



Highlights of [GAO-07-1127](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The Smithsonian Institution (Smithsonian) is the world's largest museum complex and research organization. Its annual operating and capital program revenues come from its own private trust fund assets and federal appropriations, with the majority of funds for facilities coming from federal appropriations. In 2005, GAO reported that the Smithsonian's current funding would not be sufficient to cover its estimated \$2.3 billion in facilities projects through 2013 and recommended that the Smithsonian Board of Regents, its governing body, develop and implement a funding plan. As requested, GAO described changes in the condition of the Smithsonian's facilities and estimate for project costs since 2005, analyzed the Smithsonian's steps taken and challenges regarding protecting and managing its real property portfolio, and assessed the Smithsonian's efforts to develop and implement strategies to fund its facilities' projects. GAO reviewed relevant documents and interviewed officials from the Smithsonian and other organizations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Smithsonian (1) increase awareness of security issues; (2) include privately funded projects in its capital plan, and (3) comprehensively analyze funding options and report to Congress and the Office of Management and Budget on a funding strategy. The Smithsonian concurred with the report's recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-07-1127](#). For more information, contact Mark L. Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or goldsteinm@gao.gov.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Funding Challenges Affect Facilities' Conditions and Security, Endangering Collections

What GAO Found

The Smithsonian has made some facilities improvements since our 2005 report, but the continued deterioration of many facilities has caused further access restrictions and has threatened collections. The Smithsonian's cost estimate for facilities projects has increased to \$2.5 billion from \$2.3 billion in April 2005. For example, a lack of temperature and humidity control at National Air and Space Museum storage facilities has caused corrosion to historic airplanes and increased the cost of restoring these items for exhibit.

While the Smithsonian follows key security practices to protect its assets, it faces challenges related to ensuring that museum and facility directors are aware of security information and related to funding constraints. Some directors' lack of awareness of security information limits their ability to respond to changes in the security of their facilities. Also, some museum and facility directors stated that in the absence of more security guards, some cases of vandalism and theft have occurred. In addition, the Smithsonian has made significant strides in improving its real property portfolio management, such as improving its real property data and using performance metrics. However, the Smithsonian has omitted privately funded projects from its capital plan, making it challenging for the Smithsonian and stakeholders to comprehensively assess the funding and scope of projects.

To address GAO's April 2005 recommendation regarding implementing a funding plan for its facilities projects, the Board of Regents created an ad-hoc committee, which, after reviewing nine options, requested increased federal funding. We found that some of the Smithsonian's evaluations of the nine funding options were limited in that they did not always provide complete analysis, fully explain specific assumptions, or benchmark with other organizations. Also, some options were dismissed because independently they would not generate enough revenue, but the evaluations do not consider combining options to increase revenues.

Facilities Problems Include Leaks in the National Zoological Park's Sea Lion Pool and the Roof of the National Museum of African Art



Sources (left to right): GAO and Smithsonian Institution.