Background

GAO’s mission is to support Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people. GAO provides nonpartisan, objective, and reliable information to Congress, federal agencies, and to the public and recommends improvements, when appropriate, across the full breadth and scope of the federal government’s responsibilities.

GAO’s work supports a broad range of interests throughout Congress. In fiscal year 2014, GAO received requests for our work from 94 percent of the standing committees of Congress and almost 70 percent of their subcommittees. Additionally, senior GAO officials testified 129 times on a wide range of issues that touched virtually all major federal agencies.

GAO remains one of the best investments in the federal government, and GAO’s dedicated staff continues to deliver high quality results. GAO’s work helped Congress achieve some of the billions in savings and revenue enhancements needed to avoid sequestration in fiscal years 2014 and 2015. In addition, GAO’s work was cited repeatedly in the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015, and contributed to over a dozen key authorizations and reauthorizations, including, among others, the Department of Defense, the Coast Guard, workforce programs, and agriculture programs. GAO’s work also contributed to bills intended to improve veteran’s health care, federal acquisitions of information technology and weapons systems, and transparency of federal programs.

In addition to the $54.4 billion in financial benefits from GAO’s work, during fiscal year 2014, we recorded over 1,200 program and operational improvements in numerous areas affecting public safety and security and the efficient and effective functioning of government programs, including:

- cybersecurity governance;
- oversight of international food aid;
- security of diplomatic facilities and personnel overseas;
- sharing of terrorism-related information with federal and non-federal partners; and
- the future of nanomanufacturing, including research and development, U.S. competitiveness, and environmental, health, and safety concerns.

Workforce and succession planning also remain a priority for GAO. In FY 2015, GAO plans to achieve a staffing level of 3,015 FTEs through a targeted recruiting strategy to address critical skills gaps. This is a positive step forward in rebuilding staff capacity which in recent years had fallen to the lowest level since 1935. The additional staff will help ensure GAO has the resources to assist Congress in improving government performance, effectiveness, and accountability, as well as support GAO’s commitment to service and quality. GAO’s limited investments in IT and building infrastructure will allow GAO to further streamline business operations, increase staff productivity, as well as improve access to information. Implementation will be done through a phased approach to reduce risk and ensure effective implementation.

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