INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The National Archives and Records Administration’s Fiscal Year 2008 Expenditure Plan

What GAO Found

NARA’s fiscal year 2008 expenditure plan satisfies five of the six legislative conditions and partially satisfies the remaining condition. NARA satisfied the conditions that the plan follow capital planning and investment controls established by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB); comply with NARA’s enterprise architecture; comply with the acquisition rules, requirements, guidelines, and system acquisition management practices of the federal government; be approved by NARA and OMB; and be reviewed by GAO. NARA partially satisfied the remaining condition: that ERA conform to the agency’s enterprise life cycle methodology. This methodology requires, among other things, that the agency identify, communicate, and mitigate program risks. NARA has identified numerous project risks and reported them to OMB and the Congress, including the risk that it will not have the capability to process the Bush administration’s presidential records at the time of the January 2009 presidential transition. However, the agency has not yet developed a plan to mitigate this significant risk. Instead, the agency intends to develop a mitigation plan at the end of 2008, when it expects to know more about the types and volumes of presidential records that it is to receive. This proposed schedule, however, will leave NARA little time to prepare for and implement the plan, decreasing the assurance that it will be adequately prepared to meet the requirements of the Congress, the incoming President, and the courts for information contained in the previous administration’s records.

In addition, GAO observed that monthly ERA status reports that NARA has been providing to the Congress since January 2008—while including useful information on the project’s activities, expenditures, and risks—do not include summary measures of the project’s performance against cost and schedule estimates—information that NARA does provide to OMB. According to agency officials, such measures are not included in the monthly reports because the reports follow an agreed-upon format. However, these measures provide an important perspective on project progress not otherwise available. If future reports do not include such measures, the Congress may be hampered in its ability to effectively oversee the program.