

Highlights of [GAO-15-417T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, Committee on Appropriations, U. S. Senate

Background

GAO's mission is to support Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people. GAO provides nonpartisan, objective, and reliable information to Congress, federal agencies, and to the public and recommends improvements, when appropriate, across the full breadth and scope of the federal government's responsibilities.

GAO's work supports a broad range of interests throughout Congress. In fiscal year 2014, GAO received requests for our work from 94 percent of the standing committees of Congress and almost 70 percent of their subcommittees. Additionally, senior GAO officials testified 129 times on a wide range of issues that touched virtually all major federal agencies.

GAO remains one of the best investments in the federal government, and GAO's dedicated staff continues to deliver high quality results. In fiscal year 2014 alone, GAO's work yielded \$54.4 billion in financial benefits – a return of about \$100 for every dollar invested in GAO. Since fiscal year 2003, GAO's work has resulted in:

- over ½ trillion dollars in financial benefits; and
- about 15,800 program and operational benefits that helped to change laws, improve public services, and promote sound management throughout government.

These results are a reflection of the dedication and hard work of GAO's staff. GAO has again been recognized as an employer of choice, and continues to be ranked near the top on "best places to work" lists. In December 2014 the Partnership for Public Service ranked GAO second among mid-size agencies as one of the best places to work in the federal government.

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FISCAL YEAR 2016 PERFORMANCE BUDGET U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

GAO's fiscal year (FY) 2016 budget request of \$553.1 million supports 3,055 full time equivalent (FTE) staff and continues progress towards achieving an optimal level of 3,250 FTE. The request also provides the resources to maintain current operations and make limited investments in GAO's information technology (IT) and building infrastructure. Costs will be offset with \$33.4 million in reimbursements, primarily from financial audits and rental income.

The Congress used GAO's work extensively in 2014 to identify legislative solutions to emerging problems, achieve cost savings, and find efficiencies in federal agencies and programs. GAO's work helped Congress achieve some of the billions in savings and revenue enhancements needed to avoid sequestration in fiscal years 2014 and 2015. In addition, GAO's work was cited repeatedly in the *Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015*, and contributed to over a dozen key authorizations and reauthorizations, including, among others, the Department of Defense, the Coast Guard, workforce programs, and agriculture programs. GAO's work also contributed to bills intended to improve veteran's health care, federal acquisitions of information technology and weapons systems, and transparency of federal programs.

In addition to the \$54.4 billion in financial benefits from GAO's work, during fiscal year 2014, we recorded over 1,200 program and operational improvements in numerous areas affecting public safety and security and the efficient and effective functioning of government programs, including:

- cybersecurity governance;
- oversight of international food aid;
- security of diplomatic facilities and personnel overseas;
- sharing of terrorism-related information with federal and non-federal partners; and
- the future of nanomanufacturing, including research and development, U.S. competitiveness, and environmental, health, and safety concerns.

Workforce and succession planning also remain a priority for GAO. In FY 2015, GAO plans to achieve a staffing level of 3,015 FTEs through a targeted recruiting strategy to address critical skills gaps. This is a positive step forward in rebuilding staff capacity which in recent years had fallen to the lowest level since 1935. The additional staff will help ensure GAO has the resources to assist Congress in improving government performance, effectiveness, and accountability, as well as support GAO's commitment to service and quality. GAO's limited investments in IT and building infrastructure will allow GAO to further streamline business operations, increase staff productivity, as well as improve access to information. Implementation will be done through a phased approach to reduce risk and ensure effective implementation.