

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-321](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Disposal of unneeded buildings—for example through demolition, sale, or transfer to other federal agencies—has the potential to save the government millions of dollars. To this end, OMB has developed policies to reduce space in federal buildings and identify buildings for disposal. Recent progress notwithstanding, GAO's body of work on real property has found limitations in the overall reliability of data in GSA's government-wide database. OMB has reported on the status of federal real property disposals for fiscal years 2014 and 2015.

GAO was asked to examine the reliability of the data used to report disposals and any efforts to improve the data. This report assesses (1) the reliability and reporting of government-wide disposal data for fiscal years 2014 and 2015, and (2) steps OMB, GSA, and three selected agencies have taken to improve disposal data. GAO analyzed the most recent FRPP data, agency documents, and interviewed OMB, GSA, and agency officials. GAO selected the Departments of Agriculture, Energy, and the Interior based on the highest numbers of disposed buildings.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends (1) that GSA implement a data validation procedure to prevent reporting a building as disposed of multiple times and (2) that OMB, in coordination with GSA, establish a procedure to verify that its reports include data as intended. GSA and OMB agreed with GAO's recommendations and identified steps to implement them.

View [GAO-17-321](#). For more information, contact David J. Wise at (202) 512-2834 or wised@gao.gov.

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FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY

Government-wide Building-Disposal Data Generally Reliable, but Opportunities for Further Improvements Exist

What GAO Found

GAO's analysis showed that government-wide data were generally reliable for reporting on real property disposals for fiscal years 2014 and 2015.

- The General Services Administration's (GSA) Federal Real Property Profile (FRPP) serves as the building inventory database for most of the largest federal agencies. FRPP's data on real property disposals were generally complete, reasonable, and internally consistent, based on GAO's guidance for assessing data reliability. For example, the disposal date, disposal method, and buildings' square footage data generally met these criteria.
- The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) reporting of FRPP disposal data for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 was also generally reliable. Based on analysis of FRPP data, GAO was able to replicate OMB's reported numbers on building disposals, despite minor inconsistencies. GAO identified three minor inconsistencies in its analysis and OMB's reporting, all of which led to some over-reporting of building disposals. For example, the data showed 134 buildings as disposed of in multiple years. Given that these inconsistencies resulted in small differences in the number of buildings reported, GAO determined that the inconsistencies did not affect the overall reliability of government-wide reporting of disposal data.

OMB, GSA, and selected federal agencies have taken steps to improve government-wide real-property data and additional opportunities exist to make further improvements to data and reporting on disposed buildings. For example, OMB issued a government-wide memo requiring agencies to implement data-validation and verification checks when submitting annual FRPP data. GSA issued guidance that should help agencies identify data anomalies. The three selected agencies have taken steps, such as updating their real-property databases and reporting guidance, to improve the reliability of their real property data. GSA has also taken steps to improve disposal data specifically. For example, GSA has addressed one of the inconsistencies GAO found, wherein agencies reported disposals with a disposal date from a previous reporting year. Regarding a second inconsistency that GAO identified wherein agencies can report the same building as disposed of multiple times, GSA officials responded that they intend to address this issue by adding a data validation procedure to prevent this reporting error in the future. However, GSA did not give details on how it would accomplish this step especially in light of several other concurrent initiatives under way. Without such a control in place, disposals can be overstated and agencies might make decisions based on data that could be more accurate. A third inconsistency, wherein OMB used FRPP data differently in reporting fiscal year 2014 disposals than in fiscal year 2015, led to OMB's including 207 non-federally owned buildings in its reporting of domestic federal building reductions. OMB staff stated that they did not have a procedure in place to verify with GSA that the summary data used in fiscal year 2015 only included federally owned buildings and were suitable for reporting on the progress of reducing the federal footprint. Thus, OMB did not precisely represent what it intended to measure. As the *Reduce the Footprint* policy calls for OMB to continue to report annually on these data, it will be important to ensure that Congress and other stakeholders receive the most accurate data available.