

Flash Poll Key Findings: Trade and Business Consolidation Plan

A Candid Survey of Trade and Business-oriented Federal Employees

Underwritten by:

**Government
Executive**

About



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Purpose and Methodology

On January 13, 2012, President Obama announced his plan to seek authority to reorganize federal trade and business-related functions. In order to better understand the effects of consolidation on the federal workforce, the Government Business Council, the research division of *Government Executive*, surveyed managers from the agencies involved in the proposed reorganization.

The survey was distributed to a random sample of *Government Executive* readers from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Export-Import Bank, Overseas Private Investment Corporation, Small Business Administration and U.S. Trade and Development Agency on January 13-18, 2012. An open-link survey was also posted to GovExec.com. Over 130 federal employees from the six trade and business organizations completed the survey. At least 121 managers from other civilian and defense agencies also completed the open-link survey, but that data is not included in this report.

Respondent Profile

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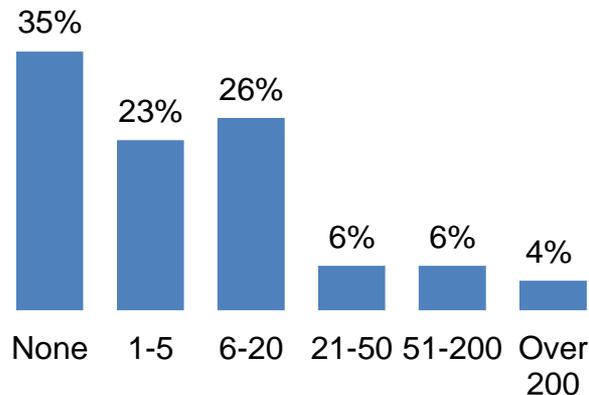
Organizations Represented:

- U.S. Department of Commerce
- Small Business Administration
- Overseas Private Investment Corporation
- Export-Import Bank
- Office of the U.S. Trade Representative

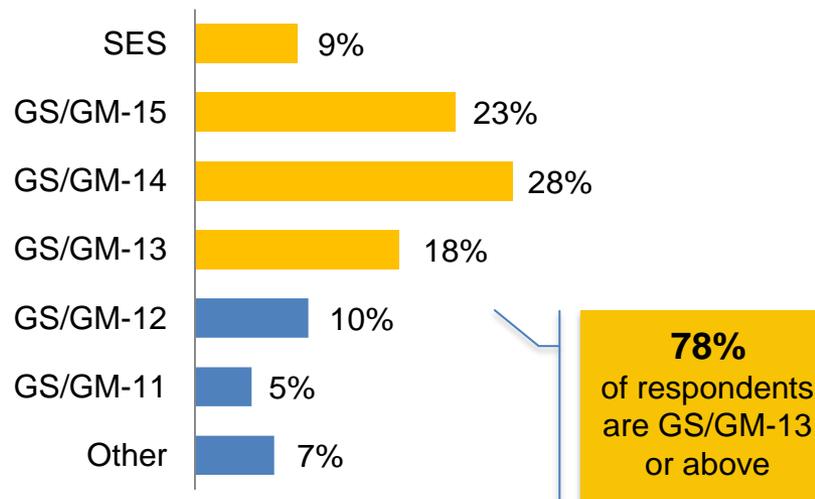
Respondents include those holding GS11-15 grade levels and members of the Senior Executive Service in trade and business-related federal organizations.

A full 78 percent of federal managers surveyed are GS-GM-13 or above and 65 percent oversee at least one direct report.

Oversees/Reports



Job Grade / Rank



Percentage of respondents, n=130

Flash Poll Results

Key Findings

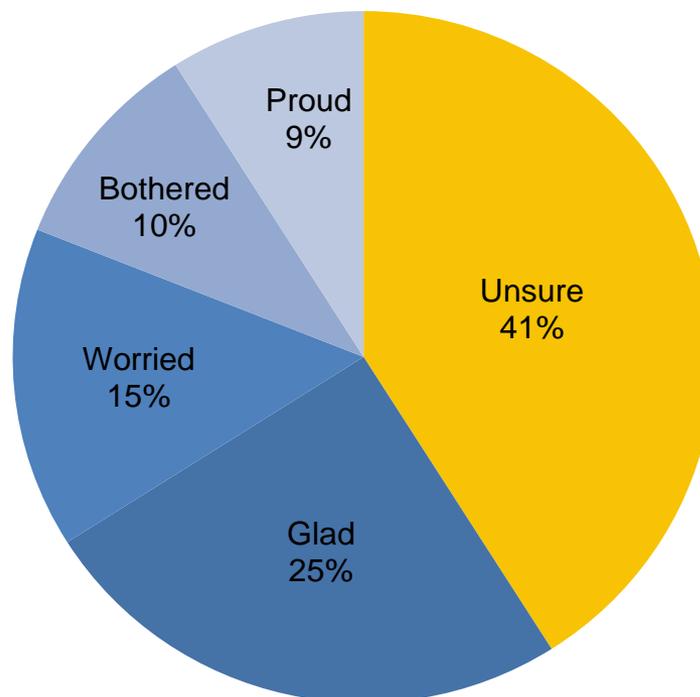
- Business and trade-oriented managers have mixed feelings about President Obama’s plan to reorganize federal trade and business-related functions. Forty-one percent of respondents’ immediate reaction was “unsure” and one quarter were “glad.”
- Managers identify overlap in both missions (72 percent) and programs (71 percent) among the Department of Commerce, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Small Business Administration, U.S. Trade and Development Agency, Overseas Private Investment Corporation, U.S. Trade and Development Agency and the Export-Import Bank. Financing and assistance programs are the most repeated.
- While overlap exists between the six trade and business organizations, managers do not find the redundancy to be overwhelming. Within the agencies under consideration, only eleven percent of those surveyed believe that more than half of programs overlap.
- Consolidation efforts are expected to bring leadership and management challenges, especially in the areas of morale and employee retention. A full 80 percent of managers anticipate such leadership and management challenges and 75 percent mention difficulties related to a cultural resistance to change. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of managers feel that the President lacks the authority for the broad ambition and will be denied by Congress.
- The reorganization plan may be good for business. Fifty-five percent of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that President Obama’s business and trade consolidation plan would help American businesses succeed.



Managers Are Unsure About Consolidation Plan

- Most managers (41 percent) are unsure about their feelings dealing with President Obama's consolidation plan.
- Over one third of respondents (34 percent) answer with the positive answers of "glad" and "proud." One fourth of managers respond negatively, selecting the words "worried" or "bothered."

What is your reaction to the proposed consolidation?



"The idea has been floated before and nothing happened. I'm not sure if it will be any different this time around."

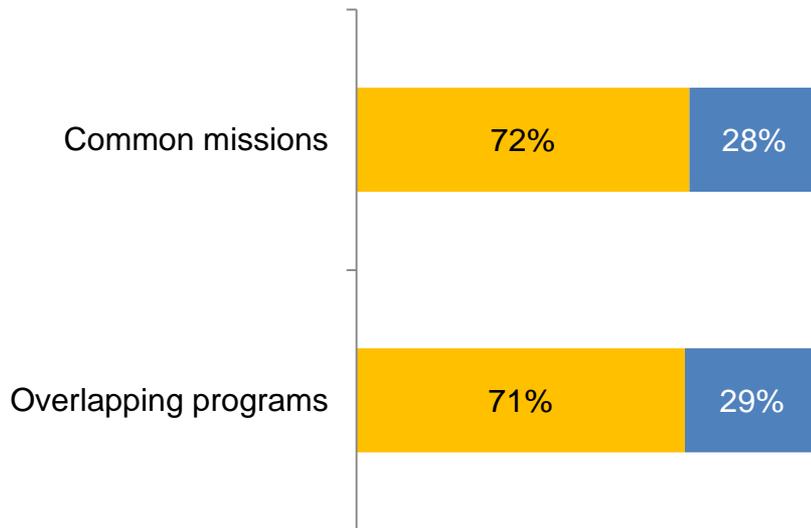
Percentage of respondents, n=163



Overlap Exists, But Efficiency Gained Would Not Be Overwhelming

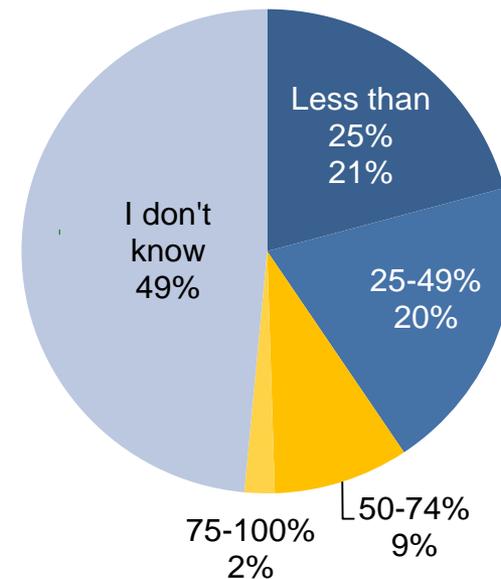
- Managers identify overlap in both missions (72 percent) and programs (71 percent) among the organizations President Obama wishes to consolidate. While overlap exists between the six trade and business organizations, managers do not find the redundancy to be overwhelming. Within the agencies under consideration, only eleven percent of managers believe that more than half of programs are duplicative.

Among Trade and Business-oriented Organizations



Percentage of respondents, n=143 and n=138 respectively

Percentage of Overlapping Programs



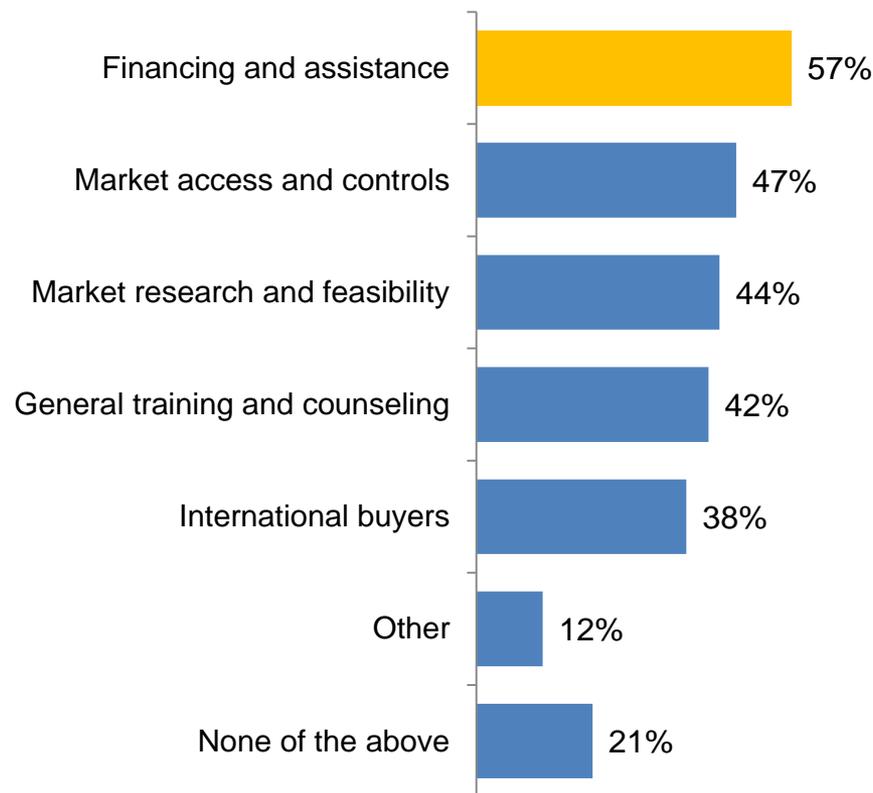
Percentage of respondents, n=111



Financing and Assistance Programs Are Most Redundant

- Trade and business-related federal organizations provide many of the same business services to entrepreneurs. Financing and assistance programs are most commonly mentioned as overlapping between the six organizations.
- President Obama's consolidation plan includes standing up Business.usa.gov, a federal website that would allow entrepreneurs one-stop access to all business functions.

Overlapping Business Functions



Percentage of respondents, n=131

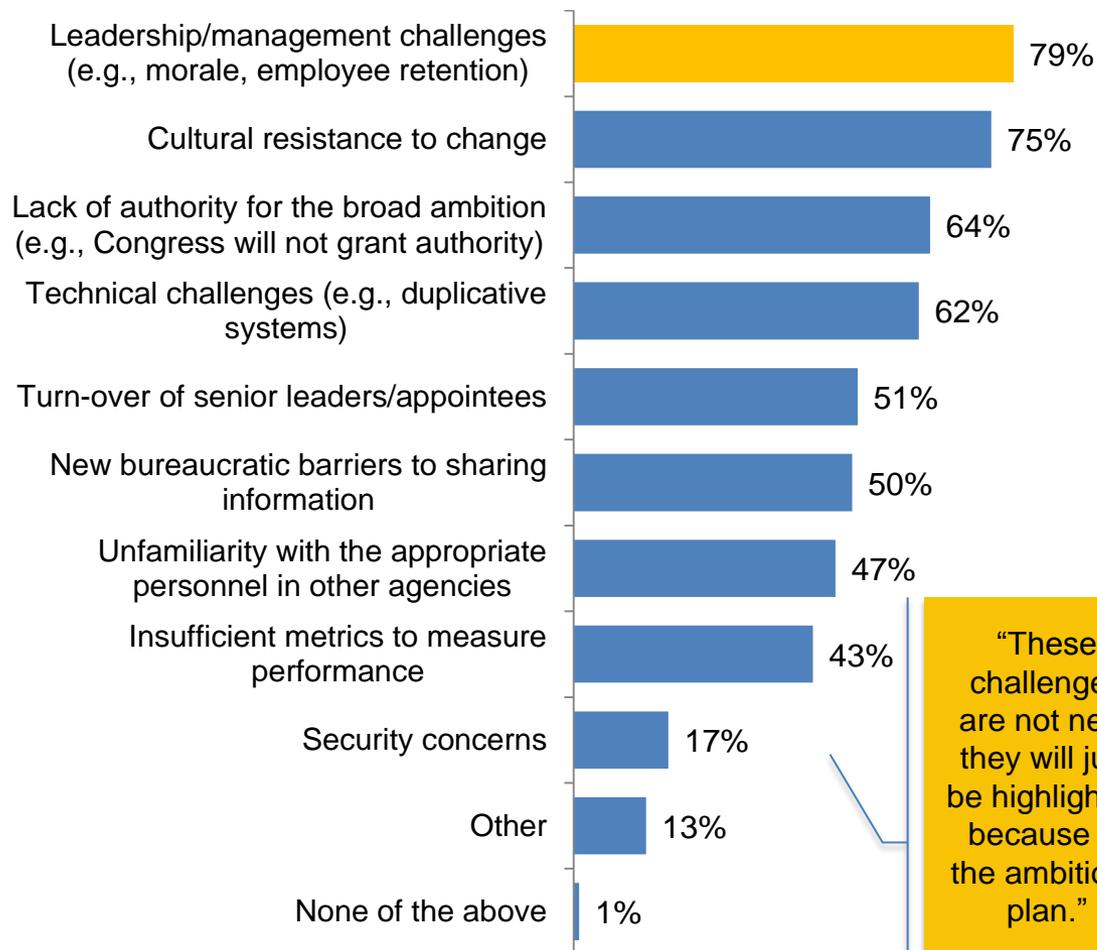


Leadership and Management Challenges Are Top Concerns

- Consolidation may bring various problems for federal managers. A full 80 percent of managers expect to encounter leadership and management challenges as a result of reorganization. Seventy-five percent expect difficulties related to government's cultural resistance to change.
- Still others believe consolidation to be ambitious. Sixty-four percent feel that Congress will not grant the President reorganizational authority.

Percentage of respondents, n=154

Challenges to Consolidation



“These challenges are not new, they will just be highlighted because of the ambitious plan.”

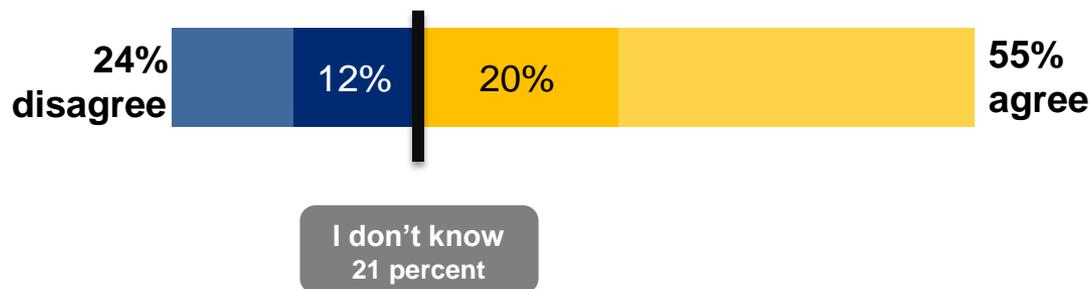
Consolidation Plan Could Be Good For Business

- Over half (55 percent) of managers feel that President Obama's consolidation plan would help American businesses succeed.
- Several managers believe that consolidation would be beneficial but are concerned about the administration's ability to execute such an ambitious plan. Some are concerned that the plan could "damage services to the public" or "rename the bloat and not remove it."

"President Obama's business and trade consolidation plan would help American businesses succeed."

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree

"Execution is the key. I do believe that our government role can be simplified for our business constituency."



Percentage of respondents, n=157



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