VA ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT

Actions Needed to Improve Program Oversight and Acquisition Outcomes

What GAO Found

For over a decade, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has worked to implement a framework for managing how it purchases goods and services, GAO found that VA has not used the current framework, in place since 2017, for its major acquisitions. This framework includes features—such as phases, key documents, and identified decision authorities—that could provide standardized management and oversight of VA’s major acquisitions.

However, most of VA’s major acquisition programs that GAO reviewed use program-specific approaches that vary widely in robustness. These approaches make it challenging for VA to provide uniform oversight for acquisitions and consistently identify opportunities to improve acquisition outcomes. For example, VA has not yet:

- addressed critical testing issues or developed performance measures for its costly Electronic Health Records Modernization program.
- determined which approach to take in implementing its Medical Surgical Prime Vendor program, a program intended to get critical supplies to the medical centers.

VA plans to implement a new framework that includes features and processes similar to those of the current one. However, GAO found VA is not well-positioned to successfully implement the new framework because it has yet to address existing challenges, such as identifying major acquisition programs subject to increased oversight within the new framework. If VA takes steps to address this and other challenges prior to implementing the new framework, the agency will be better positioned to achieve improvements in its management of major acquisitions.

Further, GAO added VA to the High-Risk List in 2019 due to numerous challenges to efficiently purchasing goods and services, including medical supplies.

What GAO Recommends

GAO has made numerous recommendations to VA aimed at improving its acquisition management. While VA has addressed many of them, VA still needs to develop a comprehensive supply chain management strategy, among other things. GAO will make additional recommendations, as appropriate, based on ongoing work.

Additional resources:

- View GAO-22-106220. For more information, contact Shelby S. Oakley at (202) 512-4841 or oakleys@gao.gov.