

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-319](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Federal agencies are exploring ways to use telework as a tool to reduce the federal footprint and use space more efficiently. GAO was asked to examine the effects of telework on agencies' space-planning efforts. In this report, GAO reviewed: (1) how the 23 civilian CFO Act agencies reported using telework in office space planning; (2) the specific ways selected agencies and GSA used telework in their office space planning; and (3) any challenges the civilian CFO Act agencies faced in using telework in office space planning.

GAO surveyed all 23 civilian CFO Act agencies, analyzed each agency's space-planning documents, and *Real Property Efficiency Plans*. GAO reviewed four agencies in greater detail based on analysis of telework data and other factors. For those four agencies GAO conducted site visits, interviewed officials, and analyzed agency documents. GAO also identified challenges agencies faced in using telework in space planning, based on survey results, agency documents, and interviews.

What GAO Recommends

GSA concurred with recommendations that GSA should: (1) develop guidance on how agencies can use telework as a strategic space-planning tool and make this guidance readily available and (2) complete and make the Workplace Investment and Feasibility Tool available to federal agencies for use in assessing the benefits and costs of telework.

View [GAO-18-319](#). For more information, contact Lori Rectanus at (202) 512-2834 or rectanusl@gao.gov.

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FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY

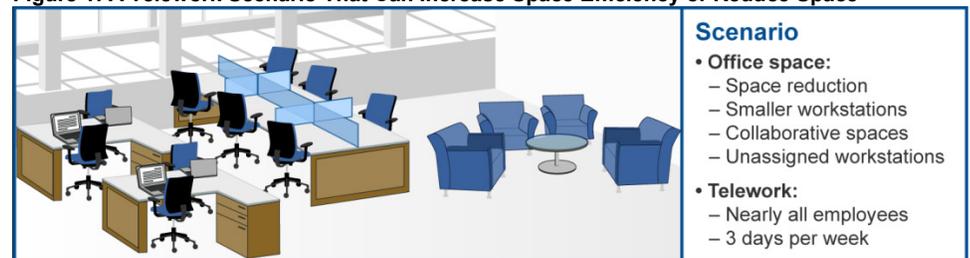
Agencies Make Some Use of Telework in Space Planning but Need Additional Guidance

What GAO Found

The 23 civilian Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Act agencies reported various ways of considering and using telework as a space-planning tool, by, for example, implementing desk-sharing for employees who telework in order to relinquish leased space, or increasing the number of staff working in an existing space without increasing its size. All of the 23 agencies discussed telework in the context of space planning and achieving greater space efficiencies in either their space-planning documents or *Real Property Efficiency Plans*. The agencies that used telework as a space-planning tool generally reported implementing smaller or unassigned workstations.

Three of the four agencies GAO reviewed in greater detail—the General Services Administration (GSA); the Office of Justice Programs at the Department of Justice; the Centers for Disease Control at the Department of Health and Human Services; and the Bureau of the Fiscal Service at the Department of the Treasury—leveraged telework to reduce or use office space more efficiently. For example, GSA and the Office of Justice Programs used telework to accommodate more employees in a smaller office space as illustrated in figure 1 below. The Centers for Disease Control used telework to accommodate more employees in the same amount of space. The Bureau of the Fiscal Service reduced space without telework by reducing the size of individual workstations.

Figure 1: A Telework Scenario That Can Increase Space Efficiency or Reduce Space



Source: GAO. | GAO-18-319

The 23 civilian CFO Act agencies reported several challenges in using telework to reduce space including human capital issues, mission suitability, and measuring cost savings attributable to telework. About two-thirds of the agencies said they would find it helpful to have additional information, assistance, or resources in using telework as a space-planning tool. GSA provides guidance to improve space utilization. However, GAO found that GSA last developed relevant formal guidance in 2006. This information, and that on GSA's telework and space-planning websites, was neither specific nor detailed and therefore of limited assistance to agencies that would like to use telework as a space-planning tool. Additionally, GSA's space-planning tool—the Workplace Investment and Feasibility Tool, intended to help agencies quantify the benefits and costs of telework—remains under development after more than 4 years, and GSA officials have not decided whether to make the tool available to other federal agencies. As such, agencies reported that they lack adequate guidance to determine how best to reduce space or use it more efficiently, and how to assess the benefits and costs of using telework in space planning.