



Highlights of [GAO-04-1085T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

GSA Has Made Progress in Planning Governmentwide Program but Challenges Remain

Why GAO Did This Study

The General Services Administration (GSA) has begun planning for a governmentwide telecommunications program known as Networx. GSA issued a request for information in October 2003 that proposed two acquisitions: Networx Universal, which was to provide a full range of national and international network services across the United States, and Networx Select, which was to provide agencies with leading-edge services with less extensive geographic coverage. Contracts under the Select acquisition were to be awarded 9 months after the Universal contracts.

In February, we testified on GSA's initial plans and identified four key challenges GSA faced in ensuring a successful outcome for the program: structure and scheduling, transition planning, service inventories, and performance measures. At the committee's request, GAO assessed GSA's progress in addressing the challenges identified as well as GSA's efforts to address long-standing issues related to billing.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

To prevent unresolved challenges from hampering GSA's efforts to provide agencies with the services they need, we recommend that it finalize and implement processes for managing transition efforts, measuring program performance, and resolving agency concerns over the usability of billing data.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-1085T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Linda D. Koontz at (202) 512-6240 or koontzl@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

GSA has addressed several of the significant challenges facing the Networx program. Work is either planned or underway on other challenges, but additional efforts will be necessary to fully address them. Specifically:

- GSA has addressed concerns about the structure and scheduling of the two acquisitions, now known as Universal and Enterprise. Instead of a 9-month lag between acquisitions that might complicate agency decision-making, GSA now plans to issue the requests for proposal (RFP) for the contracts simultaneously (See figure below). In addition, the Universal contracts will now require that offerors provide services only where federal agencies are located, rather than in the entire country, to allow more potential industry participants to compete—a concern raised in prior comments.
- GSA has solicited for contractor support to assist with the development of plans to transition to the Networx contracts. However, GSA has not yet developed procedures to ensure that lessons from past transitions are applied, or established a transition strategy.
- GSA worked with agencies to develop a service-level inventory as input into the requirements for the new contracts. In addition, it plans to work with agencies to build a more detailed inventory of currently-used telecommunications services for use during transition.
- GSA plans to implement performance measures that evaluate progress against the program's goals. However, some of the measures are still under development, and it does not have a strategy for using the measures to monitor ongoing program performance.
- GSA has reduced the number of billing elements it will track and has begun a study designed to identify potential improvements in the billing process, but it lacks a strategy for addressing agency concerns about the usability of billing data.

Until GSA develops and applies strategies for addressing the outstanding challenges facing Networx, it risks not being able to deliver all of the operations and cost improvements outlined in the program's goals.

GSA's original and revised key contract dates

	Original Universal contract schedule	Original Select contract schedule ¹	Current schedule (both contracts)
Draft RFP release	Spring 2004	Winter 2005	November 2004
Final RFP release	Fall 2004	Summer 2005	April 2005
Contract award	Winter 2005	Fall 2006	April 2006

¹In its RFI, GSA previously used the name Select to describe the contract now known as Enterprise.

Source: GSA