GAO Highlights

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Key Federal Agencies Need to Address Potentially Duplicative Investments

Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government budgets more than $82 billion annually for IT. Given the magnitude of this investment, it is important that federal agencies avoid investing in duplicative systems to ensure the most efficient use of resources. GAO's prior work has shown that agencies were funding IT investments that perform similar functions, thus raising concern that these agencies were investing in unnecessary systems. This work also raised questions about whether agencies have similar potentially duplicative investments in other areas.

GAO was asked to review duplicative IT investments. The objective of this report was to identify whether there are other potentially duplicative IT investments at key federal agencies. To do so, GAO selected for review the three agencies with the largest amount of planned IT spending–-DHS, DOD, and HHS. GAO analyzed agency budgetary data (submitted to the Office of Management and Budget) that categorize investments by function to identify investments that performed similar functions. Such investments were further grouped by their specific mission purpose and discussed with agency officials, including whether they could be consolidated or eliminated.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD develop a plan and DHS and HHS conduct analyses to address the potentially duplicative investments identified in this report. DOD and HHS agreed with GAO's recommendations but DHS disagreed. GAO believes that analysis by DHS on why one system would not support both agencies' requirements is needed.

What GAO Found

Of the 590 information technology (IT) investments reviewed, GAO identified 12 potentially duplicative investments at three key federal agencies—namely, the Departments of Homeland Security (DHS), Defense (DOD), and Health and Human Services (HHS). These investments accounted for about $321 million in reported IT spending for fiscal years 2008 through 2013. Of the 12 investments (as shown in the table below), GAO identified:

- two potentially duplicative investments at DHS that support immigration enforcement booking management, which includes the processing of apprehended illegal aliens suspected of committing criminal violations of immigration law;
- four such investments at DOD, which include two investments that track health care status of warfighters, with one since having been canceled, and two investments that manage dental care; and
- six potentially duplicative investments at HHS, which include four investments that support enterprise information security and two for Medicare coverage determination.

Potentially Duplicative Investments by Agency and Investment Purpose

Dollars in millions

Agency	Purpose	Number of investments	Planned and reported spending fiscal years 2008 - 2013
DHS	Immigration Enforcement Booking Management	2	$ 30.27
DOD	Health Care Tracking System	2	15.79
	Dental Management	2	14.81
HHS	Enterprise Information Security	4	256.59
	Medicare Coverage Determination	2	3.79
Total		**12**	**$321.25**

Source: GAO analysis.

DHS officials said having the two immigration booking investments were due in part to one component agency's unique requirements but were unable to provide analysis showing why one system could not satisfy the unique requirements. DOD officials recognized that the investments GAO identified were duplicative and have canceled one of the health care systems and intend to consolidate the dental systems by 2015 but had not developed a plan on how this was to be accomplished. HHS officials disagreed that its information security investments were duplicative but nonetheless plan to review them by September 2013 to identify opportunities for consolidation. Regarding the Medicare coverage determination investments, HHS officials noted that they have consolidated several functions but could not provide documented justification for why the other functions were not consolidated. By addressing these duplications, the agencies will be able to provide assurance they are avoiding investing in unnecessary systems and thus saving resources.

_____ **United States Government Accountability Office**