GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Opportunities to Address Pervasive Management Risks and Challenges while Reducing Federal Costs

What GAO Found

GAO’s prior work has resulted in hundreds of billions of dollars in financial benefits over the last decade as agencies and Congress acted on its recommendations. However, there are significant opportunities for further action to address government-wide challenges by implementing GAO’s recommendations that would result in billions of dollars in additional benefits.

• Action Needed to Address Growth in Improper Payments. Reducing payments that should not have been made or that were made in an incorrect amount could yield significant savings. The reported government-wide improper payment estimate for fiscal year 2016 was over $144 billion. This estimate was attributable to 112 programs spread among 22 agencies. Since fiscal year 2003, cumulative estimates have totaled over $1.2 trillion.

• Improvements Needed in Information Technology (IT) Acquisition and Operation and in Addressing Cybersecurity Challenges. The government is projected to invest more than $89 billion on IT in fiscal year 2017. However, historically, these investments have frequently failed, incurred cost overruns and schedule slippages, or contributed little to mission-related outcomes. Better managing IT could result in billions of dollars in savings and much more efficient and effective government. Opportunities also exist to better ensure the security of federal information systems and cyber critical infrastructure and protect the privacy of personally identifiable information.

• Challenges Remain in Reducing Unneeded Federal Facilities and Managing the Federal Fleet of Vehicles. Continuing to maintain unneeded facilities puts the government at risk for wasting resources due to ongoing maintenance costs as well as lost revenue from failing to sell surplus property. In addition, in fiscal year 2015, federal agencies spent about $4.3 billion on over 640,000 vehicles that agencies own or lease. In prior work, GAO found that selected agencies were spending over $20 million annually on vehicles that may not have been fully utilized. It is likely that additional cost savings are possible through enhanced agency practices.

Source: GAO analysis of agencies’ fiscal year 2016 data | GAO-17-631T