

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-431](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

According to the most recent OMB estimate, the federal government spends about \$1.2 billion annually on about 1.5 million mobile devices and associated services. OMB has identified the potential for achieving efficiencies and reducing spending on mobile technology.

GAO was asked to study management of federal mobile devices. This report's objectives were to (1) determine the extent to which federal agencies developed and maintained inventories of mobile devices and wireless services, (2) determine the extent to which agencies established procedures for monitoring and controlling spending on these devices and services, and (3) describe agencies' mobile service rates. For the 15 agencies having the highest reported annual telecommunications spending, GAO compared their inventories and procedures with federal guidance, and identified service rates reported to OMB. For each agency that delegated responsibilities to components, GAO assessed two components' inventories and procedures. GAO also interviewed agency and OMB officials.

## What GAO Recommends

To better control mobile device spending, GAO recommends that the 15 agencies take actions to improve their inventories and control processes and that OMB measure and report progress in achieving mobile cost savings. OMB and 14 agencies generally agreed with the recommendations or had no comment. One agency, the Department of Defense, partially agreed, but GAO maintains actions are still needed.

View [GAO-15-431](#). For more information, contact Carol R. Cha at (202) 512-4456 or [chac@gao.gov](mailto:chac@gao.gov).

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## TELECOMMUNICATIONS

### Agencies Need Better Controls to Achieve Significant Savings on Mobile Devices and Services

## What GAO Found

Most of the 15 agencies GAO reviewed did not have an inventory of mobile devices and associated services that can be used to assess device usage. The majority of agencies delegated responsibility of their inventories to their components. Only 5 of the 15 agencies had complete service and device inventories at either the enterprise-level or at the components GAO reviewed. The remaining agencies either did not have inventories or those inventories did not account for all devices and services.

Similarly, only 1 of the 15 agencies GAO reviewed had documented procedures for monitoring spending by reviewing devices and associated service plans for overuse, underuse, or zero use, which are key indicators of potential inefficient use. Eleven agencies had procedures that either addressed some of the potential aspects of inefficient use or were incompletely documented. Three agencies did not have any documented procedures for monitoring mobile device usage.

Number of Agencies That Followed Guidance on Managing Mobile Devices and Services			
	Fully satisfied	Met some but not all	Did not satisfy
Inventory (devices and services)	5	7	3
Procedures	1	11	3

Source: GAO analysis of agency data. | GAO-15-431

A key reason agencies did not have enterprise-wide inventories and adequate procedures for monitoring and controlling spending is that they took a decentralized approach to managing mobile device spending. Without an inventory that includes each device and associated service limits and rates, as well as documented procedures to assess device usage relative to service rate plans, agencies have a limited ability to monitor device usage and determine if a device should be canceled or moved to a more cost-effective service plan. Further, without a reliable inventory of mobile service contracts, agencies are less likely to identify opportunities for consolidation, and thus are less likely to achieve cost savings.

In addition, although the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) identified a goal for financial savings related to mobile devices and services, it has not measured progress toward that goal, as called for by leading practices in performance management. Instead, an OMB analyst said that OMB provides agencies with information on rates paid by other agencies because it believes such information is more effective at convincing agencies to achieve savings. However, without measuring progress toward its goal, OMB has little assurance that its approach is effective.

Regarding monthly mobile service costs, according to reports to OMB that GAO reviewed, agencies paid a range of rates per line for various service combinations, from \$21 for 200 voice minutes, unlimited data, and 200 text messages, to \$122 for unlimited voice, data, and text messages. Agencies also paid different rates for the same bundle of services. For example, for the unlimited voice, text, and data bundles, agencies paid between \$69 and \$122 per month.