

Why GAO Did This Study

Every year, executive agencies purchase billions of dollars of personal property while also disposing of property that is excess, or no longer needed. This excess personal property represents a significant government investment and its reuse maximizes government assets and minimizes new purchase costs.

GAO was asked to review federal use of excess personal property. This report: (1) describes what is known about the extent that agencies obtained excess personal property and (2) assesses the extent to which selected agencies' internal guidance addressed elements from the FMR for considering excess property and opportunities for GSA to promote the use of excess. GAO reviewed federal regulations and analyzed data on purchases of personal property and on excess property obtained. GAO reviewed five agencies' guidance on considering excess property and interviewed agency and GSA officials. GAO selected BIA, CBP, FAA, SEC, and USAID based on the amounts of property they purchased and excess property they reported and obtained.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making six recommendations, including (1) that each selected agency ensure its internal guidance on considering excess property fully addresses the FMR elements and (2) that GSA assess its efforts to promote agencies' maximum use of excess property and take action that will help agencies implement better guidance. All selected agencies agreed with our recommendations. GSA agreed with our findings and said it would take action on our recommendation.

View [GAO-22-104626](#). For more information, contact Catina B. Latham at (202) 512-2834 or lathamc@gao.gov.

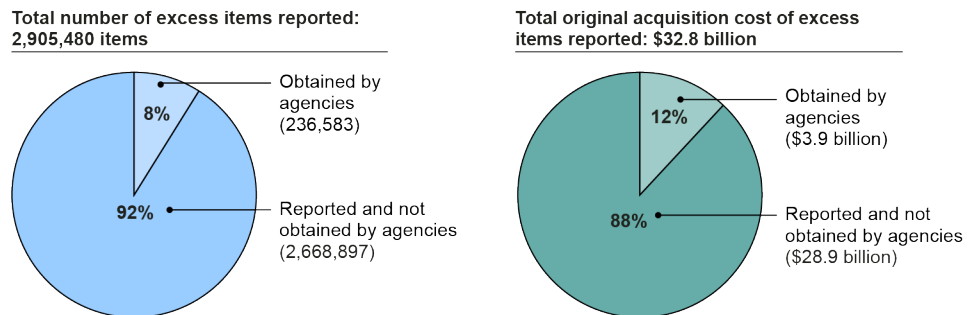
FEDERAL PERSONAL PROPERTY

Better Internal Guidance and More Action from GSA Are Needed to Help Agencies Maximize Use of Excess

What GAO Found

Before purchasing "personal property," which ranges from office supplies and food to precious metals, the Federal Management Regulation (FMR) requires executive agencies to consider whether excess property, already owned by the government, can meet their needs. Excess property is generally available at no charge (excluding costs to transport or ship) to agencies. From 2016 to 2020, agencies government-wide obtained \$3.9 billion—based on the property's original acquisition cost—in excess personal property. Comparing \$3.9 billion to the \$206 billion in property agencies purchased in the same time period, excess property was not a significant source of supply. Further, this \$3.9 billion represented a small part of the excess property available to agencies (see figure). It is unclear whether agencies could have obtained excess property to a greater extent because data on purchases and on excess property do not contain enough detail to correlate specific products agencies purchased to specific products available as excess. In addition, some categories of property agencies purchased—such as perishables and national security sensitive items—are not typically available as excess.

Percentage of Reported Excess Personal Property Obtained by Agencies Government-Wide by Number and Value, Fiscal Years 2016 to 2020



Source: GAO analysis of GSAXcess data. | GAO-22-104626

GAO identified four essential elements from the FMR on considering excess property that agencies should address in their internal guidance. These elements include determining when it is practicable to check for and obtain excess property and evaluating the suitability of excess property to meet agency needs. The guidance at five selected agencies—Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA); Customs and Border Protection (CBP); Federal Aviation Administration (FAA); Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC); and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)—varied, but none addressed all four elements. For example, two agencies' guidance addressed three elements while one agency's guidance did not address any. Without guidance that addresses the four elements, agencies may not be obtaining excess property to the extent they could in order to minimize expenditures for new property. The General Services Administration (GSA) is responsible for promoting the maximum use of excess property by executive agencies and issued the FMR and other guidance for agencies. However, GAO's findings indicate that these efforts may be insufficient, and GSA officials said GSA has not assessed its current efforts or other actions that could increase agencies' use of excess. After such an assessment, for example, GSA may be able to take actions that could help agencies more consistently meet the requirement to consider excess and increase the likelihood that agencies will maximize their use of excess property and save taxpayer dollars.