VETERANS AFFAIRS

Improved Management Processes Are Necessary for IT Systems That Better Support Health Care

What GAO Found

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has established information technology (IT) management processes that are partially consistent with leading practices. VA has issued strategic plans that identify goals and objectives related to health IT; established investment review boards at the department-level and within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) that are responsible for selecting IT investments aligned to VHA priorities; and documented VHA’s core business functions within an enterprise architecture. However, the IT strategic plans do not include performance measures and targets for their defined objectives, VA’s department-level IT investment board has been inactive and its investment selection guidance lacks criteria, and the department has not fully identified metrics aligned to core business functions to inform investment decisions. Until VA can improve these processes, it risks having IT systems that may not fully support VHA’s mission.

IT systems at VA are generally aligned to core business functions defined by VHA; however, among new service requests, which identify unmet needs of business owners, 817 out of a total of 2,772 IT needs identified for VHA since 1998 had not been met as of October 2016. About 39 percent of these open requests had been open for more than 5 years.

Breakdown of the Veterans Health Administration’s Information Technology New Service Requests

As of October 2016, Veterans Health Administration had 2,772 information technology service requests

1,955 Closed requests
817 Open requests
316 (about 39%) requests open for MORE THAN 5 years
316 (about 39%) requests open for MORE THAN 5 years
501 requests open for 5 years or less

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that VA address the deficiencies identified with IT strategic planning, investment management, and enterprise architecture; and ensure that the three programs’ IT needs are addressed. VA agreed with GAO’s recommendations and described actions planned to address them by the end of fiscal year 2018.

View GAO-17-384. For more information, contact David A. Powner at (202) 512-9286 or pownerd@gao.gov.