



Testimony

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Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations
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ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT

Initiatives Sponsored by the Office of Management and Budget Have Made Mixed Progress

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Why GAO Did This Study

One of the five priorities in the President’s Management Agenda is the expansion of electronic (e-) government—the use of Internet applications to enhance access to and delivery of government information and services. To this end, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has sponsored 25 high-profile e-government initiatives. The initiatives were selected on the basis of value to citizens, potential improvement in agency efficiency, and the likelihood of being deployed within 18 to 24 months. In May 2002, a total of 91 objectives were set for these initiatives. At the request of the Subcommittee, GAO assessed the progress of the initiatives in addressing these 91 objectives as well as key challenges they have faced.

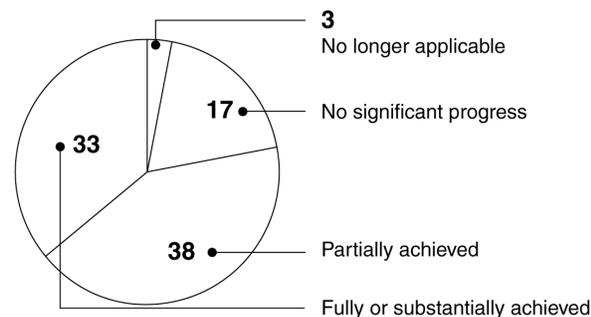
What GAO Found

Overall, mixed progress has been made in achieving the 91 objectives originally defined for the 25 OMB-sponsored e-government initiatives. To date, 33 have been fully or substantially achieved; 38 have been partially achieved; and for 17, no significant progress has been made towards these objectives. In addition, 3 of the objectives no longer apply because they have been found to be impractical or inappropriate. The figure below summarizes these results.

Examples of initiatives that have made good progress in achieving their objectives include Grants.gov, which established a Web portal that, as of February 2004, allowed prospective grants applicants to find and apply for a total of 835 grant opportunities at 29 grant-making agencies; and the Integrated Acquisition Environment, which created a single point of registration and validation for vendors and a directory of interagency contracts that currently references 16,000 contracts. A contrasting example is Project SAFECOM, which has made very limited progress over the past 2 years, largely because management teams for the project have changed four times among three different federal agencies.

Given that OMB’s stated criteria in choosing these initiatives included their likelihood of deployment in 18 to 24 months, the substantial number of objectives that are still unmet or only partially met indicates that making progress on these initiatives is more challenging than OMB may have originally anticipated. The extent to which the 25 initiatives have met their original objectives can be linked to how they have addressed key challenges, including (1) focusing on achievable objectives that address customer needs, (2) maintaining management stability through executive commitment, (3) collaborating effectively with partner agencies and stakeholders, (4) driving transformational changes in business processes, and (5) implementing effective funding strategies. Initiatives that have overcome these challenges have generally met with success in achieving their objectives, whereas initiatives that have had problems dealing with these challenges have made less progress.

Assessed Status of Initiatives’ Original Objectives



Source: GAO.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-561T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Linda D. Koontz at (202) 512-6240 or koontzl@gao.gov.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the Subcommittee's hearing on electronic government (e-government) progress. Generally speaking, e-government refers to the use of information technology (IT), particularly Web-based Internet applications, to enhance the access to and delivery of government information and service to citizens, to business partners, to employees, and among agencies at all levels of government.

Under the leadership of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), a team known as the E-Government Task Force identified a set of high-profile initiatives to lead the federal government's drive toward e-government transformation. The initiatives were selected on the basis of value to citizens, potential improvement in agency efficiency, and likelihood of deploying within 18 to 24 months. These initiatives—now numbering 25¹—cover a wide spectrum of government activities, ranging from the establishment of centralized portals on government information to eliminating redundant, nonintegrated business operations and systems. OMB has reported that, in some cases, positive results from these initiatives could produce over one billion dollars in savings from improved operational efficiency.

As requested, in my remarks today, I will discuss the progress of these cross-agency e-government projects in meeting their original objectives. In the initiatives' first formal work plans, submitted to OMB in May 2002, a total of 91 objectives were laid out. While these objectives vary widely—from simple, narrowly defined tasks, like developing a business case (e-Payroll), to broad, long-term goals, like achieving effective communications interoperability among emergency personnel at all levels of government (Project SAFECOM)—they serve as a benchmark across all of the initiatives for measuring progress over the past two years. In my remarks, I will describe the status of these original 91 objectives and also discuss major challenges that have affected the initiatives' progress

¹ Based on analysis by the E-Government Task Force, 23 initiatives were originally selected in September 2001. A 24th, e-Payroll, was then added by the President's Management Council. In 2002, a decision was made to separate the e-Clearance initiative from the Integrated Human Resources initiative, resulting in the current count of 25 projects.

in meeting these objectives. To supplement my remarks, I have included an attachment that provides additional information on the status and progress of each of the 25 e government projects in meeting their original objectives.

To address our objective of assessing the initiatives' progress in meeting their original objectives, we reviewed project management plans, documentation associated with annual budget submissions, and other related documents. We also interviewed key project management officials to gain a complete understanding of project goals, milestones, costs, performance measures, and implementation challenges. Based on analysis of this information, we assessed the status of specific project objectives by comparing achievements as of March 2004 with objectives established in May 2002 to determine whether the reported achievements (1) fully or substantially meet the stated objectives, (2) partially meet the stated objectives, or (3) do not contribute significantly or at all to the stated objectives. In three cases, we determined that addressing the original objectives would not be feasible or appropriate and thus characterized these objectives as "no longer applicable." We performed our work from January 2004 to March 2004 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Results in Brief

Overall, mixed progress has been made in achieving the 91 objectives originally defined for the 25 OMB-sponsored e-government initiatives in their work plans submitted to OMB in May 2002. To date, 33 have been fully or substantially achieved; 38 have been partially achieved; and for 17, no significant progress has been made towards these objectives. In addition, 3 of the objectives no longer apply because they have been found to be impractical or inappropriate. For two of the initiatives—Grants.gov and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Free File—all original objectives have been achieved, and for an additional five,² the majority of their original objectives have been achieved. For the other 18 initiatives, most of their objectives are either partially met or not significantly met. An

² These initiatives include e-Clearance, e-Payroll, e-Training, e-Travel, and Integrated Acquisition Environment.

example of an initiative that has made excellent progress in achieving its original objectives is Grants.gov, which established a Web portal that, as of February 2004, allowed prospective grants applicants to find and apply for a total of 835 grant opportunities at 29 grant-making agencies. Project SAFECOM, on the other hand, has made very limited progress in addressing its original objectives, which all relate to achieving communications interoperability among entities at various levels of government. Given that OMB's stated criteria in choosing these initiatives included their likelihood of deployment in 18 to 24 months, the substantial number of objectives that are still unmet or only partially met indicates that making progress on these initiatives is more challenging than OMB may have originally anticipated.

The extent to which the 25 initiatives have met their original objectives can be linked to a common set of challenges that they all face, including (1) focusing on achievable objectives that address customer needs, (2) maintaining management stability through executive commitment, (3) collaborating effectively with partner agencies and stakeholders, (4) driving transformational changes in business processes, and (5) implementing effective funding strategies. Initiatives that have overcome these challenges have generally met with success in achieving their objectives, whereas initiatives that have had problems dealing with these challenges have made less progress.

Background

E-government has been seen as promising a wide range of benefits based largely on harnessing the power of the Internet to facilitate interconnections and information exchange between citizens and their government. A variety of actions have been taken in recent years to enhance the government's ability to realize the potential of e-government, culminating in the recent enactment of the E-Government Act of 2002,³ which includes provisions addressing everything from funding of e-government initiatives to measures for ensuring security and privacy. In addition to the E-Government Act, the President designated e-government as one of five priorities in his

³ P. L. No. 107-347.

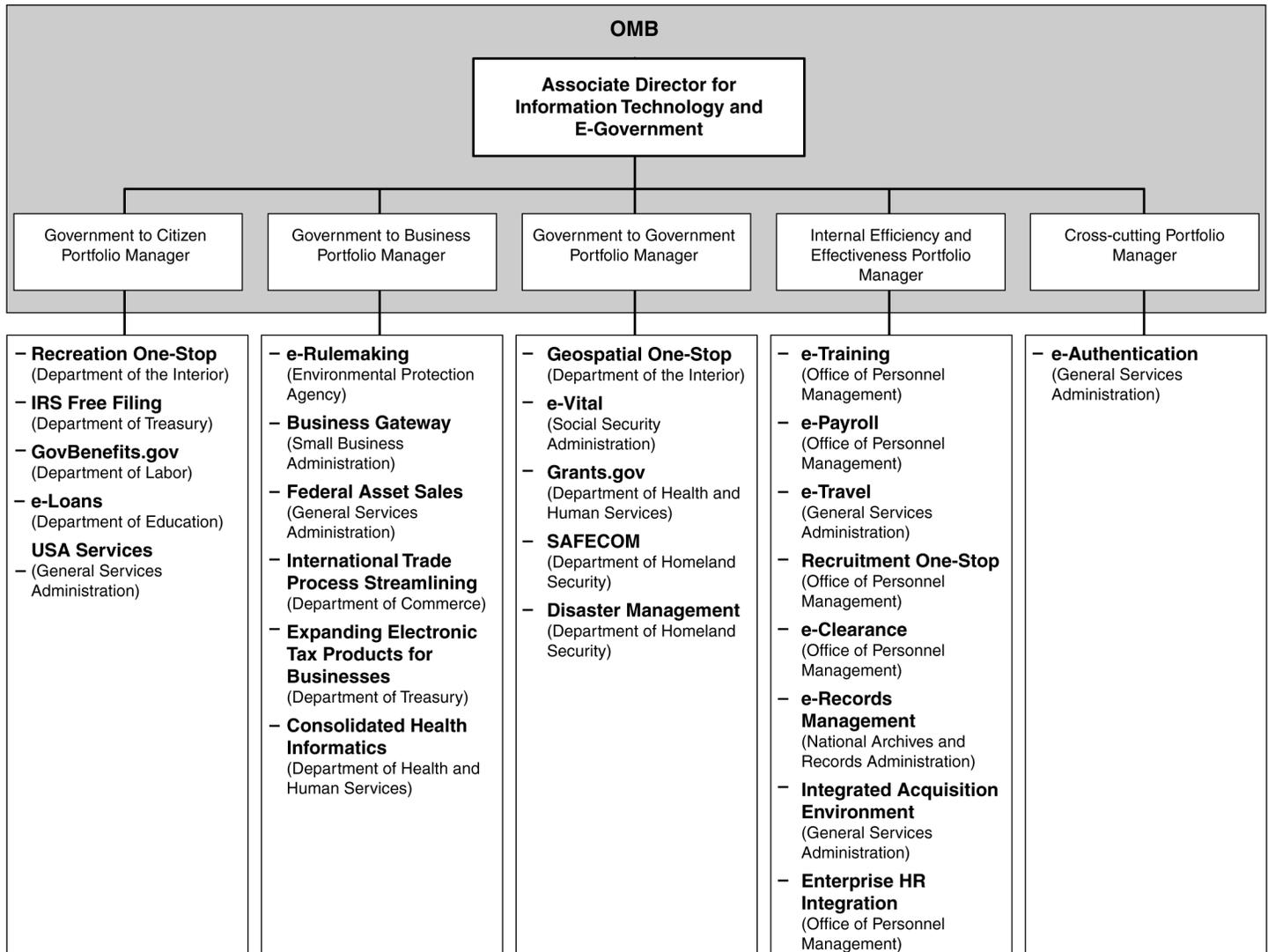
fiscal year 2002 management agenda for making the federal government more focused on citizens and results. According to the agenda, e-government is expected to

- provide high-quality customer services regardless of whether the citizen contacts the agency by phone, in person, or on the Web;
- reduce the expense and difficulty of doing business with the government;
- cut government operating costs;
- provide citizens with readier access to government services;
- increase access for persons with disabilities to agency Web sites and e-government applications; and
- make government more transparent and accountable.

As the lead agency for implementing the President's management agenda, OMB developed a governmentwide strategy for expanding e-government, which it published in February 2002.⁴ In its strategy, OMB established a portfolio management structure to help oversee and guide the Quicksilver initiatives and facilitate a collaborative working environment for each of them. This structure includes five portfolios, each with a designated portfolio manager reporting directly to OMB's Associate Director for IT and E-Government. The five portfolios are "government to citizen," "government to business," "government to government," "internal efficiency and effectiveness," and "cross-cutting." Each of the 25 initiatives is assigned to one of these portfolios, according to the type of results the initiative is intended to provide. Further, for each initiative, OMB designated a specific agency to be the initiative's "managing partner," responsible for leading the initiative, and assigned other federal agencies as "partners" in carrying out the initiative. Figure 1 provides an overview of the e-government management structure established by OMB.

⁴ Office of Management and Budget, *E-Government Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 27, 2002).

Figure 1: OMB Management Structure for e-Government Initiatives



Sources: GAO and OMB.

To oversee implementation of the initiatives, OMB has required managing partners of the initiatives to submit a series of specific planning documents. Work plans submitted by agencies in May 2002 were among the first of these documents. The work plans document agreements reached between OMB and managing partner agencies on the scope and direction of each of the initiatives. Another key planning document required for all active e-government initiatives is

a structured business case that is updated annually as part of the budget development process.

In November 2002, we reported on the completeness of the information used in selecting and overseeing the 25 e-government initiatives.⁵ We determined that despite the importance that OMB attached to collaboration and customer focus in its e-government strategy, fewer than half of the initiatives' initial business cases addressed these topics. We subsequently reviewed the challenge of achieving effective interorganizational collaboration within four of the initiatives, e-Payroll, Geospatial One-Stop, Integrated Acquisition Environment (IAE), and Business Gateway.⁶ We found that while the four initiatives had all taken steps to promote collaboration with their partner agencies, none had been fully effective in adopting key practices to fully involve important stakeholders. We made recommendations to each of the four managing partner agencies responsible for these initiatives to more fully adopt key collaboration practices, and all have indicated that they are taking actions that address our recommendations.

Mixed Progress Has Been Made in Achieving the OMB-Sponsored Initiatives' Original Objectives

Overall, mixed progress has been made in achieving the 91 objectives originally defined for the e-government initiatives in their work plans submitted to OMB in May 2002. To date, 33 of the objectives have been fully or substantially achieved; 38 have been partially achieved; and for 17, no significant progress has been made towards these objectives. In addition, 3 of the objectives no longer apply because they have been found to be impractical or inappropriate. For two of the initiatives—Grants.gov and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Free File—all original objectives have been achieved, and for an additional five,⁷ the majority of their original

⁵ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Electronic Government: Selection and Implementation of the Office of Management and Budget's 24 Initiatives*, GAO-03-229 (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 22, 2002).

⁶ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Electronic Government: Potential Exists for Enhancing Collaboration on Four Initiatives*, GAO-04-6 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 10, 2003).

⁷ These initiatives include e-Clearance, e-Payroll, e-Training, e-Travel, and Integrated Acquisition Environment.

objectives have been achieved. For the other 18 initiatives, most of their objectives are either partially met or not significantly met. Given that OMB's stated criteria in choosing these initiatives included their likelihood of deployment in 18 to 24 months, the substantial number of objectives that are still unmet or only partially met indicates that making progress on these initiatives is more challenging than OMB may have originally anticipated.

A number of the initiatives have made very significant accomplishments. For example, according to project documentation, as of February 2004, the Grants.gov portal allowed prospective grants applicants to find and apply for a total of 835 grant opportunities at 29 grant-making agencies. Similarly, GovBenefits developed a Web portal that currently provides information about over 500 benefits programs at 22 agencies, including some state benefits programs. The portal uses a structured set of questions to identify benefit programs that may apply to citizens, eliminating the need to try to identify such programs individually at separate government agencies. Likewise, the IAE project team has been successful in creating a single point of registration and validation for vendors. The IAE project team has also developed and implemented a directory of interagency contracts that currently references 16,000 contracts.

In contrast, other initiatives have made less progress. For example, Project SAFECOM has made very limited progress in addressing its three objectives, all of which relate to achieving communications interoperability among entities at various levels of government. Since its inception 2 years ago, management teams for the project have changed four times among three different federal agencies. The e-Loans initiative has made slow progress over its 2-year history and still does not have its central portal for locating loan information operational, although such a portal—GovLoans.gov—is scheduled to come online in April 2004. An extensive effort to re-scope that initiative soon after it began took up the first year of that project.

It is important to note that the scope and specificity of the initiatives' original objectives vary widely. The number of objectives per initiative varies from one to six, with some being specific near-term tasks, while others represent broader goals associated with transforming government. One of the e-Payroll initiative's

objectives, for example, was simply to develop a business case—something that was actually required of all the initiatives. On the other hand, Project SAFECOM’s three objectives called for achieving effective communications interoperability among emergency personnel at the federal, state, and local levels—broad objectives that could not realistically be expected to be fully realized in 18 to 24 months. Between these extremes, many of the objectives fell into recurrent categories, such as developing a Web portal for consolidated information dissemination (Recreation One-Stop, GovBenefits.gov, Grants.gov, and USA Services), providing the capability to conduct transactions online (IRS Free File, e-Loans, Grants.gov, and e-Vital), consolidating duplicative agency systems across the federal government (e-Travel, e-Rulemaking, and e-Payroll), and developing government standards (Consolidated Health Informatics, e-Authentication, and Geospatial One-Stop). The attachment contains specifics on the status and progress of each of the 25 initiatives in addressing their original objectives.

Initiatives Have Had Varying Success in Addressing Key Management Challenges

Achieving the e-government vision of a seamless federal enterprise offering an order-of-magnitude improvement in service to citizens can be very challenging for agencies used to complex, nonintegrated systems and business processes. The extent to which the 25 initiatives have met their original objectives can be linked to a common set of challenges that they all face, including

- focusing on achievable objectives that address customer needs,
- maintaining management stability through executive commitment,
- collaborating effectively with partner agencies and stakeholders,
- driving transformational changes in business processes, and
- implementing effective funding strategies.

In many cases, how these challenges were addressed has been a contributing factor to whether the initiatives’ objectives were satisfactorily met. Initiatives that have overcome these challenges have often met with success in achieving their objectives, whereas

initiatives that have had problems dealing with these challenges have made less progress. I will discuss each of these challenges in more detail and offer some examples of how they have affected specific e-government initiatives.

Focusing on Achievable Objectives That Address Customer Needs

By and large, e-government initiatives that have been able to keep their objectives achievable and customer-focused have been successful in meeting their objectives on time. IT planning best practices indicate that when establishing objectives for a project, an organization should consider the needs of its customers, be realistic in planning, and take into consideration potential obstacles.⁸

The Grants.gov initiative, tasked with creating a portal for federal grant customers to find and apply for discretionary grants online, is an example of an initiative that has been successful in meeting achievable objectives focused on customer needs. The initiative's efforts to date have been focused on the core functions of allowing customers to find potential grants opportunities and to apply for them through the grants.gov portal. In October 2003, the Grants.gov site was deployed with tools that allow a grant applicant to search for grant opportunities via the site, download an application form, and submit the application online. According to project documentation, as of February 2004, the Grants.gov portal allowed prospective grants applicants to find and apply for a total of 835 grant opportunities at 29 grant-making agencies.

In contrast are initiatives such as e-Authentication, which has made slower progress because one of its original objectives was not achievable. The operations concept originally defined for e-Authentication was based on a centralized gateway architecture, and the vast majority of the effort invested in the initiative through the fall of 2003 was devoted to development of this gateway. However, according to the project managers, based on the results of an internal technical advisory board review as well as a GAO

⁸ See U.S. General Accounting Office, *Assessing Risks and Returns: A Guide for Evaluating Federal Agencies' IT Investment Decision-Making*, GAO/AIMD-10.1.13 (Washington, D.C.: February 1997) and *Executive Guide: Improving Mission Performance Through Strategic Information Management and Technology*, GAO/AIMD-94-115 (Washington, D.C.: May 1994).

review,⁹ the planned centralized gateway was found to be neither technically feasible nor an appropriate solution to the authentication challenge. The e-Authentication initiative was re-focused on setting a framework of policies and standards for agencies to use in procuring commercial products to meet their authentication needs, and the technical architecture for e-Authentication in the federal government has been revised to promote a “federated approach,” whereby individual agencies develop independent but interconnected authentication mechanisms as part of their individual e-government initiatives, using products tested and approved by the e-Authentication initiative. The initiative is still in the process of overseeing development of an authentication policy framework and developing a test capability for commercial products so as to be able to provide complete support to government agencies in their acquisition of authentication services.

Another example of an initiative that originally had an unachievable objective is the Consolidated Health Informatics (CHI) initiative. According to the CHI program manager, the original intent of the initiative was to build an application for processing and exchanging standardized electronic medical records. However, through surveys of stakeholder groups, the initiative found wide variances in the kind of information required by groups in the health care community and concluded that developing a standardized electronic record was not feasible. As a result, the CHI initiative refocused its efforts on establishing health data and messaging standards in 24 specific clinical domains that are meant to serve as the building blocks for a future electronic application—a more modest but more achievable objective.

Maintaining Management Stability through Executive Commitment

Because the e-government initiatives are aimed at changing the way the government does business, sustained executive commitment has been critical to their ability to elicit cross-agency cooperation and make progress toward their objectives. Effective top management leadership, involvement, and ownership are a cornerstone of any

⁹ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Electronic Government: Planned e-Authentication Gateway Faces Formidable Development Challenges*, GAO-03-952 (Sept. 12, 2003).

effective information technology investment strategy. Strong leadership and stable management are especially critical to the success of transformational programs such as the OMB-sponsored e-government initiatives. Without such leadership, these projects are less likely to be able to meet their objectives.

For several of the e-government initiatives, executive support from OMB has been a critical element in meeting their planned objectives. Initiatives such as e-Payroll and e-Rulemaking benefited from having OMB issue memorandums to federal agencies directing them to participate in the initiatives and, as appropriate, cease operation of their own redundant systems. According to the project's managers, this direction from OMB provided critical support to the initiatives' success. Strong OMB support and attention have also allowed other initiatives to make rapid progress. The Geospatial One-Stop initiative, for example, was able to draft a set of geospatial standards for submission to the American National Standards Institute far more quickly than similar standards had been developed previously. The project manager credited this success largely to the support and visibility that OMB had given the project.

Further, support from the heads of managing partner agencies has also been critical to achieving objectives. For example, the program manager for Grants.gov stated that senior executive support had been critical in obtaining full stakeholder participation on the initiative's executive board. Specifically, the Secretary of Health and Human Services sent letters to the 11 Grants.gov partner agencies in the summer of 2002 requesting that each partner agency identify a senior member to sit on the executive board. Without such support, it would have been difficult to obtain full participation by senior officials, according to the program manager.

In contrast, Project SAFECOM, for example, has experienced frequent changes in management, which have hampered progress towards its overall objective of achieving communications interoperability¹⁰ among emergency response personnel at all levels of government. OMB originally designated the Department of the Treasury as the project's managing partner, but in May 2002,

¹⁰ Interoperability is the ability of two or more systems or components to exchange information and to use the information that has been exchanged.

oversight responsibility was given to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). By September 2002, FEMA had replaced its original SAFECOM management team and changed its implementation strategy for the project. Then, following the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security in May 2003, the project was taken out of FEMA and assigned to the department's new Science and Technology Directorate. At that time, the project gained its fourth management team and once again "started over" by devoting its energies to defining a new strategy for achieving the project's overall objective. The changing of project teams approximately every 6 to 9 months meant that much of the effort spent on the project was made repeatedly to establish administrative structures, develop program plans, and obtain stakeholder input and support. After more than 2 years, Project SAFECOM has made very limited progress in achieving its overall objective of emergency communications interoperability among entities at all levels of government.

Collaborating Effectively with Partner Agencies and Stakeholders

Many federal agencies have found it challenging to establish effective ways of collaborating across agencies and with other levels of government. In the context of electronic government, collaboration can be defined as a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. Recent management reform efforts within the federal government have focused on collaboration as a way to reduce duplication and integrate federal provision of services to the public. Collaboration is also a key theme of the President's management agenda. In October 2003, we reported on the extent to which federal agencies and other entities had been collaborating on four of the OMB-sponsored initiatives, and found that varying degrees of collaboration had been achieved.¹¹ We made recommendations to the managing partner agencies for each initiative to enhance the effectiveness of collaboration as a tool to use in achieving their objectives.

¹¹ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Electronic Government: Potential Exists for Enhancing Collaboration on Four Initiatives*, GAO-04-6 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 10, 2003).

The Integrated Acquisition Environment (IAE) initiative provides an example of effective collaboration. GSA adopted a variety of effective collaboration practices that have contributed to progress in advancing the goals of the initiative. For example, the project team developed a formal charter outlining the objectives, tasks, and roles and responsibilities of project partners, and it is in the process of completing implementation of memorandums of agreement with all participating agencies to further define their roles and financial responsibilities. Further, successful collaboration contributed to achieving the goal of establishing the Business Partner Network as a central point of access for the initiative. Specifically, effective collaboration with the Small Business Administration (SBA) helped facilitate termination of SBA's competing and redundant Pro-Net. SBA was one of IAE's original partner agencies, was involved in developing IAE's charter, and contributed staff to help achieve IAE's objectives.

In contrast, the limited progress of the Business Gateway project highlights the importance of developing collaborative relationships that include specific resource commitments. As we reported in October 2003, one of the key characteristics that contribute to the success of cross-organizational collaboration is that each participating organization contributes resources in the form of human capital or funding. However, until recently, the Business Gateway initiative did not use this approach. Instead, the project relied solely on SBA, its managing partner, to fund the initiative. Officials from partner agencies told us that because they did not provide funds for the initiative, they had little input in the decision-making process and, as a result, did not have a strong incentive to participate. In part because of poor collaboration, the Business Gateway initiative has not completed any of its original objectives. SBA officials stated that its funding strategy had recently been amended to seek funding from partner agencies. Officials reported that the revised funding strategy is currently under review by the project's governance board.

In the case of e-Vital, project officials found they could not sustain collaborative working relationships with state governments and, as a result, the project failed to complete one of its main objectives—to simplify, through the use of Internet-based technology, processes associated with collecting, reporting, and verifying vital records.

Although a system for making death record information available electronically was developed and is in use, a more comprehensive system was terminated after the pilot phase. According to project officials, the project team piloted an automated electronic system for verification of vital events in eight states, which proved successful in providing electronic access to vital records. However, the project was terminated in December 2003 because state governments, as represented by the National Association of Public Health Statistics and Information Systems, were unwilling to lower their fees for providing vital record information, which are an important source of revenue. The rationale for the initiative had been based on realizing substantial cost savings for the Social Security Administration (SSA) by allowing it to obtain vital records electronically at reduced cost. Given this obstacle, SSA decided to discontinue work on this objective. However, stronger collaboration between the e-Vital initiative and state governments could have led to earlier awareness of the fee problem and a greater joint effort to identify a creative solution that would satisfactorily address the states' financing concerns while simultaneously maintaining the overall objectives of the e-Vital initiative.

Driving Transformational Changes in Business Processes

While some of the initiatives' objectives are relatively simple and straightforward—such as developing a Web site to disseminate information—others, aimed at transforming the way government does business with its customers, have been significantly more challenging. If these transformational objectives are not fully achieved, the potential of e-government to facilitate order-of-magnitude improvements in services to citizens may not be realized.

The Department of Labor's GovBenefits.gov initiative offers an example of the relative status of transformational and non-transformational objectives. Although the project team has successfully achieved its objective of creating a Web portal to assist citizens in identifying government benefit programs, it has not yet addressed its transformational objective of streamlining the process of applying for these benefits. According to project officials, it has been very difficult to develop a common application for government benefits, because each program has unique requirements and has processes in place based on collecting unique kinds of data. With

OMB's support, the project team has defined a data standardization process—including a governance board to define standard data elements for benefits eligibility—that will be used during the next phase of the project. Because project officials are unsure how long this process will take, no milestone has yet been set for completing this objective.

The Environmental Protection Agency's e-Rulemaking initiative has had a similar experience. The project has made progress on one of its objectives through the launch of www.regulations.gov, which provides citizens with the ability to locate and submit comments electronically on proposed rules that are open for comment in the Federal Register. However, the initiative also includes a more transformational objective that will require additional time to achieve. Specifically, the ability to search full rulemaking dockets—the complete set of publicly available material (i.e., economic analyses, models, etc.) associated with a proposed rule—is not yet available and is contingent on developing a governmentwide electronic docket system and migrating all other rulemaking agencies' existing systems to the new system. Program officials currently plan to implement a first version of the centralized system by the end of January 2005 and expect that all other rulemaking agencies will migrate to it by mid-fiscal year 2006.

The General Service Administration's e-Travel initiative, which was tasked with automating and consolidating the federal government's travel process, is an example of an initiative that, like e-Rulemaking, is intended to consolidate redundant government operations, and that will require additional time to complete. Full achievement of this initiative's objectives requires that federal civilian agencies shut down existing travel management systems, and migrate to service provided by one of three e-Travel systems vendors. One step in the process of implementing this initiative was a change in a federal travel regulation that requires all affected agencies to submit migration plans to the e-Travel program management office by March 31, 2004, and migrate to an approved system for full agencywide use by September 30, 2006. According to the project manager, the process of migrating all affected federal agencies to approved systems is complex and could not be completed within the 18-to-24-month time frame set by OMB as a benchmark for the e-government initiatives.

Implementing Effective Funding Strategies

Implementing effective funding strategies has been another significant challenge for the e-government initiatives. In a recent survey conducted by the Information Technology Association of America,¹² Chief Information Officers (CIO) expressed concern that funding for e-government was not integrated into the annual budget process and that OMB has required agencies to take resources out of existing programs to advance e-government. Project officials reported adopting a variety of funding strategies to try to keep their projects on schedule.

Some initiatives have been successful in tapping into stable sources of funds, thus helping to minimize project delays. For example, OMB instructed agencies to spend their fiscal year 2003 payroll-related funds only in association with the e-Payroll initiative. The e-Payroll initiative received redirected fiscal year 2003 funds from agencies based on this guidance. Other initiatives, particularly Grants.gov and e-Rulemaking, have successfully developed and achieved consensus with partner agencies on funding contributions based on agency-unique characteristics, such as the volume of business an agency expects to conduct in conjunction with the initiative or the number of agency components that plan to participate. In these cases, effective funding strategies have been closely linked with effective collaboration strategies.

In other cases, funding strategies adopted by project teams have not helped reduce risk. With e-Records Management, for example, partner agencies have been held responsible for providing funds for the specific project components for which they act as leads. This approach is intended to encourage agency collaboration, as agencies become stewards for specific project deliverables. However, the risk of such an approach is that if expected funding from certain agencies is not provided, then an entire component of the project can be delayed. According to project officials, delays in the piloting of an enterprisewide e-Records management system occurred because the lead agency, the Environmental Protection Agency, had decreases in its fiscal year 2004 appropriations resulting in insufficient funding for the project.

¹² Information Technology Association of America, *CIO: Catalyst for Business Transformation* (Arlington, VA: March 2004).

In the case of Project SAFECOM, a lack of shared resource commitments has contributed to slow progress. According to project officials, during fiscal year 2003, SAFECOM received only about \$17 million of the \$34.5 million OMB allocated to it to be contributed by partner agencies. Further, more than \$1.4 million of that amount was not received until late September 2003, when only a week remained in the fiscal year. According to program officials, these funding shortfalls and delays resulted in the program's having to delay some of the tasks it had intended to complete, such as establishing the project's major milestones.

The challenge of identifying and instituting effective funding strategies for cross-agency initiatives remains. Regardless of what innovations agencies may make in attempting to obtain funds, the risk remains that without reliable funding mechanisms, these initiatives may face significant delays in achieving their objectives.

Having taken on a broad set of objectives to improve a wide variety of important government services, the 25 e-government initiatives sponsored by OMB have made mixed progress over their 2-year history. In some cases, citizens have been given valuable new capabilities to interact and conduct business more efficiently with their government. The Grants.gov portal, for example, now allows prospective grants applicants to find and apply for hundreds of grant opportunities across the government. Similarly, the GovBenefits portal also provides information about hundreds of benefits programs at 22 different agencies, including some state benefits programs. At the same time, however, other initiatives have had trouble addressing their original objectives, completing them slowly or changing them significantly. Consolidated Health Informatics, for example, dropped plans to develop a standardized electronic health record because it proved infeasible, just as the e-Authentication initiative dropped plans for a centralized gateway, which also turned out to be impractical. Until the initiatives fully deal with the challenges of maintaining management stability through executive commitment, collaborating effectively with partner agencies and stakeholders, driving transformational changes in business processes, and implementing effective funding strategies, they are unlikely to be able to fully meet their objectives

and realize the potential of e-government to facilitate order-of-magnitude improvements in services to citizens. It will be important that the initiatives' managing partners focus on fully addressing these challenges as they continue to progress.

Contact and Acknowledgements

If you should have any questions about this testimony, please contact me at (202) 512-6240 or via e-mail at koontzl@gao.gov. Other major contributors to this testimony included Shannin Addison, Elizabeth Bernard, Barbara Collier, Felipe Colón, Jr., John de Ferrari, and Jamie Pressman.

Attachment. Status and Progress of the 25 e-Government Initiatives

Business Gateway

Managing partner agency: Small Business Administration (SBA)

Purpose: Reduce the burden on businesses by making it easy to find, understand, and comply (including submitting forms) with relevant laws and regulations at all levels of government.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$8.2 million

Table 1: Status of Original Business Gateway Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Allow businesses to easily get information about the federal, state, and local laws and regulations that apply to them.	●
Provide businesses access to online tools that will help them determine applicable laws and regulations, whether they are in compliance with such laws and regulations, and what to do/where to go to achieve compliance.	●
Allow businesses to register online, at the state level, and apply to receive selected federal, state, and local licenses and permits.	●

Source: GAO analysis of SBA data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ● = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

The Business Gateway initiative (formerly Business Compliance One-Stop) was originally planned to be implemented in two phases, both of which together would address the initiative's first objective. Only the first phase has been completed. Phase one was to implement a Web portal intended to serve as a single place for finding "plain English" legal guides and legal and regulatory information. This Web portal, www.BusinessLaw.gov, became operational in December 2001. The second phase was to make the portal more interactive by developing a new navigation tool, offering a range of automated compliance assistance tools and prototyping a transaction engine for integrated business registration, online licensing, and permitting. However, by July 2003, SBA had made only limited progress toward achieving expanded capabilities of the portal. A pilot version of the planned navigation tool had been

implemented, but only 4 of the 30 planned automated compliance assistance tools had been developed. On July 1, 2003, OMB announced that the project would be refocused on reducing the paperwork burden on small businesses.¹³

To address the second objective, the initiative plans to (1) develop an electronic catalog listing both electronic and paper forms and (2) consolidate other Web-based information resources such as Business.gov and BusinessLaw.gov. Regarding the last objective, SBA reported that pilot projects are under way with Illinois and Georgia.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics planned for the Business Gateway initiative.

Table 2: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Time savings for business compliance and filing	Reduce by 50%	Not reported
Regulatory agency savings through transition to compliance from enforcement through automated processes	Increase by 25%	Not reported
Number of days reduced for issuing permits and licenses	Not reported	Not reported
Cycle time to issue permits and licenses issued	Within 24 hours	Not reported
Number of visitors/page views	Increase by 10–20%	Not reported
Reduction in redundant IT investments	Not reported	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

¹³ For additional discussion of Business Gateway's past progress, see U.S. General Accounting Office, *Electronic Government: Potential Exists for Enhancing Collaboration on Four Initiatives*, GAO-04-6 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 10, 2003).

Consolidated Health Informatics (CHI)

Managing partner agency: Health and Human Services (HHS)

Purpose: Adopt a portfolio of health information interoperability standards enabling all agencies in the federal health enterprise to “speak the same language” based on common enterprisewide business and information technology architectures.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: This initiative is supported entirely by contributions of staff time and other nonfinancial resources from HHS and partner agencies.

Table 3: Status of Original Consolidated Health Informatics Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Create a single, integrated, electronic medical record and access infrastructure that could capture health data at the point of care and make it available to government agencies and healthcare organizations that need the information.	∅
Establish a public/private sector consolidated health informatics council to oversee activities undertaken as part of the initiative.	●

Source: GAO analysis of HHS data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

According to the CHI program manager, the initiative was substantially re-scoped early in its development and, as a result, no longer plans to address its original first objective. According to the program manager, the original intent was to build an application for processing and exchanging standardized electronic medical records. However, project staff surveyed a range of stakeholders and found wide variances in the kind of information that was needed by different groups within the health care community and concluded that developing a single standardized electronic medical record was not feasible. As a result, the CHI initiative was refocused on establishing health data and messaging standards in 24 specific clinical domains (i.e., medications, demographics, immunizations, etc.) that are to serve as building blocks for an electronic medical

record. In March 2003, 5 of the 24 planned standards were rolled out for use by federal agencies. CHI plans final rollout of all 24 clinical domains by the end of spring 2004. The second original objective still applies. The CHI initiative instituted a CHI Council consisting of federal agencies, including the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs and the Social Security Administration. The council meets every 2 weeks and has component working groups that are tasked to work on specific clinical domains. The council established a partnership with the National Committee on Vital Health Statistics to obtain input from the private sector on the 24 proposed clinical domain standards.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics planned for the Consolidated Health Informatics initiative.

Table 4: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Number of federal agencies and systems using CHI standards to store and/or share health information	Not reported	Not reported
Number of contracts requiring the standards	Not reported	Not reported
Impact on patient service, public health, and research	Not reported	Not reported
Percentage increase in common data available to be shared with users	Not reported	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

Disaster Management

Managing partner agency: Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Purpose: Provide federal, state, and local emergency managers online access to disaster management related information, planning, and response tools.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$35.3 million

Table 5: Status of Original Disaster Management Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
An easy to use, unified point of access to disaster management knowledge and services	●
Accelerated and improved quality of disaster mitigation and response	○

Source: GAO analysis of DHS data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ● = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

Currently the disaster management Web site (www.disasterhelp.gov) has a variety of information about disaster management activities and links to many agency Web sites that provide further information and services. Several specific tasks were established under the first objective, and one of these is partially complete—to deploy an integrated portal for access to disaster management services and tools. Regarding the second objective, the initiative has not begun addressing how to accelerate and improve the quality of disaster mitigation and response. Although the overall objectives for Disaster Management have not changed, the project has changed its implementation approach, based on input from stakeholders at the state and local level. Specifically, the project originally intended to develop a complete set of electronic tools to assist state and local officials in managing disaster response. However, stakeholders expressed a clear preference to continue using existing commercial products, and OMB concurred with Homeland Security’s decision to re-scope the

planned work to better meet stakeholder needs. As re-scoped, the project is planned to focus on facilitating connectivity among existing disaster management systems by developing data exchange standards and providing supporting telecommunications links.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the Disaster Management initiative and their reported status.

Table 6: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Reduce response recovery time by 15%	Reduction by 15%	Not reported
Improve situational awareness planning capability by 25%	Improve capability by 25%	Not reported
Increase the number of first responders using Disaster Management Interoperability Services (DMIS) tools by 10%	Increase usage by 10%	1,500 first responders trained to use DMIS tools as of November 13, 2003; DMIS delivered to almost 300 user groups
Number of registered users in DisasterHelp.gov	Not reported	10,291 as of November 11, 2003

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

e-Authentication

Managing partner agency: General Services Administration (GSA)

Purpose: Minimize the burden on businesses, the public, and government when obtaining services online by providing a secure infrastructure for online transactions, eliminating the need for separate processes for the verification of identity and electronic signatures.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$9.27 million

Table 7: Status of Original e-Authentication Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Develop an outreach program to the e-Gov initiatives, industry, and citizen groups.	●
Define operation concepts, to include critical success factors and requirements, in conjunction with each e-Gov initiative.	◐
Identify ease of use requirements in conjunction with portfolio managers.	◐
Develop an authentication capability that will support multiple levels of assurance.	∅

Source: GAO analysis of GSA data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

Of e-Authentication's four original objectives, the team has completed one, partially completed two others, and developed a new objective to replace its original fourth objective, which was terminated. The operational concept originally defined for e-Authentication was based on a centralized gateway architecture, and the vast majority of the effort invested in the initiative through the fall of 2003 was devoted to development of this gateway. However, based on the results of an internal technical advisory board review as well as a GAO review,¹⁴ the planned centralized

¹⁴ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Electronic Government: Planned e-Authentication Gateway Faces Formidable Development Challenges*, GAO-03-952 (Sept. 12, 2003).

gateway was found to be neither technically feasible nor an appropriate solution to the authentication challenge. The e-Authentication initiative is now focused on setting a framework of policies and standards for agencies to use in procuring commercial products to meet their authentication needs, and the technical architecture for e-Authentication in the federal government has been revised to promote a “federated approach.”

The project team has developed an extensive outreach effort, including a series of public meetings and presentations involving both citizen groups and industry, which address the project’s first objective. Regarding the second objective, project officials have been working with the other e-government initiatives to define their e-Authentication requirements using an electronic risk assessment tool. Regarding the third objective, the e-Authentication project did not identify ease-of-use requirements in conjunction with portfolio managers. Instead, the team is working on addressing ease-of-use issues within the process of assessing stakeholder requirements.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the e-Authentication initiative and their reported status.

Table 8: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Cost avoidance from a coordinated and streamlined approach	Not reported	Not reported
Minimum number of different credentials required to do business with the government online	Not reported	Not reported
Number of accredited credential providers	Not reported	12 as of March 15, 2004
Number of interoperable authentication products	Not reported	3 as of December 31, 2003
Percentage of citizens trusting transactions with the government	Not reported	24 percent of Americans are “high trusters,” according to a Pew survey in April 2003

Source: President’s Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

e-Clearance

Managing partner agency: Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Purpose: Streamline and improve the quality of the current security clearance process.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$9.96 million

Table 9: Status of Original e-Clearance Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Create a common, secure, and standardized source of investigative information to support employee assignment decisions.	●
Connect OPM's Security/Suitability Investigations Index (SII) with DOD's Joint Personnel Adjudication System (JPAS). ^a	●
Cause civilian agencies to "load" their clearance information into the SII in order to centralize the data.	●
Allow individuals to complete and submit forms electronically to security personnel and for security personnel to submit electronically to their investigative supplier.	●
Reduce future paper investigations records to electronic versions and make them universally accessible to authorized users on a real time basis.	◐
Ensure all e-Clearance systems have appropriate privacy and security protections necessary to assure the data are adequately protected.	◐

Source: GAO analysis of OPM data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

^aFor an assessment of DOD's clearance process, see U.S. General Accounting Office, *DOD Personnel Clearances: DOD Needs to Overcome Impediments to Eliminating Backlog and Determining Its Size*, GAO-04-344 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 9, 2004).

Project Progress

The Clearance Verification System, which addresses objective 1, was completed in February 2003, and e-Clearance connected with JPAS in December 2002 (objective 2). Further, all existing clearance data have been loaded into SII (objective 3), and the Electronic Questionnaire for Investigations Processing (e-QIP) has been made available to allow individuals to complete and submit forms electronically (objective 4). The fifth objective is partially complete;

major investigative agencies have begun imaging their paper files. Finally, e-Clearance is in the process of certifying and accrediting the various elements of its systems to assure security and privacy.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the e-Clearance initiative and their reported status.

Table 10: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Cost per application	Not reported	Not reported
Reciprocation between agencies	Not reported	Not reported
Average time to process clearance forms	Not reported	Not reported
Average time to complete clearance forms	Not reported	2 hours as of June 23, 2003
Time to locate and evaluate previous investigations and clearances	Not reported	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

e-Loans (Online Access for Loans)

Managing partner agency: Department of Education

Purpose: Create a single point of access for citizens to locate information on federal loan programs, and improve back-office loan functions.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$1.81 million

Table 11: Status of Original e-Loans Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Provide a single point of entry to allow citizens and businesses to find and apply for loan programs.	●

Source: GAO analysis of Education data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ● = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

The e-Loans Web site (GovLoans.gov) is currently in prototype stage and is planned to be operational in April 2004. Originally the initiative was intended to develop a consolidated central portal for identifying and applying for government-sponsored loans. However, the objectives for this initiative changed in September 2002, after project officials conducted extensive outreach to better identify the needs of their stakeholders. They discovered that the original business case for the initiative did not recognize the significant role played by private-sector lenders and other providers in delivering loans and loan services. Accordingly, the project's objectives were revised to (1) create an easy-to-find, single point of access to government loan-related services, (2) reduce the reporting burden on businesses, (3) share information more quickly and conveniently between federal agencies, and (4) automate internal processes.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics established for the e-Loans initiative.

Table 12: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Number of clicks to access relevant loan information	Not reported	Not reported
Improve agency access to risk mitigation data	Not reported	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

Enterprise Human Resources Integration (EHRI)

Managing partner agency: Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Purpose: Streamline and automate the electronic exchange of standardized human resources (HR) data needed for creation of an official employee record across the executive branch. Provide comprehensive knowledge management workforce analysis, forecasting, and reporting across the executive branch for the strategic management of human capital.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$32.2 million

Table 13: Status of Original EHRI Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Develop the methods and means to support integrated resource forecasting and planning policy analysis.	●
Transform the manual data currently captured on paper forms into a readily accessible electronic medium.	●
Improve data accuracy and integrity through employee self-validation.	○
Modernize governmentwide HR record keeping, sourcing, and reporting practices.	○
Analyze OPM's Retirement Systems Modernization data requirements and incorporate into the EHRI Logical Data Model.	●
Promote data standardization, architectural integrity, and interoperability across the spectrum of HR e-Gov initiatives.	●

Source: GAO analysis of OPM data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ● = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

Regarding the first objective, to date EHRI has made HR workforce analysis and forecasting tools available to 15 agencies, but has not developed the means to support planning policy analysis. A pilot for conversion of manual data is to be implemented in fiscal year 2004. According to the project manager, EHRI has not yet taken steps to improve data accuracy and integrity through employee self-validation nor has it modernized government HR record-keeping practices. EHRI has analyzed the Retirement Systems Modernization

data and plans to incorporate data requirements by September 30, 2004. EHRI is actively participating in and contributing to the construction of OPM's enterprise architecture, and coordinating with other OPM initiatives on data requirements, standards, and technology to promote data standardizations, architectural integrity, and interoperability.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics established for the Enterprise HR Integration initiative.

Table 14: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Cost/cycle time savings per transaction due to reduction in manual paper processing	Not reported	Not reported
Time for intra-agency transfers	Not reported	Not reported
Usage of analytics by all cabinet-level agencies in the human capital planning process	Not reported	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

e-Payroll

Managing partner agency: Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Purpose: Consolidate 22 federal payroll systems to simplify and standardize federal human resources/payroll policies and procedures to better integrate payroll, human resources, and finance functions.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$56.1 million

Table 15: Status of Original e-Payroll Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Develop a business case.	●
Benchmark federal payroll services and systems.	●
Integrate payroll policy with HR policy.	◐
Incorporate partners in decision process.	●
Leverage existing investments.	◐

Source: GAO analysis of OPM data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

E-Payroll has completed three of its five objectives: a business case has been completed, an initial benchmarking study was completed for 26 agencies, and partners have been incorporated in the decision-making process. With regard to the third objective, e-Payroll officials have identified approximately 92 specific payroll policy issues and have resolved four of them to date. According to the project manager, e-Payroll providers are working to leverage existing investments but have not completed this objective.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics established for the e-Payroll initiative.

Table 16: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Payroll cost per transaction/per employee	"In line with industry averages"	Not reported
Accuracy of Treasury disbursements, post payroll interfaces, and periodic reporting	Not reported	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

e-Records Management

Managing partner agency: National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

Purpose: Provide policy guidance to help agencies to better manage their electronic records, so that records information can be effectively used to support timely and effective decision making, enhance service delivery, and ensure accountability. Four major issue areas are correspondence management, enterprisewide electronic records management, electronic information management standards, and transferring permanent records to NARA.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$0.6 million

Table 17: Status of Original e-Records Management Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Providing correspondence management models to enable agencies to use modern techniques for cross-agency decision making and correspondence.	∅
Developing revised baseline functional requirements for records management applications for governmentwide use.	●
The development of enterprisewide e-records management practices.	◐
Giving agencies tools for transferring electronic records to the National Archives in a variety of data types and formats so that records may be preserved for future government and citizen use.	◐

Source: GAO analysis of NARA data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ∅ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

According to the project managers, the first objective was terminated based on stakeholder input that there was no need for a correspondence tracking system. Regarding the second objective, NARA established baseline functional requirements for records management applications by issuing guidance endorsing the use of Defense Department standards. Concerning the development of enterprisewide e-records management practices, progress was

reported to be partially complete. The initiative issued guidance on capital planning for enterprisewide record management applications in June 2003. NARA is awaiting OMB approval of draft guidance that would direct agencies in developing agency-specific electronic record management system requirements. Additionally, part of the planned effort to address the third objective has been delayed due to funding shortfalls. For the last objective, four of the six planned data standards types—which serve as the initiative’s tools for transferring electronic records—have been defined.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics planned for the e-Records Management initiative and their reported status.

Table 18: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Percent of eligible data items archived/preserved electronically	Not reported	Not reported
Document search/retrieval burden	Not reported	Not reported
Document recovery burden	Not reported	Not reported
Median time for processing archival electronic records	250 calendar days	759 calendar days

Source: President’s Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

e-Rulemaking

Managing partner agency: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Purpose: Allow citizens to easily access and participate in the rule making process. Improve access to, and quality of, the rulemaking process for individuals, businesses, and other government entities while streamlining and increasing the efficiency of internal agency processes.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$11.5 million

Table 19: Status of Original e-Rulemaking Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Provide an easy and consistent way for the public to find and comment on proposed rules.	●
Create a governmentwide, centralized online capability to access and search all publicly available regulatory material.	◐
Build a unified, cost-effective “back room” regulatory management system to ensure efficiency, economies of scale, and consistency for public customers and the government.	○

Source: GAO analysis of EPA data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

In January 2003, www.regulations.gov was launched, which enables citizens and businesses to search for and respond electronically to proposed rules open for comment in the *Federal Register*.¹⁵ The ability to search full rulemaking dockets—the complete set of publicly available material (i.e., economic analyses, models, etc.) associated with a proposed rule—is not yet available and is contingent on developing a governmentwide electronic docket system. At the request of OMB, the e-Rulemaking initiative was asked to reassess the centralized architecture it had originally

¹⁵ For a more detailed examination of the first phase of this initiative, see U.S. General Accounting Office, *Electronic Rulemaking: Efforts to Facilitate Public Participation Can Be Improved*, [GAO-03-901](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 17, 2003).

proposed for this system, identify alternatives, and submit a recommendation to OMB. The e-Rulemaking executive committee submitted its recommendation to adopt a centralized architecture to OMB in late February 2004. Officials expect OMB to endorse this recommendation in the near future. Program officials anticipate rolling out “Version 1.0” by the end of January 2005 and expect all other rulemaking agencies will migrate to it by mid-fiscal year 2006. Development of a regulatory management system (objective 3) will depend on implementation of the docket architecture, and, according to program officials, OMB has directed that agency participation in this objective be voluntary.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the e-Rulemaking initiative and their reported status.

Table 20: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Number of electronic comments submitted through Regulations.gov	200,000	509
Number of downloads of rules and regulations	4,000,000	More than 700,000 page views or downloads from July to November 2003
Number of public participants in the rulemaking process	150,000	Almost 200,000 unique visitors to Regulations.gov from January through November 2003
Number of online docket systems decommissioned with the associated cost savings and cost avoidance	5 systems, \$8 million in cost savings, \$5 million cost avoidance	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

e-Training

Managing partner agency: Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Purpose: Create a premier e-Training environment that supports development of the federal workforce through simplified and one-stop access to high quality e-Training products and services, and thus advances the accomplishment of agency missions.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$19.4 million

Table 21: Status of Original e-Training Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Reduce redundancies and provide economies of scale for the purchase, development, and implementation of e-learning products and services across government.	●
Implement a premier e-training portal that provides enhanced one-stop access to high quality training and development opportunities for government employees.	●
Provide increased access to common need government-centric/high-interest e-training courses.	●
To support and advance the use of “communities of practice” to improve human capital within agencies and across the federal government.	◐

Source: GAO analysis of OPM data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

According to the project manager, the project realized \$15 million in cost avoidance/savings in fiscal year 2003 by reducing redundancies in federal training programs and providing economies of scale (objective 1). GoLearn.gov was launched in July 2002, with additional modules released in January and September 2003 (objective 2). The e-Training initiative has provided increased access to government-oriented courses, such as “Merit Systems Principles and Prohibited Personnel Practices” and “Foreign Voting Assistance” (objective 3). In September 2003 the initiative implemented the Competency Management Center on its GoLearn.gov site. The Competency Management Center currently

contains career path and competency data for the IT workforce based on the CIO Council's IT Workforce Development Roadmap. Additional communities in the acquisition, human resources, and finance domains will be added with the September 2004 update (objective 4).

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the e-Training initiative and their reported status.

Table 22: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Cost avoidance: total tuition/travel cost reductions for participating agencies	Minimum of \$50 million in reductions	\$15 million as of July 31, 2003
Percent of executive branch agencies receiving their e-Training via GoLearn.gov	Not reported	14 as of July 31, 2003
Number of registered users with GoLearn.gov	Not reported	190,000
Total number of courses completed	Not reported	160,000

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

e-Travel

Managing partner agency: General Services Administration (GSA)

Purpose: Provide a governmentwide Web-based service that applies world-class travel management practices to consolidate federal travel, minimize cost, and produce superior customer satisfaction. From travel planning and authorization to reimbursement, the e-Travel Service (eTs) will leverage administrative, financial, and information technology best practices to realize significant cost savings and improved employee productivity.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$12.4 million

Table 23: Status of Original e-Travel Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Rationalize, automate, and consolidate the federal government's travel process. This travel management service will be accessed through the Web and will cover the travel process from planning, authorization, and reservations, to travel claims and voucher reconciliation.	●
Assess the operational concepts to include critical success factors and requirements.	●
Identify at least three realistic alternative business models.	●
Draft legislative changes, redefine a Travel Management System, and act on enabling regulatory changes.	●

Source: GAO analysis of GSA data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ● = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

The e-Travel initiative has taken a number of steps to establish a governmentwide Web-based travel management service. In November 2003, GSA awarded contracts for the Web-based e-Travel system to three vendors. All civilian federal agencies will be required to use the new system by September 30, 2006. Regarding its second objective, the project team developed a concept of operations in December 2001 based on an initial OMB assessment, meetings with partnering agencies, and market and best practices research. According to the project manager, three potential business models were identified (objective 3) including maintaining the

existing paper-based travel process, establishing a simple electronic booking system with paper-based voucher processing, and a full e-Travel option incorporating both electronic booking and electronic voucher processing. The initiative selected the full e-Travel option. Regarding the fourth objective, a federal travel regulation (FTR) that became effective January 21, 2004, outlines three key milestones for agency implementation. Agencies are required to submit migration plans to the e-Travel project management office by March 31, 2004, and have a signed task order to implement eTs with one of the three vendors by December 31, 2004. The FTR also establishes September 30, 2006, as the date by which all agencies covered by the FTR must migrate to the eTs for full agencywide use. According to the e-Travel project manager, an additional objective has been added to the original four that involves development of a business intelligence capability based on analyzing travel data captured by the system.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics established for the e-Travel initiative.

Table 24: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Percentage of users expressing high level of satisfaction	Not reported	Not reported
Number of agencies using e-Travel	Not reported	Not reported
Percentage use of e-Travel services within each agency	Not reported	Not reported
Number of trips serviced through e-Travel	Not reported	Not reported
Percentage of trips planned and completed online	Not reported	Not reported
Significant reduction in duplicative systems (Currently 6+ online booking channels, 50+ travel planning/processing channels, 200+ licensed and government-developed expense reporting systems)	Not reported	Not reported
Reduction in administrative cost per trip	Align with commercial best practices	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

e-Vital

Managing partner agency: Social Security Administration (SSA)

Purpose: Establish common electronic processes for federal and state agencies to collect, process, analyze, verify, and share death record information. Also promote automating how deaths are registered with the states.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$2.0 million

Table 25: Status of Original e-Vital Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Automate state-based processes for death registration.	●
Simplify, through use of Internet-based technology, processes associated with collecting, reporting, and verifying vital records.	●
Establish a framework that will facilitate more efficient processing and effective use of other state-owned vital record information (e.g., divorce, fetal death data).	○

Source: GAO analysis of SSA data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ● = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

Of e-Vital's three original objectives, the project team has partially completed two. Regarding the first objective, the team has developed a framework for states to build electronic death registration (EDR) systems, which provide an automated registration process for making death record information available electronically. In addition, they have established standards, guidelines, and requirements for states to use to implement these systems. Three states and New York City have signed contracts to implement EDR and are scheduled to implement the systems by April 2004. Four more states are scheduled to implement EDR by September 2004, and five more by 2005. The Electronic Verification of Vital Events (EVVE), which is intended to provide the federal government with online access to vital records such as birth records, was piloted in 8 states, and it proved successful in providing electronic access to vital records. However, the project

was terminated in December 2003 because state governments were unwilling to lower their fees for providing vital record information. The rationale for the initiative had been based on realizing substantial cost savings for the Social Security Administration (SSA) by allowing it to obtain vital records electronically at reduced cost; however, states were reluctant to forgo an important source of revenue and, in some cases, fees could not be lowered because they were set by state law. Given this obstacle, SSA decided to discontinue work on this objective. According to the SSA officials, no effort is under way to address the third objective, because it is intended to build on the infrastructure of the EDR project once it is in place.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics established for the e-Vital initiative.

Table 26: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Time for state to report death to SSA	15 days	Not reported
Number of verified death records	Not reported	Not reported
Time to verify birth and death entitlement factors	24 hours	Not reported
Number of false identify cases	Not reported	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

Expanding Electronic Tax Products for Businesses

Managing partner agency: Department of Treasury

Purpose: Reduce the number of tax-related forms that businesses must file, provide timely and accurate tax information to businesses, increase the availability of electronic tax filing, and model simplified federal and state tax employment laws.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$3.2 million, based on official direction by OMB as part of the fiscal year 2004 budget process

Table 27: Status of Original Expanding Electronic Tax Products for Businesses Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Reduce the number of tax-related forms that businesses must file and that government agencies must process.	●
Provide timely and accurate tax information to businesses.	●
Increase the availability of electronic tax filing.	●
Simplify federal and state tax employment laws and related reporting requirements.	○

Source: GAO analysis of Treasury data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ● = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

The Expanding Electronic Tax Products for Businesses initiative consists of seven separate projects, of which four have been implemented to date. Implementation of these four projects contributes to the partial achievement of the first three objectives. In January 2003, employment tax reporting forms were made available for electronic filing. In April 2003, IRS deployed its Internet-based employer identification number (EIN) tool, allowing businesses to apply for and obtain EINs online. In February 2004, corporate and exempt organization tax returns were made available for electronic submission, completing the third and fourth projects. According to the program manager, the fourth objective is to be addressed by providing support for three additional projects, which

have not yet been implemented: Harmonized Wage Reporting, Standardized EIN, and Single Point Electronic Filing of Form W-2/3.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the Expanding Electronic Tax Products for Businesses initiative and their reported status.

Table 28: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Burden reduction for businesses per return and/or application filed	Not reported	290,991 burden hours saved from Internet EIN as of November 29, 2003
Administrative cost to federal government per return filed	Not reported	Not reported
Cycle time to grant EIN—valid EIN granted immediately	Immediately	5 seconds for Internet EIN application
Number of electronic “94x” forms submitted	Not reported	11,244 as of December 5, 2003
Number of electronic “SS-4” forms submitted	Not reported	581,981 as of December 20, 2003
Number of states participating in integrated registration and EIN	Not reported	2 as of July 1, 2003

Source: President’s Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

Federal Asset Sales

Managing partner agency: General Services Administration (GSA)

Purpose: Identify, recommend, and implement improvements for asset recovery and disposition, making it easier for agencies, businesses, and citizens to find and acquire/buy federal assets.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$7.24 million

Table 29: Status of Original Federal Asset Sales Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Serve as the focal point for the development of a Web-based single point solution to federal asset sales with increased value to the citizen that provides a consistent and standardized experience for the government customer base.	●
Reduce redundant investments, minimize costs, maximize agency participation, and maximize sales proceeds.	○
Through the use of proven marketplace solutions, increase the number of buyers and active users; enhance satisfaction for agency sellers as well as citizen and business buyers.	○

Source: GAO analysis of GSA data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

According to project officials, the first objective is being addressed through development of Web portals for the sale of excess personal and real property. The team plans to award a contract for the personal property portal in the near future. Project documentation states that the portal will be operational in July 2004. Project officials have scheduled the real property portal contract to be awarded in September 2004. Efforts to draft and award these contracts have taken up most of the time of the initiative, as the initiative has worked to gain stakeholder consensus and approval. According to agency officials, the second and third objectives will also be addressed by implementation of these portals; however, no progress has yet been made on these objectives.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the Federal Asset Sales initiative and their reported status.

Table 30: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
At least 10 federal departments and agencies actively contributing and supporting Federal Asset Sales effort by offering assets for sale by end of fiscal year 2003	At least 10 agencies	GSA and NASA have committed assets to Federal Asset Sales as of December 2003
Reduce the number of existing Web sites that sell or list federal assets for sale by 25 percent in fiscal year 2004	Reduction by 25 percent	Not reported
Reduce the cost to process a personal property sales transaction by 5 percent in fiscal year 2004	Reduction by 5 percent	Not reported
Increase the number of unique visitors to Federal Asset Sales by 5 times the January 2003 baseline in fiscal year 2004	Increase of 5 times January 2003 baseline	Not reported
Decrease average cycle time associated with the personal property asset disposition process by 21 business days in fiscal year 2004	Decrease cycle time by 21 business days	Not reported
Net proceeds generated through personal property sales	Not reported	Not reported
Net proceeds generated through real property sales	Not reported	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

Geospatial One-Stop

Managing partner agency: Department of the Interior

Purpose: Provide federal and state agencies with a single point of access to map-related data to enable consolidation of redundant data.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$9.95 million

Table 31: Status of Original Geospatial One-Stop Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Provide fast, low cost, reliable access to geospatial data needed for federal, state, and local government operations.	●
Facilitate government-to-government interactions needed for vertical missions such as homeland security.	●
Facilitate the improved delivery of government services to the public.	●
Obtain multisector input for coordinating, developing, and implementing geographic information standards to create the consistency needed for interoperability and to stimulate market development of tools.	●

Source: GAO analysis of Interior data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ● = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

The Geospatial One-Stop project team has taken actions that partially complete all four of the initiative's original objectives. To address the first objective, in June 2003, the project team developed a portal, www.geodata.gov, intended to provide a central location to identify geospatial data held by both federal and nonfederal agencies. The project plans to award a contract in August 2004 to develop a revised version of the portal. In addition, according to the fiscal year 2005 budget submission, the project team has created a draft framework of data standards that have been submitted to the American National Standards Institute for review. To address the second objective, project officials are working to organize the content of the portal into content categories and lines of business, such as homeland security. According to the executive director, the team is working on the third objective by setting up an online

“marketplace” intended to provide information on federal agencies’ future data acquisitions, allowing state and local governments the opportunity to find and potentially make use of geographic information systems (GIS) projects in their areas. Regarding the fourth objective, the project team recently conducted the first of a series of teleconferences aimed at sharing information about federal, state, and local government GIS activities.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the Geospatial One-Stop initiative and their reported status.

Table 32: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Number of data sets posted to the portal	Not reported	5,417 as of November 5, 2003
Number of users	Not reported	12,299 unique visitors for month ending November 3, 2003
Number of cost sharing partnerships for data collection activities	Not reported	Not reported
Number of data set hits	Not reported	Not reported
Number of federal agencies posting data sets to geodata.gov	Not reported	16 as of November 3, 2003

Source: President’s Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

GovBenefits

Managing partner agency: Department of Labor

Purpose: Provide a single point of access for citizens to locate and determine potential eligibility for government benefits and services.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$11.9 million

Table 33: Status of Original GovBenefits.gov Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Provide potential beneficiaries instant access to information for all government benefit programs and services through a single Web site.	●
Enable individuals to apply for benefits online through a streamlined application process.	○

Source: GAO analysis of Labor data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

The GovBenefits program has made progress in allowing citizens to locate and apply for government benefits and services. The GovBenefits.gov portal currently provides information about over 500 benefits programs at 22 agencies, including some state benefits programs. The portal uses a structured set of questions to identify benefit programs that may apply to citizens, eliminating the need to try to identify such programs individually at separate government agencies. According to GovBenefits officials, the project's next phase will focus on working with partner agencies to develop standards for benefit eligibility and application information. GovBenefits officials reported that until such standards are developed, an online application capability cannot be deployed.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the GovBenefits.gov initiative and their reported status.

Table 34: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Visits to site per month	350,000	498,743 for month ending October 31, 2003
Number of unique visitors per month	Not reported	251,304 for month ending October 31, 2003
Number of referrals to partner benefit sites	10% increase	35,000 for month ending October 2, 2002; 107,484 for month ending October 31, 2003
Average time to find benefits and determine eligibility	20 minutes or less	15 minutes as of September 1, 2003

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

Grants.gov

Managing partner agency: Health and Human Services (HHS)

Purpose: Create a single portal for all federal grant customers to find, apply for, and ultimately manage grants online.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$10.67 million

Table 35: Status of Original Grants.gov Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Pilot a simple, unified way to find grant opportunities via the Web.	●
Evaluate the use or expansion of interagency and agency specific capabilities for discretionary grant programs.	●
Work with e-authentication PMO and privacy groups.	●
Define application data standards.	●
Deploy simple, unified application mechanism.	●

Source: GAO analysis of HHS data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

The Grants.gov initiative (formerly e-Grants) has achieved all of its original objectives. In July 2002, the initiative piloted its “Find” tool, which serves as a simple, unified way for grant applicants to find discretionary grant opportunities via the Internet. In May 2002, a technology evaluation report was published that examined the use or expansion of interagency and agency-specific capabilities including commercial off-the-shelf software. In consultation with the e-Authentication initiative, Grants.gov selected a commercial provider of e-authentication credentials for the Grants.gov site. The initiative worked to define a standard grant application for its “Apply” tool, which would allow an applicant to download an application form and submit an application online. In October 2002, after consultations with stakeholders in the grantee community, an existing OMB-approved standard grant application form already in use by many grant-making agencies was selected for use in the “Apply” tool. On October 31, 2003, the www.Grants.gov site was deployed with both “Find” and “Apply” tools. A grant applicant may

search for grant opportunities via the site, download an application form, and submit the application online. According to project documentation, as of February 2004, the Grants.gov portal allowed prospective grants applicants to find and apply for a total of 835 grant opportunities at 29 grant-making agencies.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the Grants.gov initiative and their reported status.

Table 36: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Number of grant-making agencies publishing grant opportunities in portal	Not reported	26 as of December 9, 2003
Number of grant programs available for electronic application	Not reported	6 as of December 9, 2003
Percent of reusable information per grant application	Not reported	Not reported
Number of applications received electronically	Not reported	8 as of December 9, 2003
Number of grant announcements posted in Grants.gov (Total Postings)	Not reported	1,516 as of December 3, 2003

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

Integrated Acquisition Environment (IAE)

Managing partner agency: General Services Administration (GSA)

Purpose: Create a secure business environment that will facilitate and support the cost-effective acquisition of goods and services by agencies, while eliminating inefficiencies in the current acquisition environment.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$44 million

Table 37: Status of Original Integrated Acquisition Environment Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Deploy a single point of registration and validation of supplier data accessed by all agencies.	●
Implement a central point for consolidated collection and access of statistical and management information related to government acquisitions.	●
Implement a directory of governmentwide acquisition contracts (GWAC) and multiple award contracts (MAC) to simplify selection and facilitate leverage of government buying.	●
Develop a standard glossary and vocabulary to facilitate exchange of data between and within agencies.	◐
Reduce the cost of and make transparent the ordering, billing, and collections of intergovernmental transactions.	◐

Source: GAO analysis of GSA data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

Three of IAE's five original objectives are complete, and the remaining two objectives are partially complete. The project team developed a single point of registration and validation through IAE's Business Partner Network, which allowed the Small Business Administration to shut down its obsolete Pro-NET. In October 2003, the project launched the Federal Procurement Data System–Next Generation (FPDS-NG), which is intended to be the central point for collection of statistical and management information related to government acquisitions. In addition, the IAE project team developed and implemented an interagency contracts directory,

which became operational in July 2003. The directory references 16,000 contracts as of February 18, 2004. Regarding its fourth objective, the project team has published a first version of eTransaction standards as well as a draft summary Extensible Markup Language guidance. While the fifth objective was listed in the project's May 2002 work plans as involving "intergovernmental" transactions, it was actually intended to refer to intragovernmental (i.e., within the federal government) transactions. The IAE team has registered all agencies for intragovernmental transactions, and it is currently prototyping an intragovernmental transaction system with five agencies.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the IAE initiative and their reported status.

Table 38: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Percent reduction in time for delivery of products and services	Not reported	Not reported
Cost-to-spend	Not reported	Not reported
Number of intra-governmental transactions going through the Intragovernmental Transactions Exchange	Not reported	40 as of December 11, 2003
Number of interagency contracts in directory	Not reported	16,000 as of December 11, 2003
Number of vendors registered in the central contractor registration central database	Not reported	262,823 as of December 11, 2003
Percent reduction in procurement transaction errors	Not reported	Not reported
Percent of transactions reported directly to FPDS-NG	Not reported	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Free File

Managing partner agency: Department of Treasury

Purpose: Create a single point of access to free online preparation and electronic tax filing services provided by commercial partners to reduce burden and costs to taxpayers.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$406,000¹⁶

Table 39: Status of Original IRS Free File Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Work with a consortium of companies from the electronic tax preparation and filing industry to offer free online tax return preparation to a significant number of taxpayers.	●
Host a Web page for the consortium and provide access to the consortium from appropriate government Web pages.	●

Source: GAO analysis of Treasury data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

Formerly known as EZ Tax Filing, the IRS Free File initiative is now largely complete. The initiative's strategy has been to leverage existing commercial service providers to offer a free tax filing option to some federal taxpayers. According to the IRS Free File program manager, the IRS signed an agreement with the Free File Alliance—a consortium of companies in the electronic tax preparation and filing industry—to make free electronic filing services available to 60 percent of taxpayers on October 30, 2002. On January 16, 2003, the IRS launched the free file service on www.irs.gov. Taxpayers visiting the project's Web site can link to companies that are members of the Free File Alliance and receive free filing services, if taxpayers meet company-defined eligibility requirements, such as a maximum adjusted gross income.

¹⁶ Estimate provided by IRS Free File initiative program staff. There was no fiscal year 2004 budget submission for this initiative.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the IRS Free File initiative and their reported status.

Table 40: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Percentage coverage of tax filing public	Minimum of 60 percent	60 percent minimum
Number of citizens filing electronically	2.4 million	2.79 million as of September 30, 2003

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

International Trade Process Streamlining (ITPS)

Managing partner agency: Department of Commerce

Purpose: Make it easy for small and medium enterprises to obtain the information and documents needed to conduct business abroad.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$1.47 million

Table 41: Status of Original International Trade Process Streamlining Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Consolidate and integrate the export process online under Export.gov, which will include foreign partner matching/verification, export financing and insurance, and consolidated market research.	●
Develop online applications for export financing, insurance, and loan guarantees offered through the Export-Import Bank and the Foreign Agriculture Service's Credit Guarantee System.	◐
Introduce "One-Stop, One Form," which will reduce the time required for small and medium enterprises to fill out export-related forms and paperwork by providing a single online form for many export transactions.	◐

Source: GAO analysis of Commerce data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

The ITPS project team has fully achieved one of its original objectives and has made progress towards achieving the other two. According to the ITPS project manager, other trade portals have been integrated into the export.gov portal, thus consolidating the online export process. The project team has deployed online tools, such as a guide for exporting, an automated North American Free Trade Agreement certificate of origin, and a streamlined application process for exporters. Additionally, the project manager stated that a tool has been put online that allows exporters to enter their information in a single form that is used to automatically populate all other applications that are linked to this form. According to the project manager, additional applications to more fully address the second and third objectives are currently in development.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the ITPS initiative and their reported status.

Table 42: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Time to fill out export forms and locate information	Reduce by 10 percent annually	Not reported
Number of unique visitors to Export.gov	Increase by 15 percent	598,290 as of January 7, 2004
Number of trade leads accessed by small and medium enterprises through export.gov	Increase by 10 percent	28,716 as of January 7, 2004
Number of registered businesses on Export.gov	Not reported	1,246 as of January 7, 2004

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

Project SAFECOM

Managing partner agency: Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Purpose: Serve as the umbrella program within the federal government to help local, tribal, state, and federal public safety agencies improve public safety response through more effective and efficient interoperable wireless communications.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$26.02 million

Table 43: Status of Original Project SAFECOM Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Achieve federal-to-federal interoperability throughout the nation.	○
Achieve federal-to-state/local interoperability throughout the nation.	○
Achieve state/local interoperability throughout the nation.	○

Source: GAO analysis of DHS data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

As of March 2004, Project SAFECOM has made very limited progress in addressing its overall objective of achieving communications interoperability among entities at all levels of government. Program officials now estimate that a minimum level of interoperability will not occur until 2008, and that full interoperability will not occur until 15 years later, in 2023.

SAFECOM has experienced frequent changes in management, which have hampered its progress. OMB originally designated the Department of the Treasury as the project's managing partner. However, in May 2002, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which had an emergency-response mission more closely aligned with SAFECOM's goals, was designated managing partner. By September 2002, the Federal Emergency Management Agency had replaced its SAFECOM management team and shifted its implementation approach. Following the establishment of the

Department of Homeland Security¹⁷ in May 2003, the project was taken out of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and assigned to the department's new Science and Technology Directorate because of a perceived need to incorporate more technical expertise. This marked the fourth major change in the project's management team within 2 years.

Project SAFECOM has pursued a number of activities since DHS took control of the project in May 2003 that are intended to lay the groundwork for future interoperability. Specifically, DHS established a governance structure for the project that includes executive and advisory committees to formalize collaboration with stakeholders. The department has also conducted several planning conferences that have provided an opportunity for stakeholders to modify program goals and the tasks planned to address them. Further, grant guidance has been developed within the SAFECOM project for use with awards to public safety agencies that encourage planning for interoperability. Also, project officials are working with the Commerce Department to catalog all existing federal agencies that use public safety communications systems and networks.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the Project SAFECOM initiative and their reported status.

Table 44: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Number of agencies that can communicate with one another	Not reported	Not reported
Response times for jurisdictions and disciplines to respond to an event	Not reported	Not reported
Number of wireless grant programs that include SAFECOM-approved equipment	Not reported	2
Voice, data, and video Convergence	Not reported	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

¹⁷ The Federal Emergency Management Agency became part of the Department of Homeland Security in March 2003.

Recreation One-Stop

Managing partner agency: Department of the Interior

Purpose: Provide a single-point-of-access, user-friendly, Web-based resource to citizens, offering information and access to government recreational sites.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$0.6 million

Table 45: Status of Original Recreation One-Stop Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Allow citizens to be able to obtain information about parks, museums, historical landmarks, and other recreation sites, including hours of operation, fees, public accommodations, and services.	●
Allow citizens to be able to make reservations, order passes, conduct other service transactions online.	◐
Provide access to government-collected data relevant to recreation activities.	◐
Link to related information and services provided by nongovernmental partners.	○

Source: GAO analysis of Interior data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

Of the four original objectives, the initiative has completed one, partially completed two others, and made no progress on the last. The original Recreation.gov Web site, which was launched in April 1998, provided limited information on recreation sites and activities. The current site, developed by the Recreation One-Stop initiative, offers services that allow citizens not only to obtain information on recreation sites and activities—addressing the initiative’s first objective—but also to make reservations, partially addressing the second objective. The site does not yet allow for ordering passes or for conducting other online transactions. By providing online information and reservations, the Web site provides access to some government-collected data relevant to recreation activities, but not all state government recreation information is yet included.

Currently, the initiative is seeking to develop agreed-upon standards for data submission and display for a planned online clearinghouse. The site does not yet contain any links to information or services provided by nongovernmental partners.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the Recreation One-Stop initiative and their reported status.

Table 46: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Number of partners sharing data using common (Recreation Markup Language) data standard	Increase by 15%	Not reported
Number of facilities listed in Recreation.gov	Increase by 25%	3,800 as of 1/7/04
Number of federal Web sites with consistent recreation data	Increase by 25%	Not reported
Number of online reservations	Not reported	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

Recruitment One-Stop (ROS)

Managing partner agency: Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Purpose: Outsource delivery of USAJOBS Federal Employment Information System to deliver state-of-the-art online recruitment services to job seekers including intuitive job searching, online resume submission, applicant data mining, and online feedback on status and eligibility.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$6.7 million

Table 47: Status of Original ROS Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Increase customer satisfaction with the federal application process through Recruitment One-Stop.	●
Decrease the amount of time it takes to source candidates.	●
Source 75 percent of federal job candidates through Recruitment One-Stop by the end of fiscal year 2003.	○
Desired quality level of new hires is achieved.	○
Identify and work to eliminate unnecessary legal and regulatory constraints to effective recruitment.	○

Source: GAO analysis of OPM data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ● = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

The ROS team has worked primarily to enhance the USAJobs Web site, which is intended to serve as the foundation for achieving most of the initiative's objectives. Regarding the first objective, ROS has used the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) as a measure. The ACSI rates customer service with a score of 0 to 100, and the customer satisfaction rating for the USAJobs Web site has increased from a score of 68 to a score of 73. OPM officials stated that although they have increased customer satisfaction, their intention is to significantly surpass the government average score of 71. The projects' second objective has been partially realized; a resume-mining tool to source candidates has been implemented, but

it has not been widely used to date. The third objective has not been achieved; currently only approximately 21 percent of federal job candidates have been sourced through ROS. Further, ROS has not developed or implemented a measure for whether the “desired quality level” of new hires has been achieved. ROS has made no significant progress toward the fifth objective; ROS has not identified nor has it worked to eliminate unnecessary legal and regulatory constraints.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the Recruitment One-Stop initiative and their reported status.

Table 48: Performance Metrics

Metric	Target	Reported status
Cost per hire	Not reported	\$2,790 as of August 30, 2003
Time to fill vacancies	Not reported	102 as of August 30, 2003
Percent of federal job applicants using Recruitment One-Stop	80 percent	Not reported
Number of visitors to site (daily)	Not reported	183,911 as of December 31, 2003
Number of applications (resumes) on file annually	Not reported	273,820 as of December 31, 2003
Availability of applicant status	Real time	Not reported

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.

USA Services

Managing partner agency: General Services Administration (GSA)

Purpose: Develop and deploy governmentwide citizen customer service using industry best practices that will provide citizens with timely, consistent responses about government information and services.

Reported fiscal year 2004 budget: \$9.35 million

Table 49: Status of Original USA Services Objectives

Objectives	Assessed status
Implement a pilot routing and reporting solution for e-mail messages from FirstGov to a selected group of 10 agencies	●
Deploy an integrated Web and call center point of service including e-mail management systems managed by GSA's Office of Citizen Services	●
Assess citizen needs against existing federal government customer relationship management (CRM) environments and systems. Define citizen-focused response processes that are optimized for timeliness and quality of response, while incorporating privacy and security.	◐
Develop and implement a prototype for a seamless, multiagency citizen response accountability solution. This will be an integrated case management and CRM system. Then implement the solution as an integrated cross-organization solution.	○

Source: GAO analysis of GSA data.

Legend: ● = objective fully or substantially achieved; ◐ = objective partially achieved; ○ = no significant progress made toward this objective; ∅ = objective no longer applicable.

Project Progress

USA Services developed and implemented a pilot reporting and routing solution for e-mail messages in December 2002, and in April 2003, the project established a more robust e-mail capability through its Federal Citizen Information Center (FCIC) National Contact Center. Currently, a citizen can submit questions for the federal government via the FirstGov portal or by calling the National Contact Center. Inquiries submitted via FirstGov are routed to an FCIC "information agent" where the inquiry is resolved or forwarded to the appropriate agency contact. Currently USA Services resolves agency-specific requests for four agencies that have contracted for

such services and has newly signed agreements with two additional agencies. USA Services assesses citizen needs through various means, including the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) and by obtaining direct citizen feedback. However, the CRM component of the initiative's objectives has not yet been realized. According to project officials, the project's original vision of an integrated case management system has not been achieved and is currently on hold because of concerns about feasibility, cost, and protection of customer privacy.

Performance

The table lists key performance metrics used for the USA Services initiative and their reported status.

Table 50: Measures of USA Services Performance

Measure	Target	Reported status as of Sept. 30, 2003
Average time to respond to inquiries through Firstgov.gov and FCIC	100% of inquiries responded to within 24 hours	12 hours
Average time to resolve inquiries through Firstgov.gov and FCIC	Not reported	2 business days
Number of governmentwide inquiries that call center and e-mail systems can handle	3.3 million calls per year; 150,000 e-mails per year	1,756,700 calls; 60,198 e-mails
Achieve cost savings from outsourcing Tier 1 citizen contact center requirements to USA Services	10 agencies by Sept. 30, 2004	3 agencies; 13 agencies have established working agreements

Source: President's Fiscal Year 2005 Budget submission.