Homeland Security Acquisitions

Leveraging Programs’ Results Could Further DHS’s Progress to Improve Portfolio Management

What GAO Found

During 2017, 10 of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) programs GAO assessed that had approved schedule and cost goals were on track to meet those goals. GAO reviewed 28 programs in total, 4 of which were new programs that GAO did not assess because they did not establish cost and schedule goals before the end of calendar year 2017 as planned. The table shows the status of the 24 programs GAO assessed. Reasons for schedule delays or cost increases included technical challenges, changes in requirements, and external factors.

What GAO Recommends

GAO identified two areas where DHS could strengthen its portfolio management policies and implementation efforts:

- DHS’s policies do not reflect the key practice to reassess a program that breaches—or exceeds—its cost, schedule, or performance goals in the context of the portfolio to ensure it is still relevant or affordable. Acquisition management officials said that, in practice, they do so based on a certification of funds memorandum—a tool GAO has found to be effective for DHS leadership to assess program affordability—submitted by the component when one of its programs re-baselines in response to a breach. Documenting this practice in policy would help ensure DHS makes strategic investment decisions within its limited budget.

- DHS is not leveraging information gathered from reviews once programs complete implementation to manage its portfolio of active acquisition programs. DHS’s acquisition policy requires programs to conduct post-implementation reviews after initial capabilities are deployed, which is in line with GAO’s key practices. Acquisition management officials said they do not consider the results of these reviews in managing DHS’s portfolio because the reviews are typically conducted after oversight for a program shifts to the components. Leveraging these results across DHS could enable DHS to address potential issues that may contribute to poor outcomes, such as schedule slips and cost growth, for other programs in its acquisition portfolio.