 16, 2010

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman
Chairman
The Honorable Susan M. Collins
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Daniel K. Akaka
Chairman
The Honorable George V. Voinovich
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal
Workforce, and the District of Columbia
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Herb Kohl
Chairman
The Honorable Bob Corker
Ranking Member
Special Committee on Aging
United States Senate

To improve its ability to recruit, retain, and engage the federal workforce,
the federal government has implemented a wide range of work/life
programs, which according to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)
are designed to create more flexible, responsive work environments that
allow workers to meet the obligations of work and life. These programs
include flexible work schedules, child care, and telework.[1] To that end,
OPM assists and guides agencies in choosing work/life programs that will
help attract and retain federal workers by providing them with tools—
such as handbooks and manuals, a Web site dedicated to work/life
programs and issues, and forums to discuss work/life issues—that an
agency may use as it implements work/life programs.

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[1]Although telework is offered as a work/life program to the federal workforce, we have not
included it in this report because GAO is conducting a separate review of the federal
telework program.

You expressed an interest in the federal government's ability to recruit and retain the workforce it needs and engage the employees it has while competing with the private sector for workforce talent. Therefore, you asked us to determine the extent to which (1) OPM provides assistance and guidance to federal agencies for establishing and enhancing work/life programs and the extent to which agency officials are satisfied with OPM's assistance and guidance; (2) OPM or the federal agencies track, evaluate, or modify work/life programs; and (3) OPM has identified leading practices in the private sector for the implementation of work/life programs and shared this information with federal agencies. For the purpose of this report, we defined work/life programs as workplace programs and policies designed to help federal employees identify and resolve personal or work-related issues, and include such programs and policies as flexible scheduling, child care, assistance for drug and alcohol abuse, and health and wellness programs.

To address our objectives, we did the following.

- We designed and administered a survey to assess agency perceptions of OPM's performance during a 1-year period—specifically OPM's assistance, guidance, and information sharing on work/life programs and issues.[2] We also designed the survey to determine whether and how the agencies track, evaluate, and modify their own work/life programs. We selected 20 Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) from federal departments or agencies and 20 work/life program managers from the same federal departments or agencies to receive the survey. The CHCOs we selected were members of the CHCO Council.[3] Because a portion of the survey focused on agency perceptions of OPM's assistance, we excluded OPM's CHCO from our sample. Additionally, because we intended the survey respondents to speak on behalf of their department or agency, we excluded two CHCO council members who serve as proxies for numerous federal agencies, specifically one member representing small federal agencies and

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[2]We asked the survey recipients to focus their perceptions about OPM's assistance, guidance, and information sharing during the 1-year period beginning April 2009 and ending April 2010. This time period coincides with the first year tenure of the new Director of OPM and would reflect any changes in OPM's policies (or actions) resulting from the new OPM administration.

[3]The CHCO Council consists of 25 members: the OPM Director, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Deputy Director for Management and the CHCOs from the 15 executive departments and an additional 8 federal agency CHCOs designated by the OPM Director. The Council advises and coordinates the human capital activities of its members' agencies.

another member representing federal national security and intelligence agencies. Of the 40 potential respondents, 33 completed our survey.[4]

- We reviewed applicable statutes and regulations, past OPM reports, OPM's 2006-2010 and 2010-2015 strategic plans, written policy, guidance, directives, and material on OPM's Web site relating to work/life assistance, guidance, and identification of leading practices.

- We interviewed OPM officials and staff in OPM's Office of Work/Life/Wellness.

- We reviewed reports and periodical articles about the work/life programs of leading private sector companies.

- We selected seven private sector companies representing various industries that have been recognized by human capital associations and publications as providing their employees with quality work/life programs. We interviewed the officials from these companies who have direct knowledge of their companies' work/life programs to obtain information on the development and implementation of those programs. However, these seven companies are not representative of all private sector companies and therefore, we cannot generalize the information these private sector officials provided about their work/life programs to other private sector companies.

- We reviewed prior GAO reports on human capital issues.

See appendix I for more information about our scope and methodology.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2009 through December 2010 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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[4]We did not receive survey responses from work/life program managers at the Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Department of Education, Department of Homeland Security, and National Aeronautics and Space Administration, or from the CHCOs for the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State (see table 3 in app. I).

Background

Employers in both the public and private sectors have realized that offering work/life programs—such as alternative work schedules, child care, and health and wellness programs—have become an essential element in recruiting and retaining their workforces.[5] The federal government, as a major employer, also recognizes that work/life policies, programs, and practices make good business sense.[6] Congress has recognized the need to provide federal workers workplace flexibilities and has authorized numerous work/life programs for federal agencies to implement.[7] In addition, the executive branch has recognized and supported the benefits of these programs by implementing a range of work/life programs, from flexible work arrangements to child care assistance. Table 1 lists some examples of work/life programs federal agencies provide their employees, as identified by OPM.

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[5]WorldatWork, "Attraction and Retention: The Impact and Prevalence of Work-Life & Benefit Programs" (Scottsdale, Ariz.: WorldatWork, Oct. 2007) http://www.worldatwork.org/waw/adimLink?id=21945&nonav=yes (accessed May 14, 2009). WorldatWork is a nonprofit organization that focuses on human resources issues including compensation and work/life programs.

[6]OPM, *A New Day for the Civil Service: Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey 2010-Results from the 2010 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey* (Washington, D.C., 2010).

[7]For example, Congress has authorized flexible and compressed work schedules (5 U.S.C. §§ 6120-6133), voluntary leave transfer and leave bank programs (5 U.S.C. §§ 6331-6340 and §§ 6361-6373), and use of appropriated funds to support child care centers (40 U.S.C. § 590) and to subsidize child care (40 U.S.C. § 590(g)).

Table 1: Examples of Federal Work/Life Programs

Category	Subcategory	Work/life programs
Workplace flexibilities	Alternative work schedules	Flexible scheduling Job sharing
	Leave programs	Family leave Leave bank
	Volunteerism/community involvement	Blood donation Tutoring
Family	Care giving programs	Child care Elder/dependent care
Health and wellness	Flexible spending accounts	Dependent care Health care
	Employee assistance programs	Drug/alcohol abuse Smoking cessation
	Health promotion	Wellness programs Health screening

Source: OPM.

OPM plays a key role in fostering and guiding improvements in all areas of strategic human capital management—including work/life programs—in the executive branch. As part of that role, OPM can assist in—and, as appropriate, require—building infrastructures within agencies to successfully implement and sustain human capital reforms and related initiatives. For example, OPM promotes human capital leading practices across federal agencies and conducts audits of human capital management within the federal government to ensure compliance with laws, regulations, and policies. To promote coordination among agencies outside of Washington, D.C., OPM works with Federal Executive Boards (FEB) to share guidance and leading practices and obtain feedback from federal agencies on human capital issues.[8] OPM also coordinates its efforts through its involvement in the CHCO Council, which was established to advise and coordinate the human capital activities of its members' agencies. The CHCO Council has expressed its support of the strategic

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[8]OPM, *Working for America: Strategic and Operational Plan 2006-2010* (Washington, D.C., 2006). The FEBs were established by Presidential Directive in 1961. FEBs foster communication, coordination, and collaboration among federal field agencies and serve as a forum for the exchange of information between Washington and the field about programs, management strategies, and administrative challenges including human capital management.

goals articulated in OPM's 2010-2015 strategic plan, such as governmentwide initiatives addressing veterans employment, hiring reform, labor-management relations, diversity, and other efforts to hire the best employees for federal service.

Additionally, OPM advocates the use of its Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework (HCAAF), a set of tools and strategies available to federal agencies that assist officials in achieving results from their human capital programs.[9] The framework guides the assessment of agency human capital efforts, while allowing enough flexibility for federal agencies to tailor their human capital efforts to their missions, plans, and budgets.

We have previously recommended that OPM encourage continuous improvement and assist agencies' efforts in acquiring, developing, and retaining workforce talent.[10] According to OPM officials, OPM fulfills this role in part by assisting federal agencies and serving as a clearinghouse of information for agencies in developing and implementing work/life programs. Within OPM, the office responsible for this mission is the Office of Work/Life/Wellness—a component of the Office of Agency and Veterans' Support. OPM's Office of Work/Life/Wellness provides leadership on work/life issues to the federal government by partnering with federal agencies to help them develop and manage work/life programs that meet the human capital needs of the federal workforce, and providing the policies and guidance that form the foundation of these programs.[11]

We have also previously reported on the need for OPM to continue its leadership role in identifying and helping agencies apply human capital flexibilities and the need for agencies to develop management

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[9]OPM, *OPM Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Performance Report*. HCAAF offers guidance and integration so that all involved in transforming human capital management—such as OPM and the federal agencies—can understand how to manage human capital programs and how to gauge progress and results in managing their human capital programs.

[10]GAO, *Human Capital: Sustained Attention to Strategic Human Capital Management Needed*, GAO-09-632T (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 22, 2009).

[11]http://www.opm.gov/employment_and_benefits/worklife/aboutus (Washington, D.C., 2010) (accessed Nov. 2010).

infrastructure to make use of available flexibilities.[12] Recently, we reported on the need for agencies to use the flexibilities available to them, including using these flexibilities to retain older and more experienced workers.[13] In addition, in December 2002, we reported the views of agency human capital managers and employee union officers on the effectiveness of human capital flexibilities in managing federal agency workforces. These human capital managers and union officers frequently cited work/life programs as among the effective tools for workforce management.[14]

Most Responding Officials Were Satisfied with OPM's Assistance, Guidance, and Information Sharing on Work/Life Programs

OPM's Office of Work/Life/Wellness Provides Assistance, Guidance, and Information to Assist Federal Agencies in Addressing Work/Life Programs and Issues

OPM officials describe OPM's Office of Work/Life/Wellness as a source of assistance, guidance, and information that agencies may use to develop their own work/life programs. For example, OPM provides various tools to assist agencies as they address work/life programs and issues, such as accessible points of contact, formal working groups, and training. OPM also provides guidance to agencies by promulgating regulations and providing informal guidance such as memoranda and bulletins. In addition OPM shares work/life program information through tools such as newsletters and reports—for example, reports on the status of telework

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[12]GAO, *An Assessment of Dependent Care Needs of Federal Workers Using the Office of Personnel Management's Survey*, GAO-07-437R (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 30, 2007); *Human Capital: Agencies Need Leadership and the Supporting Infrastructure to Take Advantage of New Flexibilities*, GAO-05-616T (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 21, 2005); *Human Capital: OPM Can Better Assist Agencies in Using Personnel Flexibilities*, GAO-03-428 (Washington, D.C.: May 9, 2003).

[13]GAO, *Older Workers: Enhanced Communication among Federal Agencies Could Improve Strategies for Hiring and Retaining Experienced Workers*, GAO-09-206 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 24, 2009).

[14]GAO, *Human Capital: Effective Use of Flexibilities Can Assist Agencies in Managing Their Workforces*, GAO-03-2 (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 6, 2002).

and childcare. In its 2006-2010 strategic plan, OPM indicated that it would work with the federal executive boards to share guidance and leading practices across the federal government, and obtain feedback from federal agencies on human capital issues.[15] In addition, one of OPM's 2010-2015 strategic goals focuses on providing "the training, benefits, and work/life balance necessary for federal employees to succeed, prosper, and advance in their careers." To meet this goal, OPM proposes to:

- assist agencies to evaluate and revise policies, and to address employee satisfaction with work/life programs;
- guide agencies in implementing these programs; and
- provide agencies with information and tools that promote work/life programs.[16]

Responding Agency Officials Indicate Generally Positive Perceptions about OPM's Assistance, Guidance, and Information Sharing

Overall, our survey of CHCOs and work/life managers revealed that OPM has been helpful to agencies in implementing their work/life programs. As part of our survey, we asked agency officials to respond on behalf of their departments and/or agencies on how OPM's involvement helped or hindered their ability to implement work/life programs.[17] As shown in figure 1, of the 33 agency officials who responded to our survey, 24 indicated that OPM's assistance, guidance, and information sharing greatly helped or helped somewhat in implementing work/life programs. Another six agency officials indicated that OPM's assistance, guidance, and information sharing helped in some cases and hindered in others. Although our survey provided an opportunity for respondents to elaborate on their responses or cite examples in support of their responses, none of the agency officials responding to our survey did so.

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[15]2006-2010 OPM Strategic Plan.

[16]2010-2015 OPM Strategic Plan.

[17]Agency officials were asked to respond using a five-point scale, whether OPM's involvement: (1) greatly helped, (2) helped somewhat, (3) helped in some, hindered in others, (4) hindered somewhat, or (5) greatly hindered.

Figure 1: Responding Agency Officials Generally Found OPM Helped in Implementing Work/Life Programs

Number of respondents
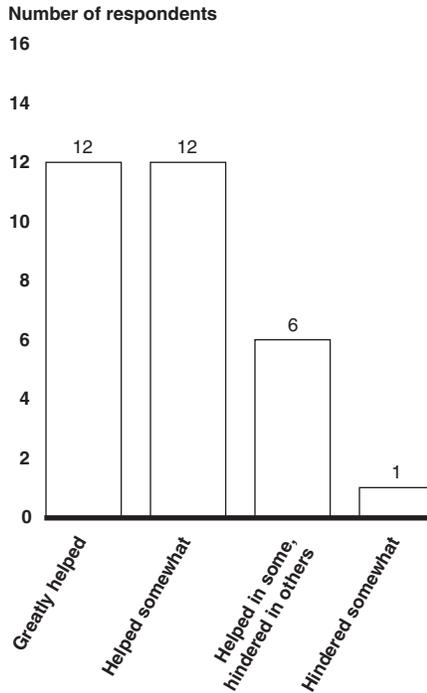
Source: GAO survey.

Note: Of 33 respondents, 2 answered "Not applicable or Do not know."

OPM officials stated that the Office of Work/Life/Wellness provides various tools to assist federal agencies implement work/life programs. For example, OPM offers training to agency officials that, among other things, helps them develop action plans to address employee satisfaction concerns related to work/life programs.[18] Also, OPM has designated points of contact who can assist agency officials to develop and implement work/life programs. In our survey, we asked agency officials to indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with OPM's assistance in developing and implementing work/life programs (such as accessible OPM points of contact, formal working groups, informal mentoring, and OPM sponsored training). As seen in figure 2, most of the 33 agency officials

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[18]In its memo to federal agencies on the 2011 budget submissions, OMB required agencies to submit action plans that address employee satisfaction with human capital programs including work/life programs.

responding to our survey were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the timeliness (22), quality (21), accessibility (22), and sufficiency (23) of OPM's assistance. For example, one agency official stated that OPM officials respond quickly to requests for assistance on work/life policy matters, and another agency official stated that OPM's work/life staff is always very responsive and helpful.

Figure 2: Responding Agency Officials Were Generally Satisfied with OPM's Assistance with Work/Life Programs

Number of respondents
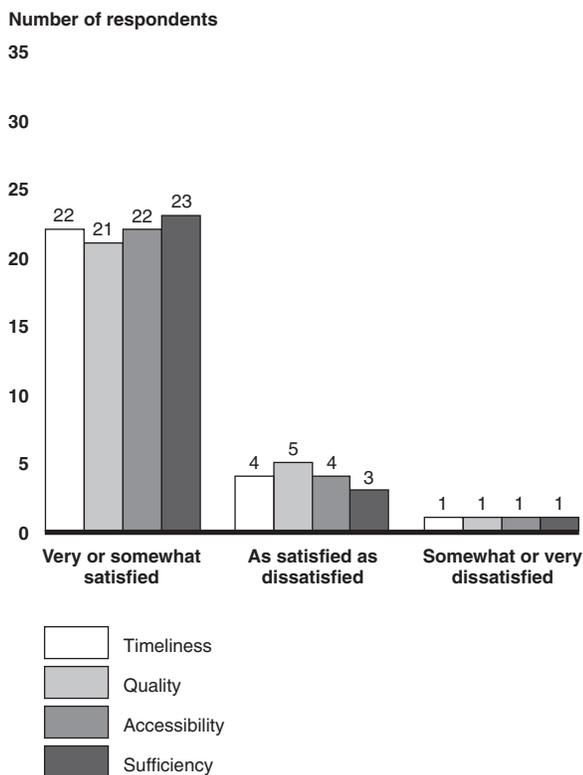
Source: GAO survey.

Note: Of the 33 respondents, 3 answered "Did not seek OPM assistance."

In addition to providing assistance to federal agencies, OPM also guides federal agencies by promulgating regulations for work/life programs and issuing programmatic guides and handbooks that explain the requirements for work/life programs such as employee assistance programs, part-time employment and job sharing, child care, and tobacco cessation. In our survey, we asked agency officials to indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with this guidance. As seen in figure 3, most of the 33 agency

officials responded that they were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the timeliness (22), quality (24), accessibility (22), and sufficiency (22) of the guidance they received from OPM. For example, one official stated that OPM greatly assisted his/her agency as it expanded its health and wellness program by providing the agency guidance and by participating in a summit meeting with the agency.

Figure 3: Responding Agency Officials Were Generally Satisfied with OPM's Guidance on Work/Life Programs

Number of respondents
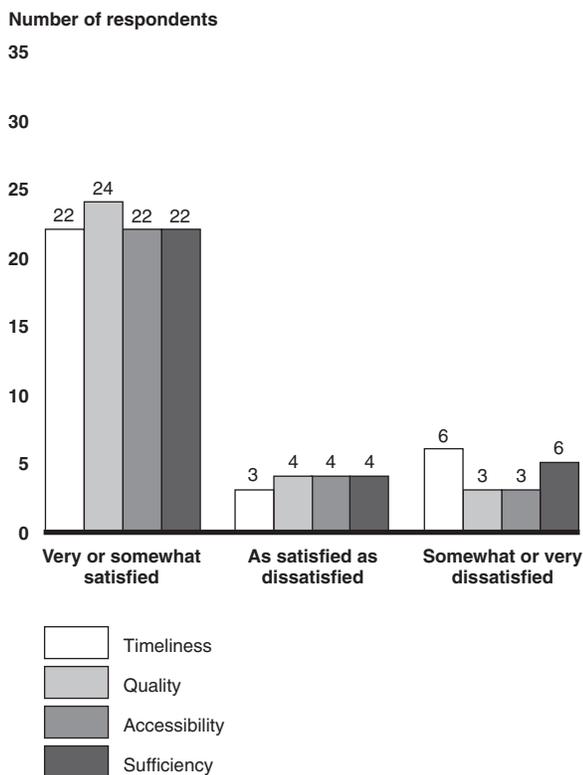
Source: GAO survey.

Note: Of the 33 respondents, 2 answered "Do not know."

According to OPM officials, the agency also shares information with federal agencies on leading practices of work/life programs using various avenues such as posting information to its Web site and notifying federal agencies through interactive listservs. Our survey asked how satisfied or dissatisfied agency officials were with OPM's efforts to share information on leading practices in work/life programs. As seen in figure 4, most of the 33 agency officials indicated that they were either very satisfied or

somewhat satisfied with the timeliness (22), quality (23), accessibility (23), and sufficiency (22) of the information they received from OPM. According to an official who responded to our survey, OPM has communicated the importance of these work/life programs and has provided practical suggestions to support agencies in defining goals and sharing best practices.

Figure 4: Responding Agency Officials Were Generally Satisfied with OPM's Information Sharing Regarding Work/Life Programs

Number of respondents
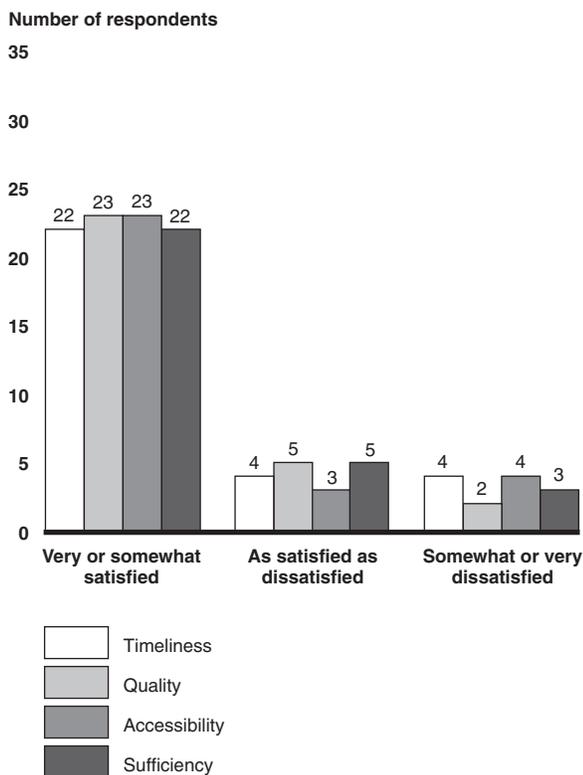
Source: GAO survey.

Note: Of the 33 respondents, 3 answered "Do not know."

OPM Tracks Some Work/Life Programs Governmentwide, While Many of the Responding Agency Officials Track or Evaluate Some of Their Own Work/Life Programs

OPM Tracks Some Work/Life Programs Governmentwide

Our prior work has indicated the need for federal agencies to track and use data that will allow them to measure a program's effectiveness including the changes in the program over time. Agencies need such measurements to help them determine if a particular human capital program—such as a work/life program—is worth the investment compared to other available human capital flexibilities targeted at employee recruitment and retention.[19] We also have previously recommended that OPM disseminate federal agencies' leading practices in human capital programs to help agencies recruit and retain their workforces.[20] Additionally, OMB's fiscal year 2012 budget guidance to federal agencies encourages agencies to: reconsider the basic design of their programs; incorporate the use of data in program design; foster innovation rooted in research; and finally, encourage the evaluation of the program.[21] Also, as part of its 2010-2015 strategic plan, OPM proposes to help agencies collect information that would allow agencies to continually improve their efforts to provide employees with a work/life balance.[22]

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[19]GAO, *Human Capital: Continued Opportunities Exist for FDA and OPM to Improve Oversight of Recruitment, Relocation, and Retention Incentives*, GAO-10-226 (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 10, 2010).

[20]GAO-09-206.

[21]OMB Memorandum to Agencies' Heads, *Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Guidance*, June 8, 2010.

[22]2010-2015 OPM Strategic Plan.

OPM tracks and collects information for a few work/life programs, notably childcare, telework, and health and wellness programs. In July 2009, OPM surveyed federal agencies about their health and wellness programs and specifically requested information on the: (1) number of health and wellness programs offered by each agency; (2) number of employees with access to the programs; (3) number of employees using the programs/services; (4) cost of the programs; and (5) metrics gathered on the programs.[23] OPM officials used this data to develop profiles of health and wellness programs across the federal government, and to help agencies formulate action plans for improving the health and wellness of federal employees. Using these program profiles, OPM developed an inventory of health and wellness programs across the federal government.

In response to OPM's 2009 survey, however, agency officials reported that they either were unable to develop cost data or that the cost data could not be broken down into meaningful components such as services, facilities, and labor. Additionally, OPM officials stated that the cost data they received provided minimal insight. As a result, when OPM requested federal agencies to report on their health and wellness programs for 2010, the request excluded asking for cost data on agencies' programs. Instead, OPM requested agencies to report on whether they had developed metrics for measuring their health and wellness programs rather than asking for the specific metrics. OPM does not collect information on other programs such as alternative work schedules, leave programs, and employee assistance programs (e.g., stress management and smoking cessation).

Many Responding Officials Track and Use Information They Independently Collect to Evaluate Some of Their Work/Life Programs

Agency officials responding to our survey indicated that their agencies track a variety of work/life programs beyond the programs tracked by OPM. As part of our survey, we asked these officials if their departments/agencies tracked (measured) the extent to which agency employees use these work/life programs. Of the 33 agency officials who responded to our survey, 29 indicated that they track either all or some of their work/life programs, as shown in figure 5.

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[23]OPM, "Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies re: Federal Agency Health and Wellness Reporting Requirements" (Washington, D.C.: July 14, 2009).

Figure 5: Most Responding Agency Officials Track the Usage of Some or All of Their Work/Life Programs

Number of respondents
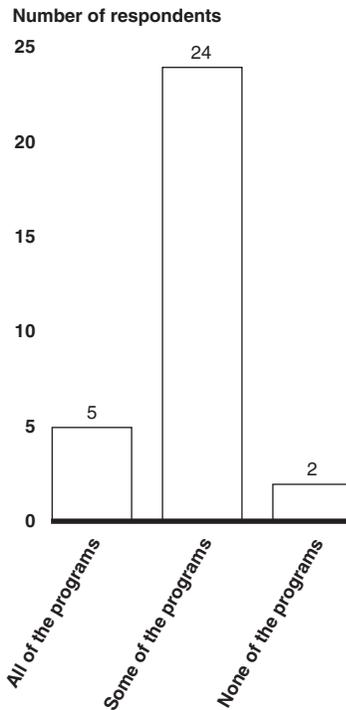
Source: GAO survey.

Note: Of the 33 respondents, 2 answered "Do not know."

Our survey further asked agency officials to specify if their agencies tracked work/life programs in the following categories: (1) alternative work schedules; (2) leave programs; (3) volunteerism and community involvement; (4) care giving; (5) flexible spending; (6) employee assistance programs; and (7) health promotion. The survey results showed that agencies were tracking programs across multiple categories. Specifically, of the 29 officials who indicated that their agencies track their work/life programs, the majority (20) indicated that their agencies track programs in four or more of these seven program categories.[24]

While most of the agency officials surveyed indicated that they track their work/life programs, we asked the officials if their departments or agencies

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[24]See table 1 for the list of work/life programs subcategories which were the basis of the categories used in our survey.

also evaluated (measured) the extent to which their work/life programs met their intended goals. These evaluations may be used to assess the programs' impact on the recruitment and/or retention of federal employees within the departments or agencies. Of the 33 agency officials responding to our survey, 21 indicated that they evaluated either all or some of their work/life programs, as shown in figure 6.

Figure 6: Many of the Responding Agency Officials Evaluate Some of Their Agencies' Work/Life Programs

Number of respondents
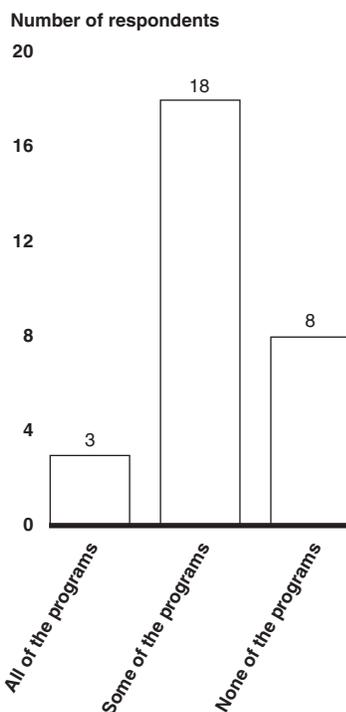
Source: GAO survey.

Note: Of the 33 respondents, 4 answered "Do not know."

Our survey also asked agency officials to specify if their agencies evaluated work/life programs in the seven categories listed above. The survey indicated that most agencies evaluated programs in at least one work/life program category. Of the 21 respondents who indicated that their agencies evaluated work/life programs, about one-half (10) indicated that their agencies evaluate programs in four or more of the seven program categories.

As a result of the agencies' independent evaluations of their work/life programs, some agency officials are potentially in a position to determine: (1) the extent to which their programs improve their ability to recruit and retain their employees and (2) whether or not they need to implement, modify, or eliminate work/life programs. The federal government continues to recognize the need to implement and modify current work/life programs. A March 2010 report published by the President's Council of Economic Advisors presented an economic perspective on workplace policies and practices and their effect on work/life balance.[25] The Council's report cited a survey of human resource managers that indicated work/life programs, such as family-supportive policies and flexible hours, were the single most important factor in private sector companies attracting and retaining employees.[26] We also surveyed agency officials about the effects of their work/life programs on employee recruitment and retention. Agency officials responding to our survey indicated that work/life programs offered by their agencies affect their ability to recruit and retain agency employees. About half of the officials indicated that offering work/life programs had a very great or great effect on their ability to recruit and retain agency employees. About another third indicated that work/life programs have a moderate effect on their ability to recruit and retain agency employees.

Agency officials may also use the evaluations of their work/life programs to modify, implement, or eliminate work/life programs. As shown in figure 7, 12 out of the 18 CHCOs responding to our survey indicated that they had modified their work/life programs based on the program data that they collected and evaluated. Ten of the 18 responding CHCOs had implemented new work/life programs based on the data they collected and evaluated. However, one of the agency officials responding to our survey indicated that current budget constraints affect an agency's ability to implement new programs.

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[25]The report provided information on: (1) some of the changes in the private sector workforce that have increased the need for flexibility in the workplace; (2) the current state of flexible work arrangements and how many employers have adapted to the changing realities in the private sector workforce and (3) the economic benefits of workplace flexibility arrangements.

[26]Executive Office of the President, Council of Economic Advisers, *Work-Life Balance and the Economics of Workplace Flexibility* (Washington, D.C., Mar. 2010). The survey was conducted by Corporate Voices for Working Families—a nonprofit organization representing the private sector on corporate and public policy issues involving working families.

Figure 7: Many of the Responding CHCOs Use Information to Modify or Implement New Work/Life Programs

Number of respondents
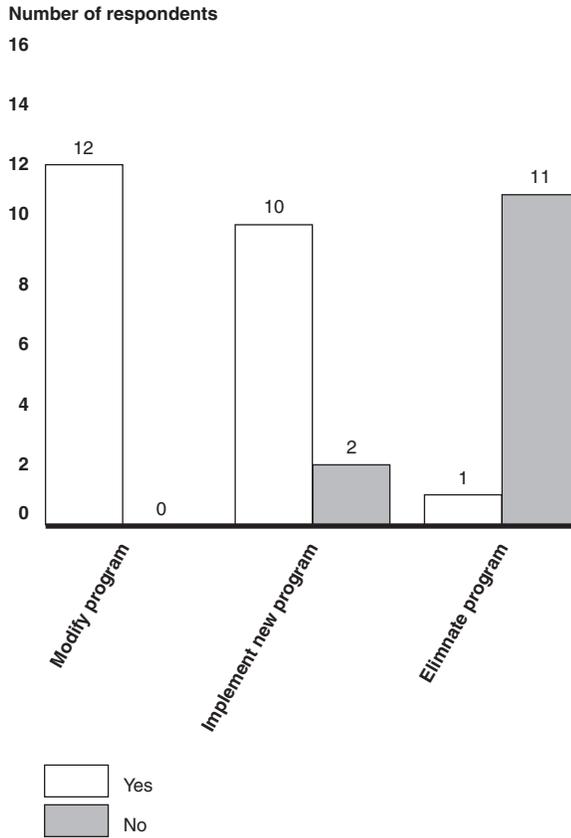
Source: GAO survey.

Note: Of the 18 CHCOs who responded, 6 did not answer this question.

Most of the agency officials responding to our survey indicated that they track many of their work/life programs. In addition, according to OPM officials, some federal agencies independently provide OPM with data and evaluations on various work/life programs. OPM officials stated that they do not share this information across federal agencies because they lack the time and resources to maintain an inventory of these evaluations. OPM officials said that the recent addition of staff to the Office of Work/Life/Wellness will enable them to review reports they may receive in the future. At the time of this review, there were no staff or resources to track, review, or maintain an inventory of these evaluations. Offering agencies more information about which work/life programs are in place across the federal government and their impact on meeting agency-

intended goals could be helpful in a budget-constrained environment. Agency CHCOs could play a valuable and central role in the selection and collection of information in or about work/life programs.

OPM Does Not Systematically Collect or Share Information on Private Sector Work/Life Programs

OPM Has Collected Information on Some Private Sector Work/Life Programs but Does Not Presently Share It with Federal Agencies

Our prior work on federal agencies' human capital efforts demonstrated the benefits of consulting with the private sector on human capital practices. For example, federal agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service and the Veterans Health Administration have incorporated private sector practices for identifying the critical skills and training needs of their workforces.[27] Also, in its strategic plan for 2010-2015, OPM defines as one of its goals having a suite of flexible work/life programs to promote a healthy work/life balance for federal employees. One of the strategies OPM proposed for achieving this goal is to evaluate the results of surveys from public and private sector organizations to identify leading practices across the sectors. The plan further indicates that OPM will provide federal agencies with these results to provide the agencies various options that they may use to compare their work/life programs with leading private sector practices.[28] However, while OPM has developed a health and wellness pilot program based on discussions with private sector representatives, it has not yet shared information about private sector work/life programs with federal agencies.

In May 2009, OPM participated in White House-sponsored meetings with representatives of large, privately-owned companies to discuss how health and wellness programs affect the private sector's workforce recruitment and retention. Also discussed during these meetings was the

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[27]GAO, *Human Capital: Selected Agencies' Experiences and Lessons Learned in Designing Training and Development Programs*, GAO-04-291 (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 30, 2004).

[28]OPM 2010-2015 Strategic Plan.

administration's WellCheck initiative, which is intended to improve federal health and wellness programs. These meetings prompted OPM to collect information about federal agencies' health and wellness programs in July 2009, as mentioned previously. Subsequently, in early 2010, OPM held two roundtables and several meetings with private sector company officials to obtain more information about private sector health and wellness programs. These meetings, according to an OPM official, helped the government representatives obtain a better understanding of models for workplace health programs and leading practices in workplace wellness.

According to OPM officials, the meetings with private sector health and wellness representatives led to the development of an OPM pilot program designed to create a healthier and more pleasant work environment for employees at the headquarters buildings of OPM, the Department of the Interior, and the General Services Administration, which are located close to each other. The pilot, known as WellnessWorks, seeks to develop a shared "work-life" campus by improving health and wellness facilities at the headquarters locations for each of the agencies. OPM has hired a wellness coordinator and is purchasing the services of a wellness service provider for the campus. The service provider will complement the existing services of the three agencies and increase the level of services across the campus to match leading practices in the private sector. WellnessWorks will offer the employees access to health and wellness services such as:

- an assessment that includes productivity and scientifically defined areas of well-being, in addition to physical health, mental health, and health behaviors;
- biometric testing, consisting of height and weight measurement and blood testing for cholesterol levels;
- programs to encourage healthy behaviors, such as weight management classes, exercise, tobacco cessation, and chronic disease management;
- face-to-face and Web-based health education resources; and
- immunizations, allergy shots, and routine injections.[29]

OPM officials will evaluate the pilot program and they plan to provide details on developing this type of collaborative "shared work/life campus" to federal agencies across the government.

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[29]OPM, Fact Sheet on Federal Employee Health and Wellness Initiative (2010).

Although OPM used information from the private sector to develop the WellnessWorks program with the goal of implementing it across the federal government, OPM has not shared with federal departments and agencies information about other health and wellness programs, or other work/life programs implemented in the private sector. Currently, OPM has not placed information on its Web site about private sector practices. Additionally, our work showed that none of the agency officials responding to our survey indicated that OPM provides them with this type of information. An OPM official told us that the agency has not considered providing this information because: (1) OPM officials have been focusing on other work/life programs such as telework and child care and (2) similar information is readily available through other sources (e.g., the Society for Human Resources Management). According to this official, OPM may consider providing agencies with the information collected from the private sector if the agencies express an interest in the information and the agencies understand that OPM is not endorsing or recommending any of the private sector programs.

Selected Private Companies Offer, Track, and Evaluate a Range of Work/Life Programs

To identify useful information available to OPM and federal agencies concerning private sector work/life programs, we selected seven private sector companies that have been recognized by human capital associations and publications as providing their employees with quality work/life programs: (1) Deloitte; (2) Ernst & Young; (3) Marriott International; (4) MetLife; (5) General Mills; (6) SC Johnson & Son; and one company that requested anonymity (see appendix I for the private sector company selection methodology).[30] These companies, representing various industries, generally offer work/life programs in the same categories and subcategories and for similar reasons as federal agencies. Table 2 lists examples of the types of programs private sector companies offer.

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[30] According to a Deloitte official, "Deloitte" means Deloitte LLP and its subsidiaries.

Table 2: Examples of Work/Life Programs at Selected Private Sector Companies

Category	Subcategory	Work/life programs
Workplace flexibilities	Alternative work schedules	Flexible scheduling
		Seasonal work hours
	Leave programs	Parental leave
		Sabbaticals
	Volunteerism/community involvement	Company-supported employee interest groups
Family	Care giving programs	Child care subsidies
		Emergency child/elder care
Health and wellness	Flexible spending accounts	Health care
	Employee assistance programs	Smoking cessation
		24/7 counseling/referral services
	Health promotion	Fitness centers and programs
		Health education and counseling

Source: GAO, based on interviews with seven private sector company officials.

Note: We used the same categories and subcategories developed by OPM.

The work/life private sector program managers informed us that they use various sources of information to determine future program needs, such as employee feedback and demographic analysis of the workforce. For example, officials from one company said that after concluding a study of working parents and their families, they decided to expand their parental leave program well beyond the industry average to help their employees balance the demands of family and career. Managers at four of the seven private sector companies told us that they compare work/life programs offered by their companies with those of other companies in the same industry or in the same geographic area to make sure they are competitive for attracting and retaining talent. Also, managers at two of the seven companies mentioned that they belong to professional human capital management organizations, which provide opportunities to share information about work/life program offerings.

The work/life managers from the participating private sector companies told us that they evaluate their programs on a regular basis to determine whether the programs are enhancing workforce recruitment and retention. According to the managers, some programs can be tracked through usage data. However, they also told us that their companies do not judge the success or failure of a program based on how frequently it is used. One

manager stated that his/her company encourages participation and seeks to overcome any barriers to program use, such as lack of awareness or lack of manager support.

Private sector companies also reported tracking the use of their flexible work schedule programs by the number of flexibility agreements on record and by employee time and attendance records to determine the extent to which company employees are using the available flexibilities. For programs that do not have usage data, the company may rely on employee feedback through e-mail, Web site comments, or personal contact to determine (1) how much a program is being used and (2) how satisfied users are with the programs. Managers told us that through this process of tracking and evaluating, they were able to align the work/life programs they offer with their employees' needs and thus enhance recruitment and increase retention. For example, one manager stated the need to develop a business case for implementing his/her company's work schedule flexibilities by surveying employees to measure the effect of these flexibilities in attracting and retaining employees. More than 75 percent of the employees indicated that the flexibilities were of significant importance in deciding to remain with the company. Another manager told us that his/her company steadily tracks the impact of the work/life programs, and that since the current set of work/life programs were introduced, employees expressed that there was more balance between their careers and personal lives.

Managers at four of the seven companies we spoke to indicated that the work/life programs instituted by their companies had had a great or very great effect on recruitment, retention, and productivity. One manager said that work/life programs were a key enabler of the corporate culture of flexibility and inclusion. Another told us that work/life programs had a very great effect on achieving the company's goals of enhancing retention and work satisfaction.

Conclusions

Overall, agency officials indicated that they were satisfied with OPM's assistance, guidance, and information sharing as they developed and implemented work/life programs. However, OPM is potentially missing opportunities to provide federal agencies with additional information that may be useful to agencies in their efforts to develop and implement work/life programs. While OPM has limited its collection and evaluation of federal work/life programs to only a few, some federal agencies are independently tracking and collecting work/life program usage data on a wider range of programs such as alternative work schedules and employee assistance programs. The agencies are also using these data to conduct assessments of these programs and use the results to make programmatic changes. Sharing data among agencies on the effect of work/life programs on agency-intended goals could be helpful for agency decision making in a budget-constrained environment. OPM officials said that they did not track or maintain an inventory of these evaluations nor review these evaluations. OPM officials said that the recent addition of staff to the Office of Work/Life/Wellness will enable them to review reports they may receive in the future.

OPM's Office of Work/Life/Wellness has met with private sector company representatives to examine private sector health and wellness programs and the leading practices used to implement those programs, however the office does not systematically collect information on other private sector work/life programs. A more systematic approach for examining how work/life programs have been implemented and evaluated in public and private sector organizations, as well as making this information more readily available, could benefit federal agencies' own efforts to establish work/life programs. In keeping with its mission to help federal agencies in their human capital management efforts, OPM can play a key role in the collection and dissemination of this type of information. Additionally, by adopting this role, OPM can make progress on its strategic goal of providing the agencies with various options that could be used to ensure that their agencies' work/life program offerings are aligned with leading practices identified in the public and private sector.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We recommend that the Director of OPM, working with the CHCO Council, identify the resources, steps, and timetable necessary to complete the following three actions:

(1) track on a more systematic basis information already being collected by individual federal agencies on their work/life programs, such as program usage data and evaluations;

(2) evaluate the results of work/life program surveys conducted by leading private sector organizations, as stated in OPM's 2010-2015 strategic plan, that could help federal agencies as they implement their work/life programs; and

(3) provide the information from both the public and private sectors, including other comprehensive evaluations produced by academic institutions, state entities, and other organizations, to agency officials—through available avenues such as the CHCO Council and federal executive boards—that could help them address work/life program issues and determine if the work/life programs are meeting their agencies' goals.

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to the Director of OPM for review and comment. OPM provided written comments which are reproduced in appendix III. OPM generally concurred with our recommendations but requested small modifications to two recommendations that include private sector work/life programs. OPM also provided technical comments which we incorporated as appropriate.

OPM concurred with our recommendation that OPM evaluate the results of work/life program surveys conducted by leading private sector organizations. However, OPM cautioned that there are enough differences between private and public sector motivations and cultures that a direct comparison of policies and practices may not provide federal agencies with a comprehensive set of "ready-to-use" solutions as they implement their work/life programs. Also, OPM does not want to appear to selectively endorse leading practices in the private sector as solutions for implementing federal work/life programs. We agree with OPM that some leading private sector practices may not be applicable to federal agencies and that OPM should not appear to selectively endorse leading private sector practices. However, we do believe that communicating these leading practices without endorsing them could provide federal agencies with additional information that federal agency officials could use in implementing their work/life programs. We revised the recommendation to reflect our agreement with OPM.

OPM also concurred with our recommendation that OPM provide information from both the public and private sector to agency officials that could help the agency officials address work/life program issues and determine if these programs are meeting the agencies' goals. However, they asked that we add other evaluations of public and private work/life

programs published by academic institutions, state entities, and other organizations such as the Sloan Foundation.[31] We agree with OPM's assessment that other available evaluations of public and private sector work/life programs could provide information to federal agency officials as they implement work/life programs. We revised the recommendation to reflect our agreement with OPM.

We are sending this report to other interested parties and to the Director of OPM. In addition, the report will be available free of charge at http://www.gao.gov.

If you, or your staff, have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-6806 or jonesy@gao.gov. Contact points for our offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff that made major contributions to this report are listed in appendix IV.

Yvonne D. Jones
Director, Strategic Issues

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[31]The Sloan Foundation is a non-profit, philanthropic organization that among other projects has provided research grants to study work-family issues such as initiatives to expand workplace flexibility.

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

This appendix details the objectives and scope of our report, and the methodology used to provide information to the requesters about the role of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in providing assistance, guidance, and oversight to federal agencies concerning work/life programs, and about private sector work/life programs. Our requesters asked us to determine the extent to which

(1) OPM provides assistance and guidance to federal agencies for establishing and enhancing work/life programs;

(2) OPM or the federal agencies track, evaluate, or refine work/life programs; and

(3) OPM has identified leading practices in the private sectors for the implementation of work/life programs and shared this information with federal agencies.

In order to address the first two objectives, we designed and administered a Web-based survey (see app. II for a copy of our questionnaire and survey results). The survey was conducted using a self-administered electronic questionnaire which was sent to a nonprobability sample consisting of 20 Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) at selected federal departments or agencies who also serve as members of the CHCO Council.[1] The same Web-based survey was also sent to a separate nonprobability sample of 20 work/life program managers from subcomponents of these departments or agencies. The purpose of the survey was to obtain respondents' perceptions on behalf of their departments or agencies of OPM's assistance, guidance, and information sharing during a one-year period.[2] Because a portion of the survey focused on agency perceptions of OPM's assistance, we excluded OPM's CHCO from our sample. Additionally, because we intended the survey respondents to speak on behalf of their department or agency, we excluded two CHCO Council members who serve as proxies for numerous federal agencies, specifically one member

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[1]The CHCO Council consists of 25 members: the OPM Director, the Office of Management and Budget Deputy Director of Management, and the CHCOs from the 15 Executive departments and an additional 8 federal agency CHCOs designated by the OPM Director.

[2]We asked the survey recipients to focus their perceptions about OPM's assistance, guidance, and information sharing during the one-year period beginning with April 2009 and ending April 2010. This time period coincides with the first year of tenure of the new Director of OPM and would reflect any changes in OPM's policies (or actions) resulting from the new OPM administration.

representing small federal agencies and another member representing
federal national security and intelligence agencies. Also included in the
survey questionnaire were questions designed to obtain information on
how these agencies track, evaluate, and modify their own work/life
programs. Table 3 lists the federal departments selected for our survey and
the number of respondents who completed our survey.

**Table 3: Federal Departments and Agencies Receiving our Survey and the Number
of Completed Responses**

Department/agency	Survey completed by CHCO	Survey completed by work/life managers
Department of Agriculture	1	1
Department of Commerce	1	0
Department of Defense	1	0
Department of Education	1	0
Department of Energy	1	1
Department of Health and Human Services	1	1
Department of Homeland Security	0	0
Department of Housing and Urban Development	1	1
Department of the Interior	1	1
Department of Justice	1	1
Department of Labor	1	1
Department of State	0	1
Department of Transportation	1	1
Department of the Treasury	1	1
Department of Veterans Affairs	1	1
Environmental Protection Agency	1	1
General Services Administration	1	1
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	1	0
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	1	1
Social Security Administration	1	1
Total	**18**	**15**

Source: GAO.

Note: Thirty-three out of a potential 40 agency officials responded to our survey.

We pretested the survey instrument with representatives from two federal
agencies during June and July 2010 and administered the survey to our
selected respondents from July through September 2010.

The practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce errors,
commonly referred to as nonsampling errors. For example, difficulties in
how a particular question is interpreted, in the sources of information that
are available to respondents, or in how the survey data are analyzed can
all introduce unwanted variability into survey results. To minimize such
nonsampling errors, a social science survey specialist designed the
questionnaire, in collaboration with GAO staff that had subject matter
expertise. As indicated above, the questionnaire was pretested to ensure
that the questions were relevant, clearly stated, and easy to comprehend.
When data were analyzed, an independent analyst reviewed the computer
program used for the analysis of the survey data. Since this was a Web-
based survey, respondents entered their answers directly into the
electronic questionnaire, thereby eliminating the need to have the data
keyed into a database and avoiding data entry errors. The results of our
survey are not generalizable to all agency officials or to all agencies
because they are based on a nonprobability sample. Also, for those agency
officials responding that their agencies evaluate their work/life programs,
we did not independently determine whether or how well they actually
evaluate their work/life programs.

We reviewed past GAO human capital reports on issues dealing with
work/life programs. We also interviewed OPM work/life officials to obtain
OPM's description of its role in interacting with federal agencies as they
develop and implement work/life programs. This included reviewing
OPM's *A New Day for Federal Service: Strategic Plan 2010-2015*, its
2006-2010 strategic plan; past OPM reports on work/life programs; and
available written policy, guidance, and directives. We also visited the
agency's Web site to examine the material available to federal agencies
and employees on work/life assistance, guidance, and identification of
leading practices.

In order to address our third objective on the identification of some
leading practices in the private sector, we reviewed publicly available
information sources to identify private sector companies that are leaders
and award winners in providing work/life programs to their workforces.
The awards are based on the types of work/life programs offered and the
diversity of the company's workforce. Some of the awards include

- *Fortune Magazine*, "Best Places to Work"—includes separate awards for work/life balance, child care, telecommuting, and unusual perks (2009);
- AARP, "Best Employers" (2008);
- *Working Mother's Magazine*, "100 Best Companies" (2008);
- Alfred Sloan Awards for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility (2005, 2006);
- *Latina Style*, "50 Special Report" (2008);
- *Black Enterprise*, "40 Best Companies for Diversity" (2009); and
- Diversity Inc., Top 50 (2009).

After reviewing these information sources, we identified 17 companies that received multiple awards from the sources we reviewed, based on a process of weighting the awards received. Out of the 17 companies that we reviewed, 7 agreed to be interviewed. The companies that we interviewed represented 6 of the 7 industry categories that we identified.[3] Table 4 lists the participating private sector companies and the industries they represent.

Table 4: Private Sector Companies Selected as Leaders in Work/Life Programs

Industry	Company
Audit/consulting	Deloitte[a]
Communications	[b]
Financial services	Ernst & Young
Hospitality	Marriott International
Insurance/financial products	MetLife
Manufacturing	General Mills
	SC Johnson & Son

Source: GAO.

[a]According to a Deloitte official, "Deloitte" means Deloitte LLP and its subsidiaries.

[b]Company requested anonymity.

We developed a structured interview instrument that we administered to officials from the participating private sector companies to obtain information on the development and implementation of work/life programs within their companies. We also asked the officials to describe

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[3]We originally selected one company in the computer/technology services industry, but that company declined to be interviewed.

how their companies track, evaluate, and modify their work/life programs
and how this information is used to make decisions about their work/life
programs. Also, for those private sector company officials responding that
their companies evaluate their work/life programs, we did not
independently determine whether or how well they actually evaluate their
work/life programs. However, these seven companies are not
representative of all private sector companies and therefore, we cannot
generalize the information these private sector officials provided about
their work/life programs to other private sector companies.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2009 through
December 2010 in accordance with generally accepted government
auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the
audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable
basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We
believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our
findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Survey of OPM's Role in Federal Agencies' Work/Life Programs

U.S. Government Accountability Office

Please Note: Numbers reported are based on 33 federal departments/agencies responding to this survey. The total number of responses for any one question may be less than 33 because all respondents did not answer all questions.

Introduction

The U.S. Government Accountability Office, an agency of Congress, is exploring the implementation of programs that help federal employees balance both their personal and professional responsibilities. The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, the Senate Select Committee on Aging, and the Senate Subcommittee on Governmental Management asked GAO to address the extent to which: (1) the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is providing agencies with assistance and guidance for establishing and enhancing work/life programs, and (2) OPM and federal agencies are tracking, evaluating and/or refining work/life programs. To meet these objectives, GAO designed this survey to solicit agencies' views on OPM's assistance and guidance for implementing work/life programs and to determine how agencies track and evaluate these programs.

GAO is administering this survey to departmental Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) who are members of the CHCO Council and to a sample of work/life program managers at the agency level within these departments. In responding to the survey, please feel free to consult with colleagues as needed to answer the survey questions. We ask that the CHCO respondents frame their answers from a departmentwide perspective and that the work/life program managers frame their answers from their agency's perspective.

To learn more about completing the questionnaire, printing your responses, and who to contact if you have questions, instructions.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in taking part in our survey.

Survey Respondent

1. Please provide the following information for the person primarily responsible for completing this survey in case we need to contact you to clarify a response.

    Name: Data intentionally not reported
    Position title:
    Department/Agency:
    Telephone:
    E-mail address:

1

Work/Life Program Inventory

2. We have classified several work/life programs available to federal employees **(excluding teleworking/telecommuting and flexiplace)** into seven categories. A number of these programs are required by law while some programs are authorized but not required.

For each of the seven work/life categories listed below, based on your current knowledge, which statement(s) best represents the situation in your department/agency?

Category 1 - Alternative work schedules (such as compressed schedule and flexible hours schedule) *(Select all answers that apply.)*

9	We offer at least one program in this category **because it is required by law.**
21	We offer at least one program in this category **even though it is not required by law.** - *See below.*
4	We offer at least one program in this category **but do not know whether required or not by law.** - *See below.*
0	We **do not offer any programs** in this category.

If your department/agency offers any programs in **category 1** that are **not required by law** or if you **do not know if it is required by law,** please provide examples of the specific program(s) you offer.

Data intentionally not reported

Category 2 – Leave Programs (such as leave for family care) *(Select all answers that apply.)*

28	We offer at least one program in this category **because it is required by law.**
6	We offer at least one program in this category **even though it is not required by law.** - *See below.*
6	We offer at least one program in this category **but do not know whether required or not by law.** - *See below.*
0	We **do not offer any programs** in this category.

If your department/agency offers any programs in **category 2** that are **not required by law** or if you **do not know if it is required by law,** please provide examples of the specific program(s) you offer.

Data intentionally not reported

2

Category 3 – Flexible Spending Accounts (such as dependent care and health care) *(Select all answers that apply.)*

16   We offer at least one program in this category **because it is required by law.**

10   We offer at least one program in this category **even though it is not required by law.** - *See below.*

8   We offer at least one program in this category **but do not know whether required or not by law.** - *See below.*

2   We **do not offer any programs** in this category.

If your department/agency offers any programs in **category 3** that are **not required by law** or if you **do not know if it is required by law**, please provide examples of the specific program(s) you offer.

Data intentionally not reported

Category 4 – Care Giving Programs (such as child care, elder/dependent care, and support for care giving) *(Select all answers that apply.)*

7   We offer at least one program in this category **because it is required by law.**

21   We offer at least one program in this category **even though it is not required by law.** - *See below.*

4   We offer at least one program in this category **but do not know whether required or not by law.** - *See below.*

3   We **do not offer any programs** in this category.

If your department/agency offers any programs in **category 4** that are **not required by law** or if you **do not know if it is required by law**, please provide examples of the specific program(s) you offer.

Data intentionally not reported

3

Category 5 – Employee Assistance Programs (such as stress management, smoking cessation, and counseling) *(Select all answers that apply.)*

25   We offer at least one program in this category **because it is required by law.**

20   We offer at least one program in this category **even though it is not required by law.** - *See below.*

3   We offer at least one program in this category **but do not know whether required or not by law.** - *See below.*

0   We **do not offer any programs** in this category.

If your department/agency offers any programs in **category 5** that are **not required by law** or if you **do not know if it is required by law**, please provide examples of the specific program(s) you offer.

Data intentionally not reported

Category 6 – Volunteerism/Community Involvement Programs (such as blood donation and tutoring) *(Select all answers that apply.)*

3   We offer at least one program in this category **because it is required by law.**

26   We offer at least one program in this category **even though it is not required by law.** - *See below.*

4   We offer at least one program in this category **but do not know whether required or not by law.** - *See below.*

2   We **do not offer any programs** in this category.

If your department/agency offers any programs in **category 6** that are **not required by law** or if you **do not know if it is required by law**, please provide examples of the specific program(s) you offer.

4

Category 7 – Health and Wellness Programs (such as fitness programs and health screening) *(Select all answers that apply.)*

3   We offer at least one program in this category **because it is required by law.**

25   We offer at least one program in this category **even though it is not required by law.** - *See below.*

3   We offer at least one program in this category **but do not know whether required or not by law.** - *See below.*

2   We **do not offer any programs** in this category.

If your department/agency offers any programs in **category 7** that are **not required by law** or if you **do not know if it is required by law,** please provide examples of the specific program(s) you offer.

Data intentionally not reported

3. Based on your experience, to what extent, if at all, do your department's/agency's work/life programs **improve the recruitment and retention of its employees?** (Select one answer in each row in a, b, and c below.)

a. Work/life programs offered that are required by law

	Not applicable, programs not offered	Very great extent	Great extent	Moderate extent	Some extent	Little or no extent	Do not know
Improves recruitment	0	6	11	10	3	1	2
Improves retention	0	6	12	9	2	0	2

b. Work/life programs offered that are not required by law but are authorized by your department/agency

	Not applicable, programs not offered	Very great extent	Great extent	Moderate extent	Some extent	Little or no extent	Do not know
Improves recruitment	0	6	10	13	1	0	3
Improves retention	0	7	9	9	3	0	3

5

c. Work/life programs offered that may or may not be required by law (i.e., you were
not sure)

	Not applicable, programs not offered	Very great extent	Great extent	Moderate extent	Some extent	Little or no extent	Do not know
Improves recruitment	5	2	5	7	2	0	9
Improves retention	5	2	7	4	2	1	8

Implementing Department/Agency Work/Life Programs

Please note: All remaining questions in this questionnaire refer to ALL work/life programs
(excluding teleworking/telecommuting and flexiplace), both those required
by law **and** those not required but authorized.

4. Based on your experience, how has each of the following factors helped or hindered your
department's/agency's ability to **implement work/life programs?** *(Select one answer in
each row.)*

	Greatly helped	Helped somewhat	Helped in some, hindered in others	Hindered somewhat	Greatly hindered	Not applicable/ Do not know
a. OPM involvement (e.g., guidance, assistance, information sharing, etc.)	12	12	6	1	0	2
b. Level of support from your department's/agency's **top-level** management	21	10	2	0	0	0
c. Level of support from your department's/agency's **mid-level** management	16	13	3	0	1	0
d. Availability of funding necessary for implementation of work/life program(s)	12	8	0	3	7	3
e. Level of employee demand (from too little to too much) for work/life program(s)	7	16	4	0	1	4
f. Labor/management agreements	4	8	12	1	0	8
g. Other factors - *Please specify below:*	0	0	0	1	2	11

Please specify other factors that helped
or hindered implementation

Data intentionally not reported

6

5. Please describe how issues related to how jobs are structured or work is performed by your department's/agency's employees (e.g., requirement that employees must work on-site for security reasons) helps and/or hinders your department's/agency's ability to implement work/life programs.

Data intentionally not reported

6. What was the **most significant challenge** that your department/agency encountered when trying to implement a work/life program? In your answer, please include the program being implemented, the challenge faced, and the end result of the challenge.

Data intentionally not reported

Departments'/Agencies' Perception of OPM

In this section, we ask about how you perceive OPM's involvement in your department's/ agency's selection, development, and implementation of work/life programs. By OPM's involvement, we are referring to any guidance, assistance, and information they shared with your department/agency. When answering these questions, please use the following OPM definitions:

Guidance - includes formal guidance (regulations) and informal guidance (such as memoranda, e-mails, and OPM bulletins).

Assistance - includes such things as accessible OPM points of contact, formal working groups, informal mentoring, and OPM sponsored training.

Information sharing - includes such things as interactive listservs, newsletters, and access to reports.

7

7. Thinking about the **guidance** that your department/agency has received from OPM during the past year, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with how OPM met the following criteria? *(Select one answer in each row.)*

	Did not seek guidance from OPM	Sought but did not receive guidance from OPM	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	As satisfied as dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Do not know
a. Timeliness	0	0	10	12	3	2	4	2
b. Quality	0	0	13	11	4	2	1	2
c. Ease of obtaining	0	0	10	12	4	3	2	2
d. Sufficiency (in terms of quality or detail)	0	0	10	12	4	2	3	2

8. Thinking about the **assistance** that your department/agency has received from OPM during the past year, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with how OPM met the following criteria? *(Select one answer in each row.)*

	Did not seek assistance from OPM	Sought but did not receive assistance from OPM	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	As satisfied as dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Do not know
a. Timeliness	3	0	11	11	4	1	0	3
b. Quality	3	0	16	5	5	1	0	3
c. Ease of obtaining	3	0	10	12	4	0	1	3
d. Sufficiency (in terms of quality or detail)	3	0	13	10	3	0	1	3

8

9. Thinking about the **information that OPM has shared with your department/agency**
during the past year, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with how OPM met the following
criteria? *(Select one answer in each row.)*

	Did not seek infor-mation from OPM	Sought but did not receive infor-mation from OPM	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	As satisfied as dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Do not know
a. Timeliness	0	0	13	9	4	3	1	3
b. Quality	0	0	14	9	5	1	1	3
c. Ease of obtaining	0	0	9	14	3	3	1	3
d. Sufficiency (in terms of quality or detail)	0	0	12	10	5	1	2	3

10. Overall, would you say that OPM's direct involvement with your department/agency during
the past year has helped or hindered your department's/agency's selection, development,
and implementation of work/life programs? *(Select one answer in each row. If your
department/agency had no interaction with OPM, please respond "No interaction with
OPM." If OPM's involvement helped your department/agency in some work/life programs
but hindered in others, please respond "Helped in some, hindered in others.")*

	No interaction with OPM	Greatly helped	Helped somewhat	Helped in some, hindered in others	Hindered somewhat	Greatly hindered	Do not know
a. **Selection** of work/life programs	9	6	11	4	0	0	3
b. **Development** of work/life programs	8	6	12	4	0	0	3
c. **Implementation** of work/life programs	8	6	12	3	0	0	4

10a. If in any row of question 10 you answered that OPM's involvement helped your
department/agency in some work/life programs but hindered in others, please describe what
helped and/or hindered your department/agency.

Data intentionally not reported

9

Tracking/Monitoring of Work/Life Programs

In this section our questions focus on how your department/agency currently tracks or monitors the work/life programs **(excluding teleworking/telecommuting and flexiplace)** offered to its employees. The next section will focus on how your department/agency evaluates the work/life programs offered to its employees.

By **tracking or monitoring** we mean measuring the extent to which your employees use these programs. This may include checks of time and attendance records, automated deductions from employees' paychecks, sign-in sheets at meetings, employee surveys, etc.

11. Does your department/agency currently **track or monitor** the extent to which the work/life programs it offers to its employees are actually used by the employees?

    5   Yes, **all** of the programs - *Continue with question 12.*
   24   Yes, **some** of the programs - *Continue with question 12.*
   2   No, **none** of the programs – *Go to page: Evaluation of Work/Life Programs*
            ----
   2   Do not know – *Go to page: Evaluation of Work/Life Programs*

12. For each of the work/life programs that your department/agency currently tracks or monitors, in which of the following ways is this tracking or monitoring carried out? *(Check all answers that apply in each row. If you track or monitor programs in a way not listed in the matrix heading, please identify in question 12a.)*

	We do not track or monitor this program	By analyzing time and attendance records	By monitoring automated deductions from employees' paychecks	By keeping track of sign-in sheets at meetings	By conducting employee surveys	By keeping logs of "contact time" or direct-service delivery hours
a. **Alternative work schedules** (such as compressed schedule and flexible hours schedule)	9	17	0	1	4	1
b. **Leave Programs** (such as leave for family care)	11	15	0	1	4	1
c. **Flexible Spending Accounts** (such as dependent care and health care)	14	2	11	0	2	1
d. **Care Giving Programs** (such as child care, elder/dependent care, and support for care giving)	10	1	1	7	5	9

Continued on next page

10

Question 12 *(Continued)*

	We do not track or monitor this program	By analyzing time and attendance records	By monitoring automated deductions from employees' paychecks	By keeping track of sign-in sheets at meetings	By conducting employee surveys	By keeping logs of "contact time" or direct-service delivery hours
e. **Employee Assistance Programs** (such as stress management, smoking cessation, and counseling)	3	0	0	9	8	21
f. **Volunteerism/ Community Involvement Programs** (such as blood donation and tutoring)	14	1	0	7	2	8
g. **Health and Wellness** (such as fitness programs and health screenings)	6	1	2	12	8	12

12a. If you track or monitor the work/life programs listed above **in any other way**, please identify the program and how it is tracked or monitored.

Data intentionally not reported

Evaluation of Work/Life Programs

In this section we ask about how your department/agency may evaluate the work/life programs **(excluding teleworking/telecommuting and flexiplace)** offered to its employees.

By **evaluating** we mean measuring the extent to which the program is meeting its goals. The results of the evaluations of work/life programs may be used to assess the programs' impact on the recruitment and/or retention of employees.

13. Does your department/agency currently **evaluate** the work/life programs it offers to its employees?

    3   Yes, **all** of the programs - *Continue with question 14.*

   18   Yes, **some** of the programs - *Continue with question 14.*

    8   No, **none** of the programs - *Skip to question 19.*
         ----
    4   Do not know - *Skip to question 19.*

11

14. Which work/life programs are you currently evaluating (or have you evaluated)?
    (Check all answers that apply.)

    10   Alternative work schedules (such as compressed schedule and flexible hours schedule)

    4   Leave Programs (such as leave for family care)

    6   Flexible Spending Accounts (such as dependent care and health care)

    13   Care Giving Programs (such as child care, elder/dependent care, and support for care
         giving)

    16   Employee Assistance Programs (such as stress management, smoking cessation, and
         counseling)

    7   Volunteerism/Community Involvement Programs (such as blood donation and tutoring)

    17   Health and Wellness Programs (such as fitness programs and health screenings)

14a. Please provide examples of programs for each program category checked.

    Data intentionally not reported

15. Does your department/agency currently use (or has it used) the results of the evaluation of work/life
    programs in the following ways?   *(Select one answer in each row.)*

	Yes	No	Do not know
a. To modify existing work/life program structure based on the data	19	0	1
b. To implement new work/life programs based on the data	15	3	2
c. To eliminate work/life programs based on the data \ *(If yes, please describe in the space below.)*	2	16	2
d. For other purposes - *Please specify below:*	2	4	5

Please describe the situation whereby a work/life program has been eliminated based on the data.
(Item "c" above)

Data intentionally not reported

Please specify other purposes for which evaluation results have been used here. *(Item "d" above)*

Data intentionally not reported

12

16. To what extent, if at all, does your department/agency assess the possible effects your work/life programs **(excluding teleworking/telecommuting and flexiplace)** have on the recruitment and retention of its employees? *(Select one answer in each row.)*

	Very great extent	Great extent	Moderate extent	Some extent	Little or no extent	Do not know
a. Recruitment	3	6	5	2	3	2
b. Retention	3	6	4	4	2	2

17. Overall, would you say that interaction with OPM has helped, had no effect on, or hindered your department's/agency's ability to evaluate each of the following categories of work/life programs? *(Select one answer in each row.)*

	Not applicable, we had no interaction with OPM	Greatly helped	Helped somewhat	Had no effect	Hindered somewhat	Greatly hindered	Do not know
a. **Alternative work schedules** (such as compressed schedule and flexible hours schedule)	4	3	7	5	0	0	2
b. **Leave Programs** (such as leave for family care)	3	5	7	3	0	0	3
c. **Flexible Spending Accounts** (such as dependent care and health care)	7	1	3	6	0	0	4
d. **Care Giving Programs** (such as child care, elder/dependent care, and support for care giving)	4	5	5	2	1	0	4
e. **Employee Assistance Programs** (such as stress management, smoking cessation, and counseling)	6	2	7	4	0	0	2
f. **Volunteerism/ Community Involvement Programs** (such as blood donation and tutoring)	5	2	3	6	0	0	5
g. **Health and Wellness** (such as fitness programs and health screenings)	2	3	11	3	0	0	2

13

18. Overall, how much of a challenge, if any, has been presented by each of the following to limit your department's/agency's ability to adequately track or evaluate it's work/life program(s)?
(Select one answer in each row.)

	Very great challenge	Great challenge	Moderate challenge	Some challenge	No challenge	Do not know
a. Lack of management support	0	0	3	8	9	1
b. Limited technology	0	4	5	8	4	0
c. Methodological constraints	1	3	3	8	2	4
d. Time constraints	4	6	3	5	3	0
e. Limited staff resources, skills, or expertise for tracking or evaluating programs	5	6	5	3	2	0
f. Organizational cultural factors – *Please specify below:*	0	1	5	2	7	5
g. Other challenges – *Please specify below:*	0	1	0	1	4	5

Please specify any organizational cultural factors here.

Data intentionally not reported

Please specify other challenges here.

Data intentionally not reported

19. If you have any comments about any of the topics covered in this questionnaire or would like to elaborate on any of your responses, please use the space below.

Data intentionally not reported

20. Are you ready to submit your final completed survey to GAO?
(This is equivalent to mailing a completed paper survey to us. It tells us that your answers are official and final.)

33   Yes, my survey is complete
7   No, my survey is not yet complete

14

Appendix III: Comments from the Office of Personnel Management

Ms. Yvonne D. Jones
Director, Strategic Issues
U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO)
441 G Street NW, Room #2440C
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Jones:

Thank you for providing the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) the opportunity to comment on the Government Accountability Office draft report, "Agencies Generally Satisfied with OPM Assistance, but More Tracking and Information Sharing Needed." We appreciate the opportunity to provide you with comments about this report.

Response to Recommendation

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend that the Director of OPM, working with the CHCO Council, identify the resources, steps, and timetable necessary to complete the following three actions:

1) track on a more systematic basis information already being collected by individual federal agencies on their work/life programs, such as program usage data and evaluations;

2) evaluate the results of work/life program surveys conducted by leading private sector organizations that could help federal agencies compare their work/life programs with private sector leading practices as stated in OPM's 2010-2015 Strategic Plan; and

3) provide the information from both the public and private sectors to agency officials—through available avenues such as the CHCO Council and federal executive boards—that could help them address work/life program issues and determine if the work/life programs are meeting their agencies' goals.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

We concur. We appreciate the time and effort that GAO has put into this informative report. The Office of Personnel Management's Work/Life/Wellness staff would welcome the opportunity to work with the CHCO Council to identify resources, steps and timetable necessary to complete the identified actions. Broadly speaking, we agree with the three actions outlined with the caveat that we have the following concerns about the emphasis on the private sector:

- We acknowledge the utility of examining leading private sector programs, policies and practices. However, motivation and culture differ enough between the two so that direct comparison does not provide a comprehensive set of ready to use solutions. We ask that GAO modify the recommendations in the report to include this observation.

- We support careful collaboration with the private sector. Avoiding the appearance of selective endorsement is a concern and needs to be factored into the recommendations.

- Comprehensive evaluations of public and private sector work/life programs have been produced in the academic research, by State entities, and other organizations such as the Sloan Foundation. We suggest that GAO's recommendations be expanded to include these.

Technical comments to the draft report are enclosed. Unless otherwise noted, the suggested revisions are meant to provide technical accuracy and conform to terminology applicable to the Federal service.

Please contact Ms. Janet Barnes, Deputy Director, Internal Oversight & Compliance on (202) 606-3270 should your office require additional information.

Again, my thanks to your office for providing this opportunity to update and clarify information in the draft report.

Sincerely,
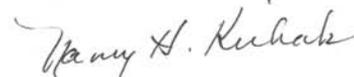
Nancy H. Kichak
Associate Director
Employee Services

Enclosure

Technical Comments on Draft GAO Report:

On page 2, first bullet at bottom of page, "We designed and administered a survey to assess agency perceptions of OPM's performance during a one-year period..." The dates of the one-year period should be specified.

On pages 4 and 5, under "Background", the period of evaluation (i.e., the dates) should be given.

On page 6, Table 1, under the Category "health and wellness", subcategory "health promotion", "worklife programs", the words "Fitness Programs" should be replaced with "Wellness Programs." Fitness is a result of physical activity participation at certain levels as determined by scientific bodies of academics and others, and is not an accurate title for programs being developed by agencies under our guidance. Wellness encompasses many other components of healthy lifestyle, including nutrition, behavior management and more.

Page 23, top of page: "OPM officials stated that they do not share this information across federal agencies because they lack the time and resources to maintain an inventory of these evaluations. OPM officials said that the recent addition of staff to the Office of Work/Life/Wellness will enable them to review reports in the future."

Comment: We request rewording this statement to say: "OPM officials said that the recent addition of staff to the Office of Work/Life/Wellness will enable them to review reports they may receive in the future. At the time of this engagement, they were not staffed or resourced to track, review or maintain an inventory of these evaluations."

Page 30, first paragraph, last two sentences: "OPM officials said that they do not track or maintain an inventory of these evaluations nor review these evaluations due to the lack of time and available resources.

Comment: We request rewording this statement to say: OPM officials said that they do not currently track or maintain an inventory of these evaluations nor review these evaluations.

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

Contact

Yvonne D. Jones, (202) 512-2717, jonesy@gao.gov

Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Steven Lozano, Assistant Director; Steven J. Berke; Jeffrey Dawson; Karin Fangman; Stuart M. Kaufman; Melanie Papasian; Joseph L. Santiago; Megan Taylor; and Gregory H. Wilmoth made key contributions to this report.

Related GAO Products

Human Capital: Sustained Attention to Strategic Human Capital Management Needed. GAO-09-632T. Washington, D.C.: April 22, 2009.

Older Workers: Enhanced Communication Among Federal Agencies Could Improve Strategies for Hiring and Retaining Experienced Workers. GAO-09-206. Washington, D.C.: February 24, 2009.

Human Capital: Transforming Federal Recruiting and Hiring Efforts. GAO-08-762T. Washington, D.C.: May 8, 2008.

Older Workers: Federal Agencies Have Challenges, but Have Opportunities to Hire and Retain Experienced Employees. GAO-08-630T. Washington, D.C.: April 30, 2008.

An Assessment of Dependent Care Needs of Federal Workers Using the Office of Personnel Management's Survey. GAO-07-437R. Washington, D.C.: March 30, 2007.

Highlights of a GAO Forum: Engaging and Retraining Older Workers. GAO-07-438SP. Washington, D.C.: February 28, 2007.

Older Workers: Some Best Practices and Strategies for Engaging and Retaining Older Workers. GAO-07-433T. Washington, D.C.: February 28, 2007.

Office of Personnel Management: Key Lessons Learned to Date for Strengthening Capacity to Lead and Implement Human Capital Reforms. GAO-07-90. Washington, D.C.: January 19, 2007.

Human Capital: Agencies Need Leadership and the Supporting Infrastructure to Take Advantage of New Flexibilities. GAO-05-616T. Washington, D.C.: April 21, 2005.

Human Capital: OPM Can Better Assist Agencies in Using Personnel Flexibilities. GAO-03-428. Washington, D.C.: May 9, 2003.

Major Management Challenges and Program Risks: Office of Personnel Management. GAO-03-115. Washington, D.C.: January 2003.

Human Capital: Effective Use of Flexibilities Can Assist Agencies in Managing Their Workforces. GAO-03-2. Washington, D.C.: December 6, 2002.