



Highlights of [GAO-06-290](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The Architect of the Capitol (AOC) is responsible for the maintenance, renovation, and new construction of the Capitol Hill complex, which comprises more than three dozen facilities and consists of nine jurisdictions, such as the U.S. Capitol and the Senate and House Office Buildings. In 2003, at the request of Congress, GAO issued a management review of AOC that contained recommendations in seven areas to help AOC become more strategic and accountable. GAO reported on AOC's progress in implementing those recommendations in January and August 2004. In 2005 and 2006, GAO briefed Congress on AOC's recent progress in implementing GAO's recommendations and on issues related to AOC's project and facilities management. This report summarizes GAO's (1) assessment of AOC's progress in implementing previous GAO recommendations and in improving project and facilities management and (2) delineation of remaining management challenges.

What GAO Recommends

The implementation status of recommendations made in our previous reports along with recommendations made following our recent reviews of project and facilities management is summarized in this report. In commenting on this report, AOC generally agreed with its content.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-290.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Patricia A. Dalton at (202) 512-2834 or daltonp@gao.gov.

ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL Management Challenges Remain

What GAO Found

Overall, AOC is making progress in implementing GAO's previous recommendations and in improving project and facilities management. For example, AOC has implemented 21 of 54 recommendations, established a central organization for managing major projects, and completed assessments of nearly all of the agency's facilities, for use in developing a comprehensive facility maintenance and building renewal plan. AOC has also begun initiatives to develop meaningful performance measures and to restructure its project management information systems to provide better data for monitoring and reporting. These initiatives, though encouraging, are in their early stages, and it is too early to determine their success. In recent briefings provided to AOC management and congressional staff, GAO made additional recommendations to improve the accountability and effectiveness of AOC's project and facilities management initiatives.

AOC has made progress in some areas, but still has a significant amount of work ahead to achieve its ultimate goal of establishing a strong strategic management and accountability framework. Specifically, it has not completed initiatives to address two critical issues—communication with external stakeholders and development of internal controls—identified in previous GAO recommendations or in independent audits of AOC's 2003 and 2004 balance sheets. These issues affect a wide range of AOC operations. For example, communication with congressional stakeholders is essential to establish and clarify service and expectation levels. Internal controls, such as a reliable cost accounting system, sound procurement practices, and a comprehensive information security program, are necessary to, respectively, improve project and facilities management, strengthen the integrity of AOC's procurement processes, and effectively safeguard AOC's data and information assets.

Leadership support is vital to ensure that needed improvements are given urgent attention; this support is also essential to ensure that improvements that have already been made are continuously evaluated and refined as needed. However, the key leadership positions of Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Administrative Officer, Director of the Capitol Power Plant, Director of Congressional and External Relations, and Director of Planning and Project Management are currently vacant. Furthermore, the term for the current Architect of the Capitol will expire in less than a year. AOC is at a critical juncture in its efforts to become more strategic and accountable. Quickly filling the vacant management positions with qualified people is essential for AOC to sustain and extend its recent improvements and to have a cohesive management team in place in the event of a turnover in the Architect of the Capitol position. AOC is now attempting to fill the vacant leadership positions, and, to mitigate the impact of these vacancies, it recently appointed an Acting Chief Operating Officer—who is also temporarily serving as the Acting Chief Financial Officer—and an Acting Chief Administrative Officer to help guide the agency's improvement efforts.