

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-135](#), a report to the Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives.

## Why GAO Did This Study

GAO designated federal real-property management as a high-risk area in part because of physical security challenges at federal facilities. FPS and GSA have joint responsibility for protecting federal facilities held or leased by GSA. FPS has primary responsibility for the security and protection of buildings and their occupants, whereas GSA has primary responsibility for security fixtures, maintenance, and building access.

In light of these challenges, GAO was asked to review (1) how the agencies' collaboration reflects key practices to ensure facility security and (2) the impact of their collaboration practices on day-to-day operations at the regional and facility level. GAO analyzed pertinent laws and documents, compared FPS's and GSA's collaboration efforts against GAO's selected key-collaboration practices, and interviewed agency officials at the headquarters and regional levels selected based on various factors. While the results from regions cannot be generalized, they provided illustrative examples.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that FPS and GSA take actions to improve their collaboration in several areas, including defining common outcomes, agreeing on roles and responsibilities, and communicating compatible policies and procedures. DHS specifically concurred with GAO's recommendations, and GSA agreed to work with FPS to address the findings.

View [GAO-16-135](#). For more information, contact Lori Rectanus at (202) 512-2834 or [rectanusl@gao.gov](mailto:rectanusl@gao.gov)

December 2015

## HOMELAND SECURITY

### FPS and GSA Should Strengthen Collaboration to Enhance Facility Security

## What GAO Found

The Federal Protective Service (FPS), within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the General Services Administration (GSA) have taken some steps to improve collaboration, such as drafting a joint strategy. While each agency has some individual policies for collaboration, the two agencies have made limited progress in agreeing on several key practices as described below. Reaching agreement on these practices will help to enhance the agencies' ability to protect federal facilities and to improve day-to-day operations at the regional level.

#### Status of the Federal Protective Service's and the General Services Administration's Efforts to Address Key Collaboration Practices

##### Define and articulate a common outcome

While FPS and GSA have drafted a joint strategy that includes a common outcome related to facility protection, they have not reached agreement on the document.

##### Establish mutually reinforcing or joint strategies

FPS's and GSA's draft joint strategy defines an overarching strategic goal of creating a federal-facility critical infrastructure that balances public access, security, and resiliency to enable continuity of operations and rapid recovery from all hazards. However, the two agencies have not reached agreement on the document. In October 2015, FPS and GSA officials told GAO that they intend to put the joint strategy on hold and revisit the document after they address other priorities.

##### Agree on roles and responsibilities

A 2006 memorandum of agreement (MOA) between FPS and GSA addresses their roles, responsibilities, and operational relationships concerning the security of GSA-controlled space. However, some information in the MOA is outdated and incorrect as it does not reflect policy and organizational changes affecting roles and responsibilities. In August 2015, FPS and GSA officials renewed negotiations to update the MOA, but the two have not yet fully agreed on current roles and responsibilities related to facility protection, and they have not set a time frame for completion.

##### Establish compatible policies, procedures, and other means to operate across agencies

In some cases, the two agencies have individual policies, but it is unclear whether they are compatible. FPS and GSA officials have not fully collaborated in communicating policies and procedures to operate across agencies and regions, and regional officials told GAO they rely on informal communication for day-to-day operations.

##### Develop mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and report on results

FPS and GSA individually monitor specific areas of facility security. However, the two agencies have not developed mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and report on the results of their related missions regarding facility protection.

##### Reinforce agency accountability for collaborative efforts through agency plans and reports

FPS's and GSA's strategic plans address the importance of collaboration with other agencies in general, but these plans do not reinforce accountability for collaborative efforts.

Source: GAO analysis of the status of FPS's and GSA's collaboration practices. | [GAO-16-135](#)

As a result of not having key practices in place, regional officials said they were not aware of agreed upon collaborative policies and procedures to conduct day-to-day operations. GAO found that this created inefficiencies and security risks. For example, FPS officials told GAO that GSA did not coordinate with them on new construction intended for law enforcement tenants, and as a result, it was not suitable for law enforcement use. GSA officials told GAO that they did not have sufficient information from FPS about security plans for upcoming events and, therefore, were not able to inform tenants of necessary security measures.