

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-251SP](#), a GAO forum

Why GAO Convened This Forum

IT expenditures too often have produced failed projects—that is, projects with multimillion dollar cost overruns and schedule delays measured in years, with questionable mission-related achievements and duplicative and inefficient operational systems. In December 2014, IT reform legislation was enacted which requires agencies to address key IT issue areas. To help address these ongoing challenges, GAO recently added improving the management of IT acquisitions and operations to its list of high-risk areas for the federal government.

While GAO has made over 800 recommendations aimed at improving IT acquisitions and operations outcomes, slightly less than half of these recommendations have been fully implemented. In light of this, GAO assembled a panel of IT experts on September 14, 2016 to elicit additional ideas to further improve delivery and operations of IT.

The viewpoints summarized in the report do not necessarily represent the views of all participants, their organizations, or GAO. GAO provided participants the opportunity to review a summary of key points from the forum and incorporated their comments as appropriate prior to publishing this report.

View [GAO-17-251SP](#). For more information, contact David A. Powner at (202) 512-9286 or pownerd@gao.gov.

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INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Opportunities for Improving Acquisitions and Operations

What the Participants Said

Forum participants discussed the challenges and opportunities for Chief Information Officers (CIO) to improve information technology (IT) acquisitions and operations—with the goal of better informing policymakers and government leadership. They identified key actions related to the following topics: strengthening the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA), improving CIO authorities, budget formulation, governance, workforce, operations, and transition planning.

STRENGTHENING FITARA'S IMPACT

- Congressional oversight could be more aggressive
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB) may need to strengthen its role
- The Department of Defense should be required to implement all provisions of FITARA

IMPROVING CIO AUTHORITIES

- Have the Chief Information Officers Council play an enhanced role in improving authorities
- Implement collaborative governance
- Evolve the role of the CIO to enable change
- Focus on cybersecurity to change existing cultures

BUDGET FORMULATION

- Use IT spend plans to improve budgets
- Examine agency programs to capture additional IT spending
- Simplify the definition of IT
- Work more closely with procurement organizations
- Work with congressional committees to explore budgeting flexibilities

GOVERNANCE

- Obtain support from agency leadership
- Enhance governance at OMB and agencies
- Use security authorities to enhance governance
- Strengthen oversight for IT purchased as a service
- Buy more and develop less
- Evolve procurement processes to align with new technologies

WORKFORCE

- Attract more qualified CIOs by appealing to key missions
- Have the Federal CIO play a more active role in attracting agency CIOs
- Give CIOs more human resource flexibilities
- Focus on attracting and investing in a more holistic IT workforce
- Better integrate private sector talent into the IT workforce

OPERATIONS

- Use a strategic approach for legacy system migration
- Migrate more services to the cloud
- Implement strategies to mitigate the impact on jobs when closing data centers

TRANSITION PLANNING

- Convey IT and cyber issues early to leadership
- Encourage Congress to focus on IT and cybersecurity at confirmation hearings
- Ensure that IT and cyber issues are OMB priorities
- Ensure GAO plays a role highlighting its work and expertise

Source: GAO analysis. | [GAO-17-251SP](#)