

Fiscal Year 2012 Performance Plan

GAO's Mission and Responsibilities

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is the audit, evaluation, and investigative arm of the Congress, and exists to support the Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government. GAO's work directly contributes to improvements in a broad array of federal programs affecting Americans everywhere. For example, in fiscal year 2010 our work yielded significant results across the government, including financial benefits of \$49.9 billion—a return of \$87 for every dollar invested in GAO—and 1,361 nonfinancial benefits that helped to change laws, such as the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act of 2010; to improve services to the public; and to promote sound management throughout government. Over the past 4 years GAO's return on investment has been \$94 for every dollar spent.

GAO issue-area experts testified 192 times before the Congress on a wide range of issues, such as, the first-time homebuyer tax credit, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) funding for broadband services, the Department of Defense's planning for the drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq, the Medicare prescription drug program, processing of Veterans Affairs disability claims, pay and benefits for deployed federal civilians, and air cargo security. On average, over the past 4 years, GAO issue-area experts annually testified 242 times before the Congress.

As a legislative-branch agency, we are exempt from many laws that apply to executive-branch agencies. However, we generally hold ourselves to the spirit of many of the laws, including the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), and the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010. Among other things, GPRA, as

amended, requires each agency to prepare an annual "performance plan covering each program activity set forth in the budget of such agency." This section of our budget submission constitutes our performance plan for fiscal year 2012.

Current Environment Demands Fiscal Discipline

Looking ahead to fiscal year 2012, GAO is acutely aware of our dual responsibilities in a time of fiscal austerity. First, Congress has rightly come to rely upon GAO to help lawmakers identify billions of dollars in cost savings opportunities to tighten federal budgets or to point out revenue enhancement opportunities. We know our mission becomes critically important when the nation faces difficult financial times. But second, GAO must also ensure it meets this first responsibility while implementing all possible cost savings in its own operations without diminishing our traditionally high-quality work that lays the foundation for critical decision-making and oversight by the Congress.

In light of our commitment to reduce our own costs as much as possible, for fiscal year 2012 we are seeking to maintain our funding level of \$556.8 million—consistent with our fiscal year 2010 appropriation and 2011 continuing resolution levels. Although operating at a flat budget for 3 years provides some operational challenges, we have carefully considered our resource requirements and made tradeoffs to ensure that we try to support a capacity of 3,220 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff to provide insightful analyses on the most important priorities for congressional oversight.

In anticipation of flat funding in fiscal year 2011, we implemented actions in fiscal year 2010 to reduce planned hiring and manage our FTE usage at 3,220 FTEs. We have also planned significant reductions in fiscal years 2011 and 2012 to streamline our operations, reduce discretionary spending, reduce and defer

investments, and leverage technology to help us achieve our mission more effectively and efficiently. For example, we have implemented several initiatives to reduce energy consumption and generate cost savings. Such actions are

possible only in the short-term and cannot be sustained indefinitely.

A summary of our funding sources is shown in the following table.

Table 1: Fiscal Year 2010 - 2012 Source of Funds
(Dollars in thousands)

Funding source	Fiscal year 2010 actual		Fiscal year 2011 estimate		Fiscal year 2012 request	
	FTEs	Amount	FTEs	Amount	FTEs	Amount
Appropriation – Salaries and expenses	3,176	\$556,325	3,220	\$556,849	3,220	\$556,849
Appropriation – Mandated review of Medicare beneficiaries’ access to vaccines		1,000				
Appropriation – Recovery Act oversight	131	20,804				
Reimbursable programs	40	10,214	30	10,304	25	7,977
Offsetting collections		10,892		17,500		18,304
Total budgetary resources	3,347	\$599,235	3,250	\$584,653	3,245	\$583,130

Source: GAO.

In addition to our fiscal year 2012 appropriation request of \$556.8 million, GAO estimates that about \$8 million from other agencies will be available as reimbursement for program and financial audits to offset the costs of these audits. In accordance with authorizing legislation, estimated reimbursements primarily include activities related to

- the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP),
- a financial statement audit of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, and
- operation of the Financial Accounting Standards Advisory Board.

In fiscal year 2012, we are also requesting authority to use \$18.3 million in offsetting collections, including

- \$7.0 million in rental income, primarily from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ rental of space in the GAO headquarters building, in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 782;
- \$4.0 million from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) as

reimbursement for an audit of the FDIC’s financial statements in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 9105;

- \$1.3 million from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) as reimbursement for an audit of the SEC’s financial statements in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3521; and
- \$6.0 million from the U.S. Treasury as reimbursement for an audit of the financial statements of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Schedule of Federal Debt as part of our annual audit of the consolidated financial statements of the U.S. Government in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3521.

Our Strategic Plan Illustrates the Wide Array of Issues That GAO Covers

GAO’s strategic plan for serving the Congress and the Nation, 2010—2015, highlights the broad scope of our efforts to help the institution of the Congress as GAO serves every standing

congressional committee and over 70 percent of their subcommittees. Consequently, the scope of our work is broad-based which allows us to respond to domestic and international challenges, such as threats confronting U.S. national security interests; fiscal sustainability and debt challenges; economic recovery and restored job growth; and advances in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and covers the following goals and objectives.

Goal 1: Help the Congress Address Current and Emerging Challenges to the Well-being and Financial Security of the American People

- Financing and Programs to Serve the Health Needs of an Aging and Diverse Population
- Lifelong Learning to Enhance U.S. Competitiveness
- Benefits and Protections for Workers, Families, and Children
- Financial Security for an Aging Population
- A Responsive, Fair, and Effective System of Justice
- Viable Communities
- A Stable Financial System and Consumer Protection
- Responsible Stewardship of Natural Resources and the Environment
- A Viable, Efficient, Safe, and Accessible National Infrastructure

Goal 2: Help the Congress Respond to Changing Security Threats and the Challenges of Global Interdependence

- Protect and Secure the Homeland from Threats and Disasters
- Ensure Military Capabilities and Readiness
- Advance and Protect U.S. Foreign Policy Interests
- Respond to the Impact of Global Market Forces on U.S. Economic and Security Interests

Goal 3: Help Transform the Federal Government to Address National Challenges

- Analyze the Government’s Fiscal Position and Opportunities to Strengthen Approaches to Address the Current and Projected Fiscal Gap
- Identify Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

- Support Congressional Oversight of Major Management Challenges and Program Risks

GAO’s *High-Risk Series* also assists the Congress by identifying areas where considerable savings are possible. This program focuses on federal areas and programs at risk of fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement, or those in need of broad-based transformation. Overall, the high risk program has served to identify and help resolve serious weaknesses in areas that involve substantial resources and provide critical services to the public. In our next update, slated for release early in the new 112th Congress, we will identify areas that are being removed from the list and any new area that is being designated high-risk. In fiscal year 2010, we issued 151 reports, delivered 67 testimonies to Congress, and prepared numerous other products, such as briefings and presentations, related to our high-risk work. In addition, we documented nearly \$27 billion in financial benefits and 522 nonfinancial benefits related to high-risk areas.

Our current high-risk list is shown on the following table.

Table 2: GAO’s High-Risk List as of February 2010

Addressing Challenges in Broad-Based Transformations	
•	Restructuring the U.S. Postal Service to Achieve Sustainable Financial Viability (New in July 2009)
•	Modernizing the Outdated U.S. Financial Regulatory System ^a (New in January 2009)
•	Protecting Public Health through Enhanced Oversight of Medical Products (New in January 2009)
•	Transforming EPA’s Processes for Assessing and Controlling Toxic Chemicals ^a (New in January 2009)
•	2010 Census
•	Strategic Human Capital Management ^a
•	Managing Federal Real Property ^a
•	Protecting the Federal Government’s Information Systems and the Nation’s Critical Infrastructures
•	Implementing and Transforming the Department of Homeland Security
•	Establishing Effective Mechanisms for Sharing Terrorism-Related Information to Protect the Homeland
•	DOD Approach to Business Transformation ^a
•	• Business Systems Modernization
•	• Personnel Security Clearance Program
•	• Support Infrastructure Management
•	• Financial Management
•	• Supply Chain Management
•	• Weapon Systems Acquisition
•	Funding the Nation’s Surface Transportation System ^a
•	Ensuring the Effective Protection of Technologies Critical to U.S. National Security Interests ^a
•	Revamping Federal Oversight of Food Safety ^a
Managing Federal Contracting More Effectively	
•	DOD Contract Management
•	DOE’s Contract Management for the National Nuclear Security Administration and Office of Environmental Management
•	NASA Acquisition Management
•	Management of Interagency Contracting
Assessing the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Tax Law Administration	
•	Enforcement of Tax Laws ^a
•	IRS Business Systems Modernization
Modernizing and Safeguarding Insurance and Benefit Programs	
•	Improving and Modernizing Federal Disability Programs ^a
•	Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation Insurance Programs ^a
•	Medicare Program ^a
•	Medicaid Program ^a
•	National Flood Insurance Program ^a

Source: GAO.

^a Legislation is likely to be necessary, as a supplement to actions by the executive branch, in order to effectively address this high-risk area.

GAO’s Positive Workforce Trends Continue

GAO achieves a high level of performance through the outstanding efforts of our professional, multidisciplinary and diverse staff. Recognizing that GAO’s accomplishments are a direct result of our dedicated workforce, we continuously strive to maintain a work environment that promotes employee well-being and productivity, and to serve as a leading-practices agency. In 2010, GAO was once again named one of the “Best Places to Work” in the federal government by the Partnership for Public Service.

Performance Measurement

To help us determine how well we are meeting the needs of the Congress and maximizing our value as a leading-practices organization, we assess our performance annually using a balanced set of quantitative performance measures that focus on four key areas—results, client, people, and internal operations.

Results: Focusing on results and the effectiveness of the processes needed to achieve them is fundamental to accomplishing our mission. To assess our results, we measure financial benefits, other (nonfinancial) benefits, recommendations implemented, and percentage of new products with recommendations.

Client: To judge how well we are serving our client, we measure the number of congressional hearings where we are asked to present expert testimony as well as our timeliness in delivering products to the Congress.

People: As our most important asset, our people define our character and capacity to perform. A variety of data sources, including an internal survey, provide information to help us measure how well we are attracting and retaining high-quality staff and how well we are developing, supporting, using, and leading staff.

Internal operations: Our mission and people are supported by our internal administrative services, including information management, building management, knowledge services, human capital, and financial management services. Through an internal customer-satisfaction survey, we gather information on how well our internal operations help employees get their jobs done and improve employees’ quality of work life.

An agencywide summary of our annual performance measures and targets for fiscal years 2007 – 2012 is included in table 3..

Table 3: Agencywide Summary of Annual Measures and Targets

Performance measure	2007 actual	2008 actual	2009 actual	2010 actual	2011 target	2012 target
Results						
Financial benefits (Dollars in billions)	\$45.9	\$58.1	\$43.0	\$49.9	\$42.0	\$42.0
Nonfinancial benefits	1,354	1,398	1,315	1,361	1,200	1,200
Past recommendations implemented	82%	83%	80%	82%	80%	80%
New products with recommendations	66%	66%	68%	61%	60%	60%
Client						
Testimonies	276	298	203	192	200	220
Timeliness ^a	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
People						
New hire rate	96%	96%	99%	95%	95%	95%
Retention rate						
With retirements	90%	90%	94%	94%	90%	90%
Without retirements	94%	93%	96%	96%	94%	94%
Staff development ^{b,c}	76%	77%	79%	79%	76%	76%
Staff utilization ^{b,d}	73%	75%	78%	77%	75%	75%
Effective Leadership by Supervisors ^{b,e}	79%	81%	83%	83%	80%	80%
Organizational climate	74%	77%	79%	79%	75%	75%
Internal operations^f						
Help to get job done	4.05	4.00	4.03	3.94	4.00	4.00
Quality of work life	3.98	4.01	4.01	3.94	4.00	4.00

Source: GAO.

Notes: Information explaining all of the measures included in this table appears in appendix I of this report.

^a The timeliness measure is based on one question on a form sent out to selected clients. The response rate for the form in fiscal year 2010 is 29 percent, and 99 percent of the clients who responded answered this question. The percentage shown in the table represents the percentage of respondents who answered favorably to this question on the form.

^b This measure is derived from our annual agencywide employee feedback survey. From the staff who expressed an opinion, we calculated the percentage of those who selected favorable responses to the related survey questions. Responses of “no basis to judge/not applicable” or “no answer” were excluded from the calculation. While including these responses in the calculation would result in a different percentage, our method of calculation is an acceptable survey practice, and we believe it produces a better and more valid measure because it represents only those employees who have an opinion on the questions.

^c Beginning in fiscal year 2006 we changed the way that the staff development people measure was calculated. Specifically, we dropped one question regarding computer-based training because we felt such training was a significant part of (and therefore included in) the other questions the survey asked regarding training. We also modified a question on internal training and changed the scale of possible responses to that question.

^d Our employee feedback survey asks staff how often the following occurred in the last 12 months: (1) my job made good use of my skills, (2) GAO provided me with opportunities to do challenging work, and (3) in general, I was utilized effectively.

^e In fiscal year 2009 we changed the name of this measure from “Leadership” to its current nomenclature to clarify that the measure reflects employee satisfaction with their immediate supervisor’s leadership. In fiscal year 2010, we changed one of the questions for this measure.

^f For our internal operations measures, we ask staff to rank 33 internal services available to them and to indicate on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest, their satisfaction with each service.

Budgetary Resources by Goal

among our strategic goals for fiscal years 2010 through 2012.

Table 4 provides an overview of how our human capital and budgetary resources are allocated

Table 4: Budgetary Resources by Strategic Goal^a
(Dollars in millions)

Strategic goal	Fiscal year 2010 actual		Fiscal year 2011 estimate		Fiscal year 2012 request	
	FTEs	Amount	FTEs	Amount	FTEs	Amount
Goal 1 Provide timely, quality service to the Congress and the federal government to address current and emerging challenges to the well-being and financial security of the American people.	1,186	\$208	1,258	\$215	1,256	\$215
Goal 2 Provide timely, quality service to the Congress and the federal government to respond to changing threats and the challenges of global interdependence.	877	171	844	151	844	151
Goal 3 Help transform the federal government to address national challenges.	1,166	195	1,028	194	1,025	192
Goal 4 Maximize the value of GAO by enabling quality, timely service to the Congress and being a leading practices federal agency.	118	26	120	25	120	25
Total budgetary resources	3,347	\$599	3,250	\$585	3,245	\$583

Source: GAO.

^a Includes resources for Recovery Act oversight funded by supplemental appropriations provided in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and TARP staff reimbursed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Organizational Structure

Gene L. Dodaro is the Comptroller General of the United States. Three other executives join the Comptroller General to form our Executive Committee: Chief Operating Officer, Patricia Dalton, Chief Administrative Officer, David Fisher, and General Counsel, Lynn Gibson.

Our strategy for meeting our performance goals is largely based on our staff, who carry out the

work that supports our mission. GAO has a workforce of highly trained professionals with degrees in many academic disciplines, including engineering, public and business administration, accounting, law, economics, and the social and physical sciences. For the most part, the 14 evaluation, audit, investigative, and research teams perform the work that supports strategic goals 1, 2, and 3—the three external strategic goals—with several of the teams working in support of more than one strategic goal. Staff in

many offices, such as the General Counsel's office; Strategic Planning and External Liaison; Congressional Relations; Opportunity and Inclusiveness; Quality and Continuous Improvement; Public Affairs; and the Chief Administrative Office, support the efforts of the teams. About three-quarters of our approximately 3,200 employees are based at our headquarters in Washington, D.C.; the rest are deployed in 11 field offices across the country. The field office staff are aligned with our research, audit, investigative, and evaluation teams and perform work in tandem with our headquarters staff.

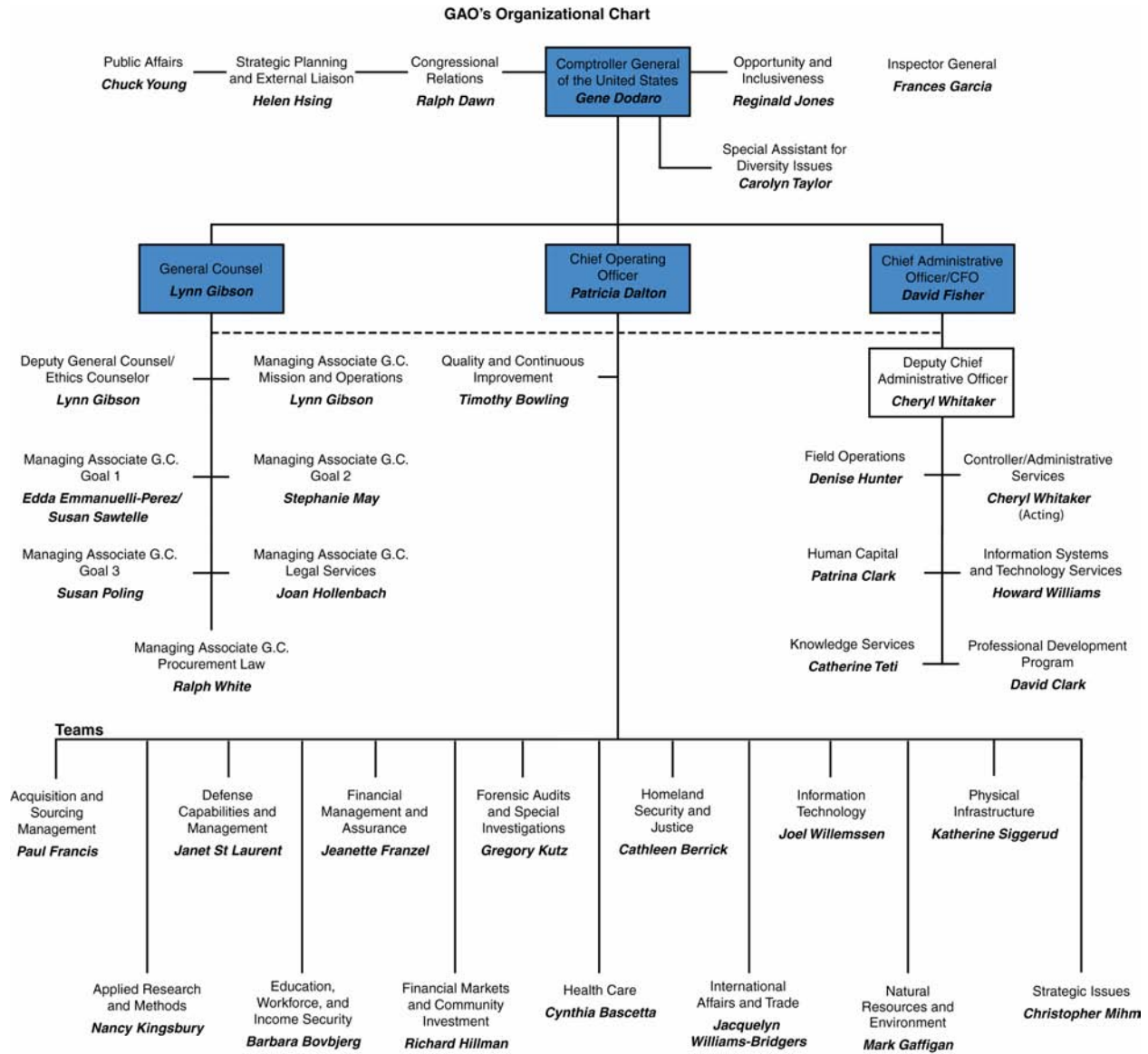
Senior executives in charge of the teams manage a portfolio of engagements to ensure that we meet the Congress's need for information on quickly emerging issues as we also continue longer-term work that flows from our strategic plan. To serve the Congress effectively with a finite set of resources, senior managers consult

with our congressional clients and determine the timing and priority of engagements for which they are responsible.

Figure 1 displays each team and office, including the name of the Senior Executive Service (SES) unit manager.

GAO Field Locations
Atlanta, GA
Boston, MA
Chicago, IL
Dallas, TX
Dayton, OH
Denver, CO
Huntsville, AL
Los Angeles, CA
Norfolk, VA
San Francisco, CA
Seattle, WA

Figure 1: GAO's Organizational Chart



Legend:

CFO - Chief Financial Officer

 - The Executive Committee

----- Indicates a support or advisory relationship with the teams/units rather than a direct reporting relationship

Note: Everyone listed on this table, other than the Comptroller General, is an SES level manager. Also, with the exception of the Comptroller General of the United States, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Administrative Officer, the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, the Special Assistant for Diversity Issues, the Inspector General, and the General Counsel, all managers are titled "Managing Director."

January 2011

Strategies

GPRA, as amended, directs agencies to articulate not just goals, but also strategies for achieving those goals. GAO emphasizes two overarching strategies for achieving our goals: (1) providing information from our work to the Congress and the public in a variety of forms and (2) continuing and strengthening our human capital and internal operations. These strategies also support the importance of working with other organizations on crosscutting issues and recognizing the internal and external factors that could affect our performance in achieving our goals.

Conducting Engagements

Attaining our three external strategic goals (1, 2, and 3) and their related objectives rests, for the most part, on providing professional, objective, fact-based, nonpartisan, nonideological, fair, and balanced information to support the Congress in carrying out its constitutional responsibilities. To implement the performance goals and key efforts related to these three goals, we develop and present information in a number of ways, including

- evaluations of federal policies, programs, and the performance of agencies;
- oversight of government operations through financial and other management audits to determine whether public funds are spent efficiently, effectively, and in accordance with applicable laws;
- investigations to assess whether illegal or improper activities are occurring;
- analyses of the financing for government activities;
- constructive engagements in which we work proactively with agencies, when appropriate, to provide advice that may assist their efforts toward positive results;
- legal opinions that determine whether agencies are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations;

- policy analyses to assess needed actions and the implications of proposed actions; and
- additional assistance to the Congress in support of its oversight and decision-making responsibilities.

We conduct specific engagements as a result of legislative mandates, resolutions, committee reports, and requests from congressional committees. In fiscal year 2010, we devoted 95 percent of our engagement resources to work requested or mandated by the Congress. We devoted the remaining 5 percent of the engagement resources to work we initiated under the Comptroller General's authority. Much of this work addressed various challenges that are of broad-based interest to the Congress.

Our staff are responsible for following high standards for gathering, documenting, and supporting the information we collect and analyze. This information is usually presented in a product that is made available to the public. In some cases, we develop products that contain classified or sensitive information that are not publicly available. Annually, we generally issue around 1,000 products and publish 300 to 400 legal decisions and opinions. In fiscal year 2012, we plan to issue

- reports and written correspondence;
- testimonies delivered orally by one or more of our senior executives at a hearing, and statements for the record provided for inclusion in the congressional record;
- briefings, which are usually given directly to congressional staff members; and
- legal decisions resolving bid protests and addressing issues of appropriations law, as well as legal opinions on the scope and exercise of authority of federal officers.

Our products will contain information, conclusions, and recommendations consistent with achieving our external strategic goals in accordance with our professional standards and core values.

Examining Past Work and Service

During fiscal year 2012, we plan to continue to examine the effect of our past work and use the results to shape our future work. This includes evaluating actions taken by federal agencies and the Congress in response to our past recommendations and, if appropriate, documenting those actions as financial benefits and nonfinancial benefits. We will continue to actively monitor the status of our open recommendations—those that remain valid but have not yet been implemented—and report our findings annually to the Congress and the public. We will also continue to use our work on high-risk areas to monitor the status of major government operations that we consider vulnerable to fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement or in need of broad-based transformation.

To attain our fourth strategic goal—an internal goal—and its four related objectives, we will implement projects to address the performance goals and key efforts in our strategic plan. We will conduct surveys of our congressional clients and internal customers to obtain feedback on our products, processes, and services and identify ways to improve them. We will also perform internal management studies and evaluations.

Soliciting Input from Experts

We will gather information and perspectives for our strategic and annual planning efforts through a series of forums, advisory boards, and panels; periodic scans of international and national issues that affect the political and social environment in which we work; and our speakers’ series.

GAO’s advisory boards and panels will support our strategic and annual work planning by alerting us to issues, trends, and lessons learned across the national and international audit community that we should factor into our work. During fiscal years 2011 and 2012, GAO will rely on the following:

The Comptroller General’s Advisory Board, whose 40 or so members from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors have broad

expertise in areas related to our strategic objectives;

The Domestic Working Group, which is composed of the Comptroller General and the heads of 15 to 18 federal, state, and local audit organizations that meet informally to exchange information and pursue opportunities to collaborate in such areas as education, transportation, and food safety; and

The Global Working Group (GWG), which provides an opportunity for selected Auditors General from around the world to informally discuss emerging issues of concern, as well as to explore ways to work more closely together. The next annual GWG meeting will be hosted by India in 2011.

We also will continue to work with a number of issue-specific and technical panels to improve our strategic and annual work planning, such as the following:

The Advisory Council on Government Auditing Standards, which provides guidance to GAO in its role of promulgating government auditing standards, popularly known as “the Yellow Book”. These standards articulate auditors’ responsibilities when auditing government organizations, programs, activities, and functions, as well as government assistance received by state and local entities, nonprofits, and other nongovernmental organizations. GAO is currently working on the sixth proposed revision of the standards. The council’s work has helped ensure that the revised standards being issued in spring 2011 are generally accepted and feasible.

The Accountability Advisory Council, which is made up of experts in the financial management community, and advises us on audits of the U.S. government’s consolidated financial statements and emerging issues involving financial management and accountability reporting in the public and private sectors.

The Executive Council on Information Management and Technology, whose members are experts from the public and private

sectors and representatives of related professional organizations, and which helps us to identify high-risk and emerging issues in the IT arena.

The Comptroller General's Educators' Advisory Panel, composed of deans, professors, and other academics from prominent universities across the United States, which advises us on strategic planning matters and recruiting, retaining, and developing staff.

Collaborating With Other Organizations

In addition to these formal advisory bodies, GAO also networks with federal, state, local, and international officials with similar or complementary missions, notably through organizations such as the following:

The National Intergovernmental Audit Forum and 10 regional intergovernmental audit forums through which we will consult regularly with federal inspectors general and state and local auditors;

The Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, a federal IG coordinating council created by statute in 2008 that combines what were formerly known as the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency and the Executive Council on Integrity and Efficiency.

These collaborative relationships have been instrumental in facilitating GAO's audit work, coordinating work to avoid overlap and duplication of effort, and sharing best practices.

GAO's primary vehicle for collaborating internationally is the **International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI)**—the professional organization of the national audit offices of 189 countries, plus the European Court of Auditors and several associate members. During the fall of 2010, the INTOSAI Congress adopted a new 5-year strategic plan that was developed by a task force chaired by the Comptroller General. GAO will continue to be an active member of international teams working on the strategic plan goals of (1) enhancing professional standards, (2) capacity building, (3) knowledge sharing, and (4) good

governance. For example, we participate in INTOSAI's knowledge sharing groups on public debt, information technology, environmental auditing, program evaluation, international money laundering and corruption, and key national indicators. GAO chairs the 26-nation INTOSAI Task Force on the Global Financial Crisis, which serves as a forum to share knowledge about the causes and effect of the crisis.

By collaborating with others, we plan to continue strengthening professional standards, providing technical assistance, leveraging resources, and developing and disseminating best practices. For example, in fiscal years 2011 and 2012, GAO will do the following:

- Continue to advance INTOSAI's capacity-building goal through the Comptroller General's Vice Chairmanship of the steering committee overseeing implementation of the Donors Funding Initiative. This memorandum of understanding between INTOSAI and 15 donor organizations aims to coordinate efforts to strengthen Supreme Audit Institutions in developing countries; and
- Directly build the capacity of national audit offices around the world through our 4-month, on-site International Audit Fellows program of classes and mentoring for mid- to senior-level staff. Since the program's inception in 1979, more than 440 officials from 110 countries have participated. GAO has received nominations for over 25 participants in the 2011 class.

Using Internal Experts

We will continue to coordinate extensively internally on our strategic and annual performance planning efforts, as well as on the preparation of our performance budget and performance and accountability report. Our efforts are completed under the overall direction of the Comptroller General. We relied on our Chief Administrative Officer/Chief Financial Officer (CAO/CFO) and her staff to provide key financial information. The CAO/CFO staff will coordinate with others throughout the agency to

provide the information on goal 4’s results and provide input on other efforts dealing with issues that include financial management, budgetary resources, training, and security. We obtain input on all aspects of our strategic and annual performance planning and reporting efforts from each of our engagement teams and organizational units. In short, we involved virtually every part of our agency and used our internal expertise in our planning and reporting efforts and will continue to do so in fiscal years 2011 and 2012.

measures that we assess at the goal level. Most teams’ and units’ performance results also contribute to meeting the targets for the agencywide measures previously discussed in this submission.

Strategic Objectives and Targets—Goal 1

Our first strategic goal upholds our mission to support the Congress in carrying out its constitutional responsibilities by focusing on work that helps address the current and emerging challenges affecting the well-being and financial security of the American people and communities.

Performance Plans by Strategic Goal

The following sections address performance results, strategic objectives, and plans for each of our four strategic goals. These objectives, along with the performance goals and key efforts that support them, are discussed fully in our strategic plan, which is available on our Web site at www.gao.gov. Specifically, for goals 1, 2, and 3—our external goals—we present performance results for the three annual

<p>GAO Teams Contributing to Goal 1 Education, Workforce, and Income Security Financial Markets and Community Investment Health Care Homeland Security and Justice Natural Resources and Environment Physical Infrastructure</p>

Table 5: Selected Work under Goal 1 in Fiscal Year 2010

Financial benefits	Eliminating seller-funded down-payments assistance for Federal Housing Administration (FHA) mortgages (\$3.5 billion) Informing legislation aimed at reducing payments to the Medicare Advantage program (\$3.4 billion) Reducing compensation to federal crop insurance providers (\$2.8 billion)
Nonfinancial benefits	Improving oversight of nursing home care Improving oversight of infection-control practices in surgical centers Expediting black lung benefits claims Identifying options to restructure the U.S. Postal Service Identifying factors to consider in restructuring Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac
Testimonies	Community emergency preparedness Corporate crime Medicare high-cost drugs Unemployment insurance trust funds

Source: GAO.

Table 6: Strategic Goal 1's Annual Performance Results and Targets
(Dollars in billions)

Performance measures	2007 actual	2008 actual	2009 actual	2010 actual	2011 target ^a	2012 target
Financial benefits	\$12.9	\$19.3	\$12.1	\$17.8	\$13.4	\$17.0
Nonfinancial benefits	238	226	224	233	225	225
Testimonies	125	123	85	86	78	90

Source: GAO.

^a Our fiscal year 2011 targets for all three performance measures are the same as those we reported in our fiscal year 2011 performance budget in January 2010.

Table 7: Examples of Planned Work under Goal 1

<p>During fiscal year 2011 and 2012, we anticipate conducting work related to the following:</p> <p><i>Financial Security</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reforms to the financial regulatory structure • the condition of home mortgage markets • government policies to foster retirement security <p><i>Social Programs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicare and Medicaid payment methods and program management • federal education grants • implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act • access to care and federal-state payment formulas in the Medicaid program • education benefits for veterans and their families <p><i>Effective Systems</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • federal efforts to develop renewable energy, energy efficient technologies, and nuclear power • federal, state, and local efforts to provide clean water • law enforcement efforts to thwart online child sexual exploitation • federal oversight of food safety • federal efforts to allocate scarce communications spectrum • transportation infrastructure financing • U.S. Postal Service financial viability and efficiency

Source: GAO.

Strategic Objectives and Targets—Goal 2

Our second strategic goal focuses on helping the Congress and the federal government in their responses to changing security threats and the challenges of global interdependence. The federal government is working to promote foreign policy goals, sound trade policies, and other strategies to advance the interests of the United States and its allies. The federal government is also working to balance national security demands overseas and at home with demands related to an evolving national security environment.

<p>Primary GAO Teams Contributing to Goal 2</p> <p>Acquisition and Sourcing Management</p> <p>Defense Capabilities and Management</p> <p>Homeland Security and Justice</p> <p>International Affairs and Trade</p> <p>Supporting GAO Teams</p> <p>Financial Markets and Community Investment</p> <p>Information Technology</p> <p>Natural Resources and Environment</p>
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Table 8: Selected Work under Goal 2 in Fiscal Year 2010

Financial benefits	<p>Contributed to DOD’s decision to cancel the Manned Ground Portion of the Army’s Future Combat System (\$3.7 billion)</p> <p>Contributing to the decision to not build European missile defense sites (\$1.4 billion)</p> <p>Assessing DOD’s management and oversight of the recruiting and retention budget (\$947 million)</p>
Nonfinancial benefits	<p>Helping to improve DOD’s management of operational contract services</p> <p>Contributing to transparency improvements related to DOD’s implementation of its Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) recommendations</p> <p>Contributing to the strengthening of intellectual property rights</p> <p>Increased regulatory attention to identifying and monitoring leverage in financial markets</p>
Testimonies	<p>Iran sanctions</p> <p>Terrorist watchlist screening</p> <p>Joint strike fighter challenges</p> <p>Global food security</p> <p>DOD military and civilian employee compensation</p>

Source: GAO.

Table 9: Strategic Goal 2's Annual Performance Results and Targets
(Dollars in billions)

Performance measures	2007 actual	2008 actual	2009 actual	2010 actual	2011 target ^a	2012 target
Financial benefits	\$10.3	\$15.4	\$12.4	\$20.5	\$13.9	\$14.0
Nonfinancial benefits	468	468	457	444	345	345
Testimonies	73	93	67	58	65	70

Source: GAO.

^a Our fiscal year 2011 target for testimonies differs from the targets we reported in our fiscal year 2011 performance budget in January 2010. Specifically, we decreased the number of testimonies by six.

Table 10: Examples of Planned Work under Goal 2

<p>During fiscal year 2011 and 2012, we anticipate conducting work related to the following:</p> <p><i>Defense Technology</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying ways for DOD to prioritize its investments in weapon systems • modernization efforts of nuclear weapons facilities and infrastructure • evaluating the effectiveness of U.S. government programs designed to protect critical technologies • assess efforts to strengthen the protection of the nation’s critical physical and cyber infrastructure <p><i>Foreign Operations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximizing international cost-sharing for security assistance in conflict and postconflict environments • assessing efforts to improve the economy and efficiency of U.S. government foreign operations • managing logistics and contractor support for ongoing operations in Afghanistan and the drawdown from Iraq <p><i>Defense Readiness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementation of the Base Realignment and Closure Efforts • efforts to develop early detection of and effective response to biological, chemical, nuclear, and radiological agents • federal efforts to improve how agencies create and use the terrorist watch list • assessing overlap, fragmentation, and duplication among defense programs and activities <p><i>Global Interdependency</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluating the efficiency of nongovernmental actors and multilateral organizations that receive U.S. support • government programs and activities that seek to expand U.S. exports
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Source: GAO.

Strategic Objectives and Target—Goal 3

Our third strategic goal focuses on the collaborative and integrated elements needed for the federal government to achieve results. The work under this goal highlights the intergovernmental relationships that are necessary to achieve national goals.

<p>Primary GAO Teams Contributing to Goal 3</p> <p>Applied Research and Methods</p> <p>Financial Management and Assurance</p> <p>Forensic Audits and Special Investigations</p> <p>Information Technology</p> <p>Strategic Issues</p> <p>Supporting GAO Teams</p> <p>Acquisition and Sourcing Management</p> <p>Natural Resources and Environment</p> <p>General Counsel</p>
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Table 11: Selected Work under Goal 3 in Fiscal Year 2010

Financial benefits	Enhancing tax compliance involving foreign accounts (\$3.0 billion) Contributing to Medicaid improved oversight resulting in significant cost avoidance (\$1.65 billion) Contributing to cost savings related to U.S. Postal Service employees postretirement health care (\$1.42 billion)
Nonfinancial benefits	Improved transparency and oversight of efforts to reduce federal improper payments Improved and modernized standards to be used by federal, state, and local auditors Advanced DHS's efforts to improve its acquisitions management Increased the visibility of VA's information management weaknesses
Testimonies	Iraq and Afghanistan contract and grant management Recovery Act oversight U.S. government financial statements Protecting federal information systems

Source: GAO.

Table 12: Strategic Goal 3's Annual Performance Results and Targets
(Dollars in billions)

Performance measures	2007 actual	2008 actual	2009 actual	2010 actual	2011 target ^a	2012 target
Financial benefits	\$22.8	\$23.4	\$18.5	\$11.6	\$14.7	\$11.0
Nonfinancial benefits	648	704	634	684	630	630
Testimonies	74	76	49	45	54	57

Source: GAO.

^a Our fiscal year 2011 target for testimonies differs from the target we reported in our fiscal year 2011 performance budget in January 2010. Specifically, we decreased the number of testimonies by five.

Table 13: Examples of Planned Work under Goal 3

<p>During fiscal year 2011 and 2012, we anticipate conducting work related to the following:</p> <p><i>Management Challenges/Risks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOD financial management improvement efforts • reviewing agencies’ knowledge of the supplier base and use of sound contract management • assessing the government’s strategy for managing its reliance on contractors and ensuring contractor integrity <p><i>Accountability</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual financial audits of the Internal Revenue Service, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, TARP, the Bureau of the Public Debt, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) • the annual consolidated financial audit of the federal government • audits of federal internal controls needed to ensure accountability over resources and payments, including improper payment controls <p><i>Financial Effectiveness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • application/use of IT investment-management best practices across the government • identifying ways to improve the collection, dissemination, and quality of federal information • evaluating the effectiveness of U.S. government programs designed to protect critical technologies <p><i>Fiscal Condition of the Government</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing the gap between taxes owed and taxes collected • issues related to financing the federal government’s growing debt • analysis of federal, state and local options for coping with recession-induced and long-term fiscal pressures
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Source: GAO.

Strategic objectives and Targets—Goal 4

Our fourth goal is focused internally on improving efficiency and effectiveness in performing our work; maintaining and enhancing a diverse workforce; expanding collaboration to promote professional standards; and being a responsible steward of our resources. Our strategic objectives under this goal are to

- improve efficiency and effectiveness in performing our mission and delivering quality products and services to the Congress and the American people;
- maintain and enhance a diverse workforce and inclusive work environment through strengthened recruiting, retention, development, and reward programs;
- expand networks, collaborations, and partnerships that promote professional standards and enhance GAO’s knowledge; agility, and response time; and

- be a responsible steward of GAO’s human, information, fiscal, technological, and physical resources.

<p>Leading GAO Office for Goal 4 Chief Administrative Officer (CAO/CFO)</p> <p>Primary Contributing GAO Offices Controller and Administrative Services Field Operations Human Capital Information Systems and Technology Services Knowledge Services Professional Development Program</p> <p>Supporting GAO Offices Special Assistant for Diversity Issues Applied Research and Methods Strategic Planning and External Liaison Congressional Relations Opportunity and Inclusiveness Quality and Continuous Improvement Public Affairs General Counsel</p>
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Table 14: Selected Work under Goal 4 in Fiscal Year 2010

<p>Enhancing our integrated workforce planning and budgeting process</p>	<p>Demonstrated agility and flexibility in addressing unprecedented new legislative responsibilities and a delayed budget in fiscal year 2009</p> <p>Routinely employed sophisticated modeling of workforce data to ensure that staff were utilized most effectively</p> <p>Used creative, alternative hiring measures to obtain needed expertise and subject-area knowledge to respond to new legislative responsibilities under TARP and the Recovery Act</p>
<p>Strengthening communication with our congressional clients and our stakeholders</p>	<p>Enhanced our communications to our clients and the public by using Web technology to more effectively provide timely information on critical issues facing the nation</p> <p>Produced video summaries on the major issues facing the new Congress and the new administration</p> <p>Produced a Web site with content and documentation supporting GAO's oversight of the Recovery Act</p>
<p>Streamlining the engagement process and improving engagement services</p>	<p>Revised 36 guidance documents on applied research tools and methods to help engagement teams better plan and implement assignments</p> <p>Enhanced the design and implementation of Web-based surveys to facilitate (1) efficient data capture and analysis, which was essential to support the many staff conducting Recovery Act audit work across 16 states and the District of Columbia and (2) reuse for subsequent efforts given our recurrent reporting responsibilities under the Recovery Act</p>

Source: GAO.

Table 15: Planned Work under Goal 4

<p>During fiscal year 2011 and 2012, we anticipate conducting work related to the following:</p> <p><i>Human Capital Management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with a contractor to develop a new performance management and appraisal system for all GAO staff and developing a new compensation system • expanding diversity training and other initiatives to enhance awareness and promote an inclusive workplace culture • implementing initiatives aimed at engaging and retaining our high quality workforce • ensuring consistency of our human capital practices and procedures with OPM's civil service reform initiatives, to the extent practicable <p><i>Engagement Management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuing efforts to streamline engagement work processes • managing our workload to ensure we are focused on the highest-priority issues • continuing to seek ways to enhance the accessibility and usefulness of our audit products <p><i>Responsible Agency Resource Stewardship</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuing to enhance physical and information security to ensure the safety and security of people and assets • implementing an electronic, integrated workforce planning and budgeting information system • leveraging technology to automate remaining manual processes and enhance efficiency and effectiveness
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Employee Organizations

- implementing the first master collective bargaining agreement with a GAO employees union, IFPTE, Local 1921
- enhancing information-sharing and collaboration with employee groups to ensure employee needs, concerns, and suggestions are understood

Strategic Planning

- reexamine advisory board membership and meeting formats to assure coverage of key strategic issues
- reinvigorate the CG Forum and Speaker Series to provide ongoing insight into emerging issues
- develop means to regularly scan and engage senior GAO leadership on emerging trends and enterprise risks

Source: GAO.

Management Challenges

The Comptroller General, the Executive Committee, and other senior executives identify management challenges through the agency's strategic planning, management, internal control and budgeting processes. We monitor our progress in addressing the challenges through our annual performance and accountability process. Under strategic goal 4, several performance goals and underlying key efforts focus attention on each of our management challenges. We use a balanced-scorecard approach for quarterly monitoring of these and other critical initiatives, and we report each year on our progress toward our performance goals.

For fiscal year 2012, we plan to continue to address three management challenges—physical security, information security, and human capital. We revisit the challenges each year and refine them, when appropriate. When we believe we have sufficiently addressed these challenges, we will remove them from our list. However, we anticipate that we may need to continue to address all three of these management challenges in future years because they are constantly evolving and require us to continually identify ways to adapt and improve. We will report any changes as we monitor and report on our progress in addressing the challenges through our annual performance and accountability process. The management challenges are discussed more fully in our Performance and Accountability Report for 2010 and are summarized below.

Physical Security Challenge

We continue to take essential actions to protect our people and our assets to ensure continuity of agency operations. The domestic and international climate demands that we constantly assess our physical security profile and seek ways to improve and strengthen it. In fiscal years 2011 and 2012, we plan to continue to improve our physical-security profile, strengthen our efforts to become a leading practices agency, and address the continuing and future issues that will challenge us in going forward. We will continue upgrading the electronic security systems in field offices and begin their integration with the headquarters system. We will develop and finalize a physical facility security plan that outlines all of our physical security functions and identifies specific responses to the different homeland-security threat levels. We will also continue with our incremental implementation of Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (the Common Identification Standard for Federal Employees and Contractors), commonly known as HSPD-12, completing contractor and employee personnel-security investigations.

Information Security Challenge

Information-systems security continues to be a critical activity in ensuring our information systems and assets are effectively protected and free from compromise. Given the constantly evolving nature of threats to information systems and assets, information security will continue to be a management challenge for us and all government and private-sector entities at

least through fiscal year 2012. Our overall goal is to ensure that information-protection requirements extend across the life cycle of documentation: from data transmission and storage to the eventual archiving and disposal of data. In fiscal years 2011 and 2012, we will continue to make progress on these efforts.

Human Capital Challenge

Our studies, which are covering more complex issues across a broad range of federal programs, require greater analysis to complete than ever before. GAO's continued effectiveness in assisting the Congress therefore depends on a talented, diverse, high-performing, and knowledge-based workforce to carry out our mission. While we continue to be highly successful in attracting talent and our attrition rates have recently declined, we—like the rest of the federal government—face new and complex 21st century challenges that affect our ability to attract and retain such a high quality workforce, including longer-term fiscal constraints, changing demographics, emerging civil service reform initiatives, and evolving public attitudes about the federal workforce.

To address these challenges, we will continue implementing initiatives identified in our framework for management improvement in the areas of recognizing and valuing diversity and addressing workload demands and staffing practices. We will also finalize a 5-year Human Capital Strategic Plan to ensure consistency with GAO's new strategic plan for fiscal years 2010—2015. Finally, we will work with a contractor to develop a new performance management system, and continue to implement other recommendations to improve performance management at GAO.

External Factors Requiring Mitigation

Several external factors could affect the achievement of our performance goals, including the amount of resources we receive, shifts in the content and volume of our work,

and national and international developments. Limitations imposed on our work by other organizations or limitations on the ability of other federal agencies to make the improvements we recommend are additional factors that could affect the achievement of our goals.

As the Congress focuses on known challenges facing the nation and responds to unforeseen events, the mix of work we are asked to undertake may change, diverting our resources from some strategic objectives and performance goals. We can and do mitigate the effect of these events on the achievement of our goals in various ways. For example we will

- continue to track current events and communicate frequently with our congressional clients in order to be alert to possibilities that could shift the Congress's priorities or trigger new priorities;
- quickly redirect our resources when appropriate, such as our response to mandates related to the Recovery Act, so that we can deal with major changes as they occur;
- maintain broad-based staff expertise so that we can readily address emerging needs; and
- initiate evaluations under the Comptroller General's authority on a limited number of selected topics, including our high-risk list update work

Another external factor that affects our ability to serve the Congress is the extent to which we can obtain access to agency information. This access to information plays an essential role in our ability to report on issues of importance to the Congress and the American people. Executive departments and agencies are generally very cooperative in providing us access to the information we need. However, over time we have experienced access issues at certain departments and agencies. Some of these are agency specific, stemming from long-standing processes and procedures that impede our access; others reflect misinterpretations of our authorities. We actively pursue access

issues as they arise, and we are engaged in discussions and efforts across the executive branch to enhance our access to information.

Program Evaluation

To assess our progress toward our first three strategic goals and their objectives and to update them for our strategic plan, we evaluate actions taken by federal agencies and the Congress in response to our recommendations. The results of these evaluations are conveyed in our performance and accountability reports as financial benefits and nonfinancial benefits from our work.

In addition, we actively monitor the status of our open recommendations—those that remain valid but have not yet been implemented—and report our findings annually to the Congress and the public (see www.gao.gov/openrecs.html). We use the results of that analysis to determine the need for further work in particular areas. For example, if an agency has not implemented a recommended action that we consider to be worthwhile, we may decide to pursue further action with agency officials or congressional committees, or we may decide to undertake additional work in that area.

We also use our biennial high-risk update report to update the status of the areas we consider vulnerable to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement, or the need for broad-based transformation. The report is a valuable evaluation and planning tool because it helps us to identify those areas where our continued efforts are needed to maintain the focus on important policy and management issues that the nation faces. (See www.gao.gov/docsearch/featured/highrisk.html.)

In fiscal year 2010, under strategic goal 4, we conducted management studies to examine internal issues, operations, and processes affecting all four of our strategic goals. We also continue our management improvement initiatives and reported on several projects

completed within five priority areas identified in fiscal year 2008:

Recognizing and Valuing Diversity; Reassessing the Performance Appraisal System; Managing Workload, Quality, and Streamlining Processes; Enhancing Staffing Practices and Developing the Workforce; and Strengthening Recruitment and Retention Initiatives. The results of some of these projects led to longer-term initiatives such as our engagement streamlining initiative and development of a new product line.

Engagement streamlining initiative: This initiative focuses on streamlining our engagement processes and increasing efficiency through the use of information technology, while still adhering to our high standards for product quality and timeliness. The team is identifying short-term and longer-term improvement that can be addressed through changes in technology, refinements in policy and processes, or a combination of the two.

Product line modernization: This initiative focuses on modernizing our product line's format and dissemination methods to more effectively meet the information needs of our clients and the public and reach a wider audience in an increasingly wireless, multimedia, and Web-based communications environment. During fiscal year 2010, we began a series of audio podcasts on significant issues we reviewed; launched a mobile version of our Web site geared for easy access with smart phones and other small-screen electronic devices; and piloted a Web-based reporting format to make our products more accessible, useful, and recognizable for users. We also added a "Share/Save" feature on our home page to make it easier for users to alert their colleagues and others about our products.

Quality assurance improvements: In response to the findings of internal inspections and suggestions resulting from our most recent external peer review, we enhanced our quality assurance framework in several areas to simplify and clarify some of our key processes and to help ensure compliance with our professional

standards. These changes included development of a new framework for categorizing our work, enhancements to our policy for obtaining comments on our draft products from external entities, revision to how we document data reliability assessments, a new approach to organizing engagement documentation, enhancements to documenting the assessment of the collective evidence, and clarifications on how to document referencing of draft products. In preparation for our next peer review in 2011, we have also conducted mandatory quality assurance training for our audit staff.

We also completed our annual evaluation of financial management practices and processes:

Financial-management practices and processes:

Each year, we monitor internal financial management controls through the use of reviews that include the identification of key controls over financial reporting and the assessment of the operating effectiveness of those controls. Where applicable, we implement consolidated end-to-end testing of some processes. We also develop corrective action plans for any identified control issues and monitor the plans until the issue is resolved. Our program meets the objectives of the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act of 1982, even though, as a legislative branch agency, we are not legally required to do so. We report the results of our analyses to the appropriate internal control working groups and the Senior Assessment Team, composed of senior agency managers and chaired by our Chief Financial Officer, that actively oversee the process. Additionally, our review of financial management systems is consistent with OMB circular A-127 and includes analyses of Statement of Auditing Standards (SAS) number 70, Service Organizations audit reports for our shared service providers. The review also includes the results of our auditor's opinions on our financial statements and on internal controls over financial reporting and the auditor's report on compliance with laws and regulations.

Appendix I

Verifying and Validating Performance Data

Each year we measure our performance with 14 indicators of our work results, client service, people management, and internal operations. To assess our performance, we use actual, rather than projected, data for almost all of our performance measures. We believe the data are reliable based on our verification and validation procedures to ensure quality.

Results Measures

Financial Benefits

Definition and Background

Our work—including our findings and recommendations—may produce benefits to the federal government that can be estimated in dollar terms. These benefits can result in better services to the public, changes to statutes or regulations, or improved government business operations. A financial benefit is an estimate of the federal monetary effect of agency or congressional actions. These financial benefits generally result from work that we completed over the past several years. The estimated benefit is based on actions taken in response to our work, such as reducing government expenditures, increasing revenues, or reallocating funds to other areas. Financial benefits included in our performance measures are net benefits—that is, estimates of financial benefits that have been reduced by the costs associated with taking the action that we recommended. We convert all estimates involving past and future years to their net present value and use actual dollars to represent estimates involving only the current year. Financial benefit amounts vary depending on the nature of the benefit, and we can claim financial benefits over multiple years based on a single agency or congressional action.

Financial benefits are linked to specific recommendations or other work. To claim that financial benefits have been achieved, our staff must file an accomplishment report documenting that (1) the actions taken as a result of our work have been completed or substantially completed, (2) the actions generally were taken within 2 fiscal years prior to the filing of the accomplishment report, (3) a cause-and-effect relationship exists between the benefits reported and our recommendation or work performed, and (4) estimates of financial benefits were based on information obtained from non-GAO sources. To help ensure conservative estimates of net financial benefits, reductions in operating cost are typically limited to 2 years of accrued reductions, but up to 5 fiscal years of financial benefits can be claimed if the reductions are sustained over a period longer than 2 years. Multiyear reductions in long-term projects, changes in tax laws, program terminations, or sales of government assets are limited to 5 years. Financial benefits can be claimed for past or future years. For financial benefits involving events that occur on a regular but infrequent basis—such as the decennial census—we may extend the measurement period until the event occurs in order to compute the associated financial benefits using our present-value calculator.

Managing directors decide when their staff can claim financial benefits. A managing director may choose to claim a financial benefit all in 1 year or decide to claim it over several years, if the benefit spans future years and the managing director wants greater precision as to the amount of the benefit.

Data Sources

Our Accomplishment Reporting System provides the data for this measure. Teams use this Web-based data system to prepare, review, and approve accomplishments and forward them to our Quality and Continuous Improvement office (QCI) for its review. Once accomplishment reports are approved, they are compiled by QCI, which annually tabulates total financial benefits agencywide and by goal.

Verification and Validation

Our policies and procedures require us to use the Accomplishment Reporting System to record the financial benefits that result from our work.

They also provide guidance on estimating those financial benefits. The team identifies when a financial benefit has occurred as a result of our work. The team develops estimates based on non-GAO sources, such as the agency that acted on our work, a congressional committee, or the Congressional Budget Office, and files accomplishment reports based on those estimates. When non-GAO estimates are not readily available, teams may use GAO estimates—developed in consultation with our experts, such as the Chief Economist, Chief Actuary, or Chief Statistician, and corroborated with a knowledgeable program official from the executive agency involved. The estimates are reduced by significant identifiable offsetting costs. The team develops workpapers to support accomplishments with evidence that meets our evidence standard, supervisors review the workpapers, and an independent person within GAO reviews the accomplishment report. For all financial accomplishment reports the managing director prepares a memorandum addressed to the Chief Quality Officer attesting that the accomplishment report meets GAO standards for accomplishment reporting. The memorandum specifically (1) addresses how linkage to GAO is established and (2) attests that the financial benefits being claimed are in accordance with GAO procedures. In fiscal year 2010, the teams were also required to consult with our Center for Economics on the calculation for financial benefits of \$500 million or more. For each of the financial accomplishment reports, an economist reviewed and approved the methodology for calculating the proposed financial benefit. The assessment results were documented in the accomplishment's supporting documentation and provided to the second reviewers.

The team's managing director is authorized to approve financial accomplishment reports with benefits of less than \$100 million. The team forwards the report to QCI, which reviews all accomplishment reports and approves accomplishment reports claiming benefits of

\$100 million or more. In fiscal year 2010, QCI approved accomplishment reports covering 95 percent of the dollar value of financial benefits reported.

In fiscal year 2010, accomplishments from \$100 million or more were also reviewed by independent second and third reviewers (reemployed GAO annuitants), who have significant experience and knowledge of GAO accomplishment reporting policies and procedures. GAO's total fiscal year 2010 reported financial benefits reflect the views of the independent reviewers.

Data Limitations

Not every financial benefit from our work can be readily estimated or documented as attributable to our work. As a result, the amount of financial benefits is a conservative estimate. Estimates are based on information from non-GAO sources and are based on both objective and subjective data, and as a result, professional judgment is required in reviewing accomplishment reports. We feel that the verification and validation steps that we take minimize any adverse effect from this limitation.

Nonfinancial BenefitsDefinition and Background

Our work—including our findings and recommendations—may produce benefits to the federal government that cannot be estimated in dollar terms. These nonfinancial benefits can result in better services to the public, changes to statutes or regulations, or improved government business operations. Nonfinancial benefits generally result from past work that we completed.

Nonfinancial benefits are linked to specific recommendations or other work that we completed over several years. To claim that nonfinancial benefits have been achieved, staff must file an accomplishment report that documents that (1) the actions taken as a result of our work have been completed or substantially completed, (2) the actions generally were taken within the past 2 fiscal

years of filing the accomplishment report, and (3) a cause-and-effect relationship exists between the benefits reported and our recommendation or work performed.

Data Sources

Our Accomplishment Reporting System provides the data for this measure. Teams use this automated system to prepare, review, and approve accomplishments and forward them to QCI for its review. Once accomplishment reports are approved, they are compiled by QCI, which annually tabulates total nonfinancial benefits agencywide and by goal.

Verification and Validation

Our policies and procedures require us to use the Accomplishment Reporting System to record the nonfinancial benefits that result from our findings and recommendations. Staff in the team file accomplishment reports to claim that benefits have resulted from our work. The team develops workpapers to support accomplishments with evidence that meets our evidence standard. Supervisors review the workpapers; an independent person within GAO reviews the accomplishment report; and the team's managing director or director approves the accomplishment report to ensure the appropriateness of the claimed accomplishment, including attribution to our work.

The team forwards the report to QCI, where it is reviewed for appropriateness. QCI provides summary data on nonfinancial benefits to team managers, who check the data on a regular basis to make sure that approved accomplishments from their staff have been accurately recorded. Additionally, on a periodic basis, the IG independently tests compliance with our process for claiming nonfinancial benefits. For example, the IG tested this process in fiscal year 2005 and found it to be reasonable. In response to the IG's recommendations, we strengthened the documentation of our nonfinancial benefits.

Data Limitations

The data may be underreported because we cannot always document a direct cause-and-effect relationship between our work and benefits it produced. However, we feel that this

is not a significant limitation on the data because the data represent a conservative measure of our overall contribution toward improving government.

Percentage of Products with Recommendations

Definition and Background

We measure the percentage of our written products (chapter and letter reports and numbered correspondence) issued in the fiscal year that included at least one recommendation. We make recommendations that specify actions that can be taken to improve federal operations or programs. We strive for recommendations that are directed at resolving the cause of identified problems; that are addressed to parties who have the authority to act; and that are specific, feasible, and cost-effective. Some products we issue contain no recommendations and are strictly informational in nature.

We track the percentage of our written products that are issued during the fiscal year and contain recommendations. This indicator recognizes that our products do not always include recommendations and that the Congress and agencies often find such informational reports just as useful as those that contain recommendations. For example, informational reports, which do not contain recommendations, can help to bring about significant financial and nonfinancial benefits.

Data Sources

Our Documents Database records recommendations as they are issued. The database is updated daily.

Verification and Validation

Through a formal process, each team identifies the number of recommendations included in each product and an external contractor enters them into a database. We provide our managers with reports on the recommendations being tracked to help ensure that all recommendations have been captured and that each recommendation has been completely and accurately stated. Additionally, on a periodic basis, the IG independently tests the teams'

compliance with our policies and procedures related to this performance measure. For example, during fiscal year 2006, the IG tested and determined that our process for determining the percentage of written products with recommendations was reasonable. The IG also recommended actions to improve the process for developing, compiling, and reporting these statistics. We have implemented the IG's recommendations for fiscal year 2007. Since then, we have used the same procedures to compute and report this measure.

Data Limitations

This measure is a conservative estimate of the extent to which we assist the Congress and federal agencies because not all products and services we provide lead to recommendations. For example, the Congress may request information on federal programs that is purely descriptive or analytical and does not lend itself to recommendations.

Past Recommendations Implemented

Definition and Background

We make recommendations designed to improve the operations of the federal government. For our work to produce financial or nonfinancial benefits, the Congress or federal agencies must implement these recommendations. As part of our audit responsibilities under generally accepted government auditing standards, we follow up on recommendations we have made and report to the Congress on their status. Experience has shown that it takes time for some recommendations to be implemented. For this reason, this measure is the percentage rate of implementation of recommendations made 4 years prior to a given fiscal year (e.g., the fiscal year 2010 implementation rate is the percentage of recommendations made in fiscal year 2006 products that were implemented by the end of fiscal year 2010). Experience has shown that if a recommendation has not been implemented within 4 years, it is not likely to be implemented.

This measure assesses action on recommendations made 4 years previously, rather than the results of our activities during the fiscal year in which the data are reported. For example, the cumulative percentage of recommendations made in fiscal year 2006 that were implemented in the ensuing years is as follows: 12 percent by the end of the first year (fiscal year 2007), 27 percent by the end of the second year (fiscal year 2008), 42 percent by the end of the third year (fiscal year 2009), and 82 percent by the end of the fourth year (fiscal year 2010).

Data Sources

Our Documents Database records recommendations as they are issued. The database is updated daily. As our staff monitor implementation of recommendations, they submit updated information to the database.

Verification and Validation

Through a formal process, each team identifies the number of recommendations included in each product, and an external contractor enters them into a database.

Policies and procedures specify that our staff must verify, with sufficient supporting documentation, that an agency's reported actions are adequately being implemented. Staff update the status of the recommendations on a periodic basis. To accomplish this, our staff may interview agency officials, obtain agency documents, access agency databases, or obtain information from an agency's inspector general. Recommendations that are reported as implemented are reviewed by a senior executive in the unit and by QCI.

Summary data are provided to the units that issued the recommendations. The units check the data regularly to make sure that the recommendations they have reported as implemented have been accurately recorded. We also provide to the Congress a database with the status of recommendations that have not been implemented, and we maintain a publicly available database of open recommendations that is updated daily.

Additionally, on a periodic basis, the IG independently tests our process for calculating the percentage of recommendations implemented for a given fiscal year. For example, based on the IG's last review of this measure, the IG determined that our process was reasonable for calculating the percentage of recommendations that had been made in our fiscal year 2002 products and implemented by the end of fiscal year 2006. The IG also recommended actions to improve the process for developing, compiling, and reporting this statistic. In fiscal year 2007, we implemented the IG's recommendation for calculating the percentage of recommendations that had been made and implemented. Since then we have continued to use this approved process to compute and report this measure.

Data Limitations

The data may be underreported because sometimes a recommendation may require more than 4 years to implement. We also may not count cases in which a recommendation is partially implemented. However, we feel that this is not a significant limitation to the data because the data represent a conservative measure of our overall contribution toward improving government.

Client Measures

Testimonies

Definition and Background

The Congress may ask us to testify at hearings on various issues, and these hearings are the basis for this measure. Participation in hearings is one of our most important forms of communication with the Congress, and the number of hearings at which we testify reflects the importance and value of our institutional knowledge in assisting congressional decision making. When multiple GAO witnesses with separate testimonies appear at a single hearing, we count this as a single testimony. We do not count statements submitted for the record when a GAO witness does not appear.

Data Sources

The data on hearings at which we testified are compiled in our Congressional Hearing System managed by staff in Congressional Relations.

Verification and Validation

The units responding to requests for testimony are responsible for entering data in the Congressional Hearing System. After a GAO witness has testified at a hearing, Congressional Relations verifies that the data in the system are correct and records the hearing as one at which we testified. Congressional Relations provides weekly status reports to unit managers, who check to make sure that the data are complete and accurate. Additionally, on a periodic basis, the IG independently verifies the total number of hearings at which we testified.

Data Limitations

This measure does not include statements for the record that we prepare for congressional hearings. Also, this measure may be influenced by factors other than the quality of our performance in any specific year. The number of hearings held each year depends on the Congress's agenda, and the number of times we are asked to testify may reflect congressional interest in work in progress as well as work completed that year or the previous year. To mitigate this limitation, we try to adjust our target to reflect cyclical changes in the congressional schedule. We also reach out to our clients on a continuing basis to increase their awareness of our readiness to participate in hearings.

Timeliness

Definition and Background

The likelihood that our products will be used is enhanced if they are delivered when needed to support congressional and agency decision making. To determine whether our products are timely, we compute the proportion of favorable responses to a question related to timeliness that appears on our electronic client outreach form. Because our products often have multiple congressional clients, we often outreach to more than one congressional staff person per product. We send a form to key staff working for

requesters of our testimony statements and to clients of our more significant written products—specifically, engagements assigned an interest level of “high” by our senior management and those requiring an expected investment of 500 GAO staff days or more. One question asks the respondent whether the product was delivered on time. When a product that meets our criteria is released to the public, we electronically send relevant congressional staff an e-mail message containing a link to the form. When this link is accessed, the form recipient is asked to respond to the timeliness question using a five-point scale—“strongly agree”, “generally agree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “generally disagree”, or “strongly disagree”—or to choose “not applicable / no answer.” For this measure, favorable responses are “strongly agree” and “generally agree.”

Data Sources

To identify the products that meet our criteria (testimonies and other products that are high-interest or expected to reach 500 staff days or more), we run a query against GAO’s Documents Database maintained by a contractor. To identify appropriate recipients of the form for products meeting our criteria, we ask the engagement teams to provide, in GAO’s Product Numbering Database, e-mail addresses for congressional staff serving as contacts on a product. Relevant information from both of these databases is fed into another database that is managed by QCI. This database then combines product, form recipient, and data from our Congressional Relations staff and creates an e-mail message with a Web link to the form. (Congressional Relations staff serve as the GAO contacts for form recipients.) The e-mail message also contains an embedded client password and unique client identifier to ensure that a recipient is linked with the appropriate form. Our Congressional Feedback Database creates a record with the product title and number and captures the responses to every form sent back to us electronically.

Verification and Validation

QCI staff review a hard copy of a released GAO product or access its electronic version to check

the accuracy of the addressee information in the QCI database. QCI staff also check the congressional staff directory to ensure that form recipients listed in the QCI database appear there. In addition, our Congressional Relations staff review the list of form recipients entered by the engagement teams and identify the most appropriate congressional staff person to receive a form for each client. E-mail messages that are inadvertently sent with incorrect e-mail addresses automatically reappear in the form approval system. When this happens, QCI staff correct any obvious typing errors and resend the e-mail message or contact the congressional staff person directly for the correct e-mail address and then resend the message. The IG reviewed the timeliness performance measure in fiscal year 2009, and as a result of this work, we have clarified the description of this measure and are documenting our procedures.

Data Limitations

We do not measure the timeliness of all of our external products because we do not wish to place too much burden on busy congressional staff. Testimonies and written products that met our criteria for this measure represented about 60 percent of the congressionally requested written products we issued during fiscal year 2010. We exclude from our timeliness measure low- and medium-interest reports expected to take fewer than 500 staff days when completed, reports addressed to agency heads or commissions, some reports mandated by the Congress, classified reports, and reports completed under the Comptroller General’s authority. Also, if a requester indicates that he or she does not want to complete a form, we will not send one to this person again, even though a product subsequently requested meets our criteria. The response rate for the form is 29 percent, and 99 percent of those who responded answered the timeliness question. We received responses from one or more people for about 58 percent of the products for which we sent a form in fiscal year 2010. In our timeliness calculations for fiscal years 2004 through 2007, we inadvertently included nonresponses to the timeliness question and therefore recalculated the results for these fiscal years. While the

percentage of favorable responses did not change significantly, the recalculation did result in us meeting our target (from 94 to 95 percent).

People Measures

New-Hire Rate

Definition and Background

This performance measure is the ratio of the number of people hired to the number we planned to hire. Annually, we develop a workforce plan that takes into account our strategic goals; projected workload changes; and other changes such as retirements, other attrition, promotions, and skill gaps. The workforce plan for the upcoming year specifies the number of planned hires. The Comptroller General, the Chief Administrative Officer, the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, the Chief Human Capital Officer, and the Controller meet monthly to monitor progress toward achieving the workforce plan. Adjustments to the workforce plan are made throughout the year, if necessary, to reflect changing needs and conditions.

Data Sources

The Executive Committee approves the workforce plan. The workforce plan is coordinated and maintained by the Chief Administrative Office (CAO). Data on accessions—that is, new hires coming on board—is taken from a database that contains employee data from the Department of Agriculture’s National Finance Center (NFC) database, which handles payroll and personnel data for GAO and other agencies.

Verification and Validation

The CAO maintains a database that monitors and tracks all our hiring offers, declinations, and accessions. In coordination with our Human Capital Office, our CAO staff enter workforce information supporting this measure into the CAO database. While the database is updated on a daily basis, CAO staff provide monthly reports to the Comptroller General and the CAO to monitor progress by GAO units in achieving workforce plan hiring targets. The CAO

continually monitors and reviews accessions maintained in the NFC database against its database to ensure consistency and to resolve discrepancies. In addition, on a periodic basis, the IG examines our process for calculating the new-hire rate. During fiscal year 2008, the IG independently reviewed this process and recommended actions to improve the documentation of the process used to calculate this measure. In fiscal year 2009, we developed standard operating procedures to document how we calculate and ensure quality control over data relevant to this measure.

Data Limitations

There is a lag of one to two pay periods (up to 4 weeks) before the NFC database reflects actual data. We generally allow sufficient time before requesting data for this measure to ensure that we get accurate results.

Retention Rate

Definition and Background

We continuously strive to make GAO a place where people want to work. Once we have made an investment in hiring and training people, we would like to retain them. This measure is one indicator that we are attaining that objective and is the complement of attrition. We calculate this measure by taking 100 percent minus the attrition rate, where attrition rate is defined as the number of separations divided by the average onboard strength. We calculate this measure with and without retirements.

Data Sources

Data on retention—that is, people who are on board at the beginning of the fiscal year and people on board at the end of the fiscal year—are taken from a Chief Administrative Officer database that contains some data from the NFC database (the NFC handles payroll and personnel data for GAO and other agencies).

Verification and Validation

CAO staff continually monitor and review accessions and attritions against the contents of their database that has NFC data and they follow up on any discrepancies. In addition, on a

periodic basis, the IG examines our process for calculating the retention rate. During fiscal year 2008, the IG reviewed this process and recommended actions to improve the documentation of the process used to calculate this measure. In fiscal year 2009, we developed standard operating procedures to document how we calculate and ensure quality control over data relevant to this measure.

Data Limitations

See New-Hire Rate, Data Limitations, section.

Staff Development

Definition and Background

One way that we measure how well we are doing and identify areas for improvement is through our annual employee feedback survey. This Web-based survey, which is conducted by an outside contractor to ensure the confidentiality of every respondent, is administered to all of our employees once a year. Through the survey, we encourage our staff to indicate what they think about GAO's overall operations, work environment, and organizational culture and how they rate our managers—from the immediate supervisor to the Executive Committee—on key aspects of their leadership styles. The survey consists of over 100 questions. To further ensure confidentiality, in fiscal year 2010 the contractor also analyzed the data.

This measure is based on staff's favorable responses to three of the six questions related to staff development on our annual employee survey. This subset of questions was selected on the basis of senior management's judgment about the questions' relevance to the measure and specialists' knowledge about the development of indexes. Staff were asked to respond to three questions on a five-point scale or choose "no basis to judge / not applicable" or "no answer."

Data Sources

These data come from our staff's responses to an annual Web-based survey. The survey questions we used for this measure ask staff how much

positive or negative effect (1) external training and conferences and (2) on-the-job training had on their ability to do their jobs during the last 12 months. From the staff who expressed an opinion, we calculated the percentage of staff selecting the two categories that indicate satisfaction with or a favorable response to the question. For this measure, the favorable responses were either "very positive impact" or "generally positive impact." In addition, the survey question asked how useful and relevant to your work did you find internal (Learning Center) training courses. From staff who expressed an opinion, we calculated the percentage of staff selecting the three categories that indicate satisfaction with or a favorable response to the question. For this measure, the favorable responses were "very greatly useful and relevant," "greatly useful and relevant," and "moderately useful and relevant." Responses of "no basis to judge / not applicable" or "no answer" were excluded from the calculation. While including "no basis to judge / not applicable" or "no answer" in the calculation would result in a different percentage, our method of calculation is an acceptable survey practice and we believe it produces a better and more valid measure because it represents only those employees who have an opinion on the questions.

Beginning in fiscal year 2006 we changed the way that the staff development people measure was calculated. Specifically, we dropped one question regarding computer-based training because we felt such training was a significant part of (and therefore included in) the other questions the survey asked regarding training. We also modified a question on internal training and changed the scale of possible responses to that question. We show the fiscal year 2004 and 2005 data on a separate line to indicate that those data are not comparable to the data beginning in fiscal year 2006.

Verification and Validation

The employee feedback survey gathers staff opinions on a variety of topics. The survey is password protected, and only the outside contractor has access to passwords. In addition,

when the survey instrument was developed, extensive focus groups and pretests were undertaken to refine the questions and provide definitions as needed. In fiscal year 2010, our response rate to this survey was about 70 percent, which indicates that its results are largely representative of the GAO population. In addition, many teams and work units conduct follow-on work to gain a better understanding of the information from the survey.

In addition, on a periodic basis, the IG independently reviews the reliability and validity of the staff development measure. The IG's most recent evaluation showed that for fiscal year 2007 we accurately calculated the measure.

Data Limitations

The information contained in the survey is the self-reported opinions of staff expressed under conditions of confidentiality. Accordingly, there is no way to further validate those expressions of opinion.

The practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce errors, commonly referred to as nonsampling errors. These errors could result from, for example, respondents misinterpreting a question, or data entry staff incorrectly entering data into a database used to analyze the survey responses. Such errors can introduce unwanted variability into the survey results. We took steps in the development of the survey to minimize nonsampling errors. Specifically, when we developed the survey instrument we held extensive focus groups and pretests to refine the questions and define terms used to decrease the chances that respondents would misunderstand the questions. We also limited the chances of introducing nonsampling errors by creating a Web-based survey for which respondents entered their answers directly into an electronic questionnaire. This approach eliminated the need to have the data keyed into a database by someone other than the respondent, thus removing an additional source of error.

Staff Utilization

Definition and Background

This measure is based on staff's favorable responses to three of the six questions related to staff utilization on our annual employee survey. This subset of questions was selected on the basis of senior management's judgment about the questions' relevance to the measure and specialists' knowledge about the development of indexes. Staff were asked to respond to these three questions on a five-point scale or choose "no basis to judge / not applicable" or "no answer." (For background information about our entire employee feedback survey, see Staff Development section above.)

Data Sources

These data come from our staff's responses to an annual Web-based survey. The survey questions we used for this measure ask staff how often the following occurred in the last 12 months: (1) my job made good use of my skills; (2) GAO provided me with opportunities to do challenging work; and (3) in general, I was utilized effectively. From the staff who expressed an opinion, we calculated the percentage of staff selecting the two categories that indicate satisfaction with or a favorable response to the question. For this measure, the favorable responses were either "always or almost always" or "most of the time". Responses of "no basis to judge" or "no answer" were excluded from the calculation. Including "no basis to judge / not applicable" or "no answer" in the calculation (in those few instances where it occurred) would not result in a different percentage. Our method of calculation is an acceptable survey practice, and we believe it produces a better and more valid measure because it represents only those employees who have an opinion on the questions.

Verification and Validation

See Staff Development, Verification and Validation, section above. The IG's most recent evaluation showed that for fiscal year 2007 we accurately calculated the measure.

Data Limitations

See the Staff Development, Data Limitations section.

Effective Leadership by Supervisors

Definition and Background

This measure is based on staff's favorable responses to 10 of 20 questions related to six areas of supervisory leadership on our annual employee survey. This subset of questions was selected on the basis of senior management's judgment about the questions' relevance to the measure and specialists' knowledge about the development of indexes. Specifically, our calculation included responses to 1 of 4 questions related to empowerment, 2 of 4 questions related to trust, all 3 questions related to recognition, 1 of 3 questions related to decisiveness, 2 of 3 questions related to leading by example, and 1 of 3 questions related to work life. Staff were asked to respond to these 10 questions on a five-point scale or choose "no basis to judge / not applicable" or "no answer." In fiscal year 2009 we changed the name of this measure from "Leadership" to its current nomenclature to clarify that the measure reflects employee satisfaction with the immediate supervisor's leadership. (For background information about our entire employee feedback survey, see Staff Development, Definition and Background, section above.)

Data Sources

These data come from our staff's responses to an annual Web-based survey. The survey questions we used for this measure ask staff about empowerment, trust, recognition, decisiveness, leading by example, and work life as they pertain to the respondent's immediate supervisor. Specifically, the survey asked staff to provide ratings on the following areas concerning their immediate supervisor during the last 12 months: my supervisor (1) gave me the opportunity to do what I do best; (2) treated me fairly; (3) acted with honesty and integrity toward me; (4) ensured that there was a clear link between my performance and recognition of it; (5) gave me the sense that my work is valued; (6) provided me meaningful incentives for high performance; (7) made decisions in a timely manner; (8) demonstrated GAO's core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability; (9)

implemented change effectively; and (10) dealt effectively with equal employment opportunity and discrimination issues. (Beginning with the 2010 survey, question 10 will be not be used for this measure and we will substitute a question on respecting and valuing differences among individuals. We are making this change because there is a large number of respondents who answer "no basis / not applicable" to the Equal Employment Opportunity/discrimination question. We believe this is due to GAO having so few discrimination cases and the safeguarding of private information, thus many employees do not have direct knowledge about how supervisors deal with such issues.) From the staff who expressed an opinion, we calculated the percentage of staff selecting the two categories that indicate satisfaction with or a favorable response to the question. For this measure, the favorable responses were either "always or almost always" or "most of the time." Responses of "no basis to judge / not applicable" or "no answer" were excluded from the calculation. While including "no basis to judge / not applicable" or "no answer" in the calculation would result in a different percentage, our method of calculation is an acceptable survey practice and we believe it produces a better and more valid measure because it represents only those employees who have an opinion on the questions.

Verification and Validation

See Staff Development, Verification and Validation, section above. The IG's most recent evaluation showed that for fiscal year 2007 we accurately calculated the measure.

Data Limitations

See Staff Development, Data Limitations, section.

Organizational Climate

Definition and Background

This measure is based on staff's favorable responses to 5 of the 13 questions related to organizational climate on our annual employee survey. This subset of questions was selected on the basis of senior management's judgment

about the questions' relevance to the measure and specialists' knowledge about the development of indexes. Staff were asked to respond to these 5 questions on a five-point scale or choose "no basis to judge" or "no answer." (For background information about our entire employee feedback survey, see Staff Development section above.)

Data Sources

These data come from our staff's responses to an annual Web-based survey. The survey questions we used for this measure ask staff to think back over the last 12 months and indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with each of the following statements: (1) a spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my work unit; (2) I am treated fairly and with respect in my work unit; (3) my morale is good; (4) sufficient effort is made in my work unit to get the opinions and thinking of people who work here; and (5) overall, I am satisfied with my job at GAO. From the staff who expressed an opinion, we calculated the percentage of staff selecting the two categories that indicate satisfaction with or a favorable response to the question. For this measure, the favorable responses were either "strongly agree" or "generally agree." Responses of "no basis to judge" or "no answer" were excluded from the calculation. Including the "no basis to judge / not applicable" or "no answer" in the calculation (in those few instances where it occurred) would not result in a different percentage. Our method of calculation is an acceptable survey practice, and we believe it produces a better and more valid measure because it represents only those employees who have an opinion on the questions.

Verification and Validation

See Staff Development, Verification and Validation, section above. The IG's most recent evaluation showed that for fiscal year 2007 we accurately calculated the measure.

Data Limitations

See Staff Development, Data Limitations section.

Internal Operations Measures

Help to Get Job Done and Quality of Work Life

Definition and Background

To measure how well we are doing at delivering internal administrative services to our employees and identify areas for improvement, we conduct an annual Web-based survey in November. The customer satisfaction survey on administrative services, conducted by an outside contractor to ensure the confidentiality of every respondent, is administered to all of our employees once a year. Through the survey we encourage our staff to indicate how satisfied they are with 20 services that help them get their jobs done and another 13 services that affect their quality of work life.

As part of the survey, employees are asked to rate, on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), those services that are important to them and that they have experience with or used recently. Then, for each selected service, employees are asked to indicate their level of satisfaction from 1 (low) to 5 (high), and provide a written reason for their rating and recommendations for improvement if desired. Based on employees' responses to these questions, we calculate a composite score.

Data Sources

These data come from our staff's responses to an annual Web-based survey. To determine how satisfied GAO employees are with internal administrative services, we calculate composite scores for two measures. One measure reflects the satisfaction with the 20 services that help employees get their jobs done. These services include Internet and intranet services, information-technology customer support, mail services, and voice communication services. The second measure reflects satisfaction with another 13 services that affect quality of work life. These services include assistance related to pay and benefits, building maintenance and security, and workplace safety and health. The composite score represents how employees rated their satisfaction with services in each of these areas relative to how they rated the importance of those services to them. The importance scores

and satisfaction levels are both rated on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).

Verification and Validation

The satisfaction survey on administrative services is housed on a Web site maintained by an outside contractor, and only the contractor has the ability to link the survey results with individual staff. Our survey response rate was 54 percent in 2009. To ensure that the results are largely representative of the GAO population, we analyze the results by demographic representation (unit, tenure, location, band level, and job type). Each GAO unit responsible for administrative services conducts follow-on work, including analyzing written comments to gain a better understanding of the information from the survey. In addition, on a periodic basis, the IG independently assesses the internal operations performance measures. The IG examined the measures during fiscal year 2007 and found the measures reasonable. The IG also recommended actions to improve the measures' reliability and objectivity. To address these recommendations, we worked with a contractor to implement an automated process for following up with survey nonrespondents, while maintaining their anonymity. This significantly increased our response rate and reliability. To enhance objectivity, we have more explicitly disclosed our survey response rate and other data limitations consistent with our reporting on the response rate and data limitations for our people measures.

Data Limitations

The information contained in the survey is the self-reported opinion of staff expressed under conditions of confidentiality. Accordingly, there is no way to further validate those expressions of opinion. We do not plan any actions to remedy this limitation because we feel it would violate the pledge of confidentiality that we make to our staff regarding the survey responses.

The practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce errors, commonly referred to as nonsampling errors. These errors could result, for example, from respondents misinterpreting a question or entering their data

incorrectly. Such errors can introduce unwanted variability into the survey results. We limit the chances of introducing nonsampling errors by using a Web-based survey for which respondents enter their answers directly into an electronic questionnaire. This eliminates the need to have the data keyed into a database by someone other than the respondent.