

Obstacles to reform in this important area are many and varied. For example, the specific nature of decisions that must be made needs to be examined into in order that criteria for evaluating discounting techniques, discount rates, and underlying concepts can meet the needs of the various decisionmakers. It is clear to us that some measure of standardization is needed to enhance the quality and consistency of information presented to the various decisionmakers for their consideration.

MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE CONGRESS

Both the case for discounting and the choice of discount rates have been subjects of dispute for years. However, the results of our survey of Federal agency practices suggest that the case for discounting is being accepted but that there is a significant difference of opinion among the agencies over discount rates. Because of the extreme variation in discount rates and techniques being used by the executive agencies for evaluating and justifying their programs and because there is strong impetus toward the use of the discounting technique provided by Federal agency adoption of planning-programming-budgeting systems, the Congress may wish to provide guidance to the executive agencies on this important topic.