

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-106908](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The acquisition of IT systems has presented challenges to federal agencies. Accordingly, GAO has identified IT acquisitions and management as a high-risk area since 2015.

GAO was asked to identify and report on selected federal IT acquisitions. GAO's objective was to identify essential mission-critical IT acquisitions across the federal government and their key attributes.

To select acquisitions for the review, GAO administered a survey to the 24 agencies covered by the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990. GAO asked them to identify their top three most important mission-critical IT acquisitions that had ongoing system development activities. From a total of 72 acquisitions identified, GAO selected 16 mission-critical IT acquisitions across 11 agencies to profile in this report.

These 16 acquisitions are key to achieving the various agencies' missions across the federal government. For each of the 16 selected acquisitions, GAO obtained additional information on cost, schedule, risks, workforce, and related information; and interviewed relevant agency officials.

GAO provided a draft of this report to the 11 agencies with IT acquisitions profiled in this report and the Office of Management and Budget. In response, eight agencies provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

View [GAO-25-106908](#). For more information, contact Carol C. Harris at (202) 512-4456 or harriscc@gao.gov.

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MISSION-CRITICAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Agencies Are Monitoring Selected Acquisitions for Cybersecurity and Privacy Risks

What GAO Found

Federal agencies are undertaking IT acquisitions that are essential to their missions. GAO identified 16 of these acquisitions as particularly critical to missions ranging from national security to public health to the economy (see table). GAO has previously reported on many of these acquisitions. As of February 2025, there were 75 open GAO IT- and cybersecurity-related recommendations pertaining to nine of the 16 acquisitions.

Essential Federal Mission-Critical Information Technology Acquisitions

Agency	Acquisition
Department of Defense	Joint Operational Medicine Information Systems
	Joint Warfighting Cloud Capability
Department of Education	Free Application for Federal Student Aid Processing System
	Title IV Origination and Disbursement Modernization
Department of Health and Human Services	Health Information Technology Electronic Health Records Modernization
Department of Homeland Security	Non-Intrusive Inspection-Integration Program
	Homeland Advanced Recognition Technology
Department of Justice	SENTRY Modernization - Centralized Inmate Case Logistics Operations and Planning System Development
Department of State	Consular Systems Modernization
Department of Transportation	Voice Communications Systems
	Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast
Department of the Treasury	Individual Master File Modernization
	Business Master File Modernization
Department of Veterans Affairs	Electronic Health Record Modernization
Environmental Protection Agency	Integrated Compliance Information System Modernization
Small Business Administration	MySBA Platform

Source: GAO analysis of agency data. | GAO-25-106908

In total, the 16 acquisitions are expected to cost at least \$51.7 billion. For example, the Department of Health and Human Services plans to spend approximately \$6.2 billion over 10 years on its electronic health records modernization effort.

Agency officials responsible for these IT acquisitions acknowledged facing a variety of risks and challenges. Specifically, 10 of the 16 acquisitions reported that not proceeding with the acquisition would jeopardize the ability of the agency to meet customer or mission needs, improve customer service, or achieve cost savings.

Further, seven acquisitions identified high risks associated with cybersecurity and information privacy. This means that an adverse cybersecurity or privacy incident could have severe or catastrophic effects on the agency, other agencies, or the nation. For example, both Department of Education acquisitions are intended to modernize systems that (1) are critical to providing federal student aid and (2) contain a large repository of personally identifiable information. Overall, cybersecurity and privacy risks are escalating as agencies' IT infrastructures continue to age and threats and vulnerabilities become more difficult to defend.