ELECTRONIC RECORDS ARCHIVE

The National Archives and Records Administration's Fiscal Year 2009 Expenditure Plan

What GAO Found

NARA’s fiscal year 2009 expenditure plan satisfies the six legislative conditions in the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act.

NARA implemented one of GAO’s prior recommendations and partially implemented the other. Specifically, NARA developed a risk mitigation plan for the EOP system in the event that it was not ready in time for the presidential transition in January 2009. In addition, NARA began including summaries of performance against ERA cost and schedule estimates in its monthly reports to Congress. However, during its review, GAO found methodological weaknesses that could limit NARA’s ability to accurately report on program cost, schedule, and performance (see below).

GAO made four observations on NARA’s expenditure plan and the ERA acquisition:

- The expenditure plan does not specifically identify whether completed system increments include all planned functionality or what functionality will be included in future increments, including the outcomes NARA expects from the remainder of its fiscal year 2009 funding. Until NARA fully describes the outcomes expected from this funding, Congress will lack important information for evaluating the agency’s requests for funds.

- The expenditure plan states that it relies on Earned Value Management (EVM), a tool for project management intended to provide objective reports of program status. However, NARA is not fully implementing practices necessary to make effective use of EVM, limiting the reliability of its progress reports. Without consistently following these best practices, NARA will be hindered in accurately monitoring and reporting on the cost, schedule, and performance of the ERA system.

- Although NARA certified initial operating capability for the EOP system in December 2008, less than 3 percent of the electronic records from the Bush Administration had been ingested into the system at the time of GAO’s review, and NARA did not expect the remainder to be ingested until October 2009. In the interim, NARA is using systems developed in accordance with its risk mitigation plan to support the search, processing, and retrieval of presidential records. These systems cost less than $600,000, compared with the $40 million NARA has obligated for the EOP system. Until NARA completely ingests the Bush Administration records into EOP, it will be unable to use the system for its intended purpose.

- NARA lacks a contingency plan for the ERA system in the event of a failure or disruption. While NARA identified 11 security weaknesses related to contingency planning during system testing and planned actions to address them, it has completed only 1 of the 11 planned actions. Further, NARA does not have a fully functional backup and restore process for ERA, a key component for ensuring system availability. Until NARA fully develops and tests a contingency plan, it risks prolonged unavailability of the ERA system in the event of a failure or disruption.