Resources > For Congress

Resources: For Congress

These GAO resources have been selected specifically for Congress members and staff.

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About GAO

GAO provides Congress, the heads of executive agencies, and the public with timely, fact-based, non-partisan information that can be used to improve government and save taxpayers billions of dollars. In fiscal year 2017, GAO reaped $73.9 billion in financial benefits and helped make the government more efficient in 1,280 other ways. GAO's annual performance and accountability report provides more details.

Where GAO Reports Come From

GAO's work is done at the request of congressional committees or subcommittees or is statutorily required by public laws or committee reports, per our Congressional Protocols. GAO also undertakes research under the authority of the Comptroller General. Learn more about the process and timing of GAO reports in our quick guide to requests.

What We Offer: How We Support The Congress

Watchdog: Your Exclusive Look at GAO

Visit our Watchdog website for more information about GAO's services specifically for Congress (accessible through the congressional computer network). There you will find information on general assistance and briefings by GAO experts, ongoing work, and requesting work.

Reports & Testimonies

Most GAO reports and testimonies are publicly available, unless they contain classified information. GAO experts also regularly testify at Congressional hearings. Reports and testimonies cover:

- Audits of agency operations to determine whether federal funds are being spent efficiently and effectively;
- How well government programs and policies are meeting their objectives;
- Policy analyses and options for congressional consideration.

Legal Decisions

GAO's office of General Counsel issues legal decisions and opinions on bid protests, appropriations law, and other issues of federal law.

Comptroller General Initiatives

The Comptroller General's forums, roundtables, and testimonies address high-level federal issues and the role of government in addressing 21st century challenges.

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Requesting GAO Services: Who Can Request Work

Requests for GAO services must come from congressional committees, subcommittees , or members of Congress. In conjunction with members of Congress, GAO developed its Congressional Protocols which outlines policies and procedures for accepting and completing work.

Request Letters: How to Request Work

Requests must be made in writing and should be submitted via email to the Congressional Relations Office. A request letter should include a brief background description of the issue and a list of questions to be addressed; the requesting Member's signature, title, and committee affiliation; and a staff point of contact.

Letters should be signed, on the appropriate Committee/Member letterhead, and addressed to:

Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW, - Room 7100
Washington, DC 20548

For assistance drafting a request letter, contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 512-4400 or visit Watchdog, our website for members of Congress and their staff.

Requests to GAO: Process and Timing

Once GAO accepts a congressional request, we initiate the audit. Next, a GAO team designs the audit method for the report. The team can provide preliminary briefings on our findings to congressional requesters. Before issuing the report, we also solicit comments from the audited agency or agencies.

Learn more about the process and timing of GAO reports in our quick guide to requests.

Watchdog: Your Exclusive Look at GAO

Members of Congress and their staff have access to information regarding GAO's ongoing work. Please see our Watchdog (accessible through the congressional computer network).

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GAO Operations:

- About GAO's products and services
- GAO's Congressional Protocols
- Requests to GAO: Process at a Glance
- GAO's Agency Protocols
- GAO's International Protocols
- GAO's Strategic Plan

Stay Connected with GAO:

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- Download our Priorities for Policy Makers App in the App Store® or GooglePlay™.
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Reference Materials: GAO's Standard-Setting Guides and Treatises

Government Auditing Standards

Federal Appropriations Law

Standards for Internal Controls

The Financial Audit Manual

Federal Information System Controls Audit Manual

Collections: GAO's Special Bodies of Cross-Cutting Work

Key Issues: The Key Issues pages provide information about GAO's work on a range of issues facing the nation and highlight our most relevant reports.

America's Fiscal Future: A big-picture look at the nation's fiscal condition.

Duplication & Cost Savings: GAO's yearly report on areas where the federal government could reduce duplication and achieve cost savings.

High Risk List: GAO's list of programs that need continued attention due to high risk factors.

Technology Assessment: GAO's analysis of critical technological innovations.

Recommendations for Executive and Congressional Action:

RECOMMENDATIONS DATABASE

GAO's recommendations database contains report recommendations that still need to be addressed.

GAO's ACTION TRACKER

GAO's Action Tracker contains the status of "actions" - specific suggestions for improvement – that GAO identified in its annual Duplication & Cost Savings reports.

Reports & Testimonies

Bid Protests & Appropriations Law

Key Issues

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HERE TO HELP YOU
Contact the Congressional Relations Office for Assistance

- **By phone:** (202) 512-4400 (Congressional Relations Office, Direct)
- **By email:** congrel@gao.gov
- **Contact your advisor:** Information accessible on our Watchdog Website for members of Congress and their staff
- **By mail:** Government Accountability Office, 441 G St., NW, Washington, DC 20548

Have questions about open recommendations?

- For questions about a specific recommendation, contact the person or office listed with the recommendation.
- For general information about recommendations, contact GAO's Audit Policy and Quality Assurance office at (202) 512-6100 or apqa@gao.gov.
- Search GAO's open recommendations.

Looking for individual GAO staff members?

The GAO Organizational Telephone Directory (PDF) provides contact information for agency personnel. This document is updated frequently.

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GAO's Congressional Protocols
GAO-17-767G: Published: Jul 17, 2017. Publicly Released: Jul 17, 2017.

SUMMARY   VIEW REPORT (PDF, 26 PAGES) 🔖

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This publication supersedes GAO-01-145G, GAO's Congressional Protocols, November 2000, GAO-03-198G, GAO's Congressional Protocols: Addendum I, November 2002, and GAO-04-310G, July 2004, GAO's Congressional Protocols. This document contains updated protocols governing GAO's work for the Congress. Since we implemented the original protocols and the 2004 update, we have identified several areas where changes would enhance our ability to better serve the Congress. The refinements in this edition incorporate feedback from Members of Congress and their staffs. These protocols continue to provide a means of holding GAO accountable for commitments made to the Congress and ensuring that GAO is consistent in dealing with all committees and Members. These revised protocols incorporate name changes of relevant GAO entities; reflect changes to aspects of GAO's process for issuing products; provide the names of the most current GAO contacts; and update methods for receiving information about GAO products.

Additional Materials:

🔖 Full Report:
(PDF, 26 pages)

🔖 Accessible Version:
(PDF, 19 pages)

Contact:

Office Of Congressional Relations
(202) 512-4400
congrel@gao.gov

Office of Public Affairs
(202) 512-4800
youngc1@gao.gov

Find Recent Work on GAO Mission and Operations »

APR 25, 2018

GAO

FISCAL YEAR 2019 BUDGET REQUEST:
U.S. Government Accountability Office
GAO-18-448T: Published: Apr 25, 2018. Publicly Released: Apr 25, 2018.

GAO

FISCAL YEAR 2019 BUDGET REQUEST:
U.S. Government Accountability Office
GAO-18-426T: Published: Apr 25, 2018. Publicly Released: Apr 25, 2018.

Explore Related Key Issues »

Explore our Key Issues on GAO Mission and Operations

Explore our other Key Issues here

GAO

Reports & Testimonies

RECOMMENDATIONS DATABASE

GAO's recommendations database contains report recommendations that still need to be addressed.

GAO's recommendations help congressional and agency leaders prepare for appropriations and oversight activities, as well as help improve government operations. Recommendations remain open until they are designated as Closed-implemented or Closed-not implemented. You can explore open recommendations by searching or browsing.

GAO's priority recommendations are those that we believe warrant priority attention. We sent letters to the heads of key departments and agencies, urging them to continue focusing on these issues. These recommendations are labeled as such. You can find priority recommendations by searching or browsing our open recommendations below, or through our mobile app.

As of May 16, 2018, GAO has issued 1,566 products with 4,827 open recommendations.

Browse Open Recommendations
Explore priority recommendations by subject terms or browse by federal agency

By Subject Term

By Federal Agency

By Topic

Search Open Recommendations
Search for a specific priority recommendation by word or phrase

Recommendation Text ▼

Search

Governing on the go?
Our Priorities for Policy Makers app makes it easier for leaders to search our recommendations on the go.
See the November 10th Press Release

Download on the App Store
Available on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play
Available on Google Play

Have a Question about a Recommendation?

- For questions about a specific recommendation, contact the person or office listed with the recommendation.
- For general information about recommendations, contact GAO's Audit Policy and Quality Assurance office at (202) 512-6100 or apqa@gao.gov.

Duplication & Cost Savings

GAO releases an annual report on opportunities to reduce fragmentation, overlap, and duplication, as well as reduce costs and increase revenue, for the federal government.

Share This:

2018 Overview

Action Tracker

By Duplication

By Cost Savings

Background

Action Tracker

GAO's Action Tracker is an interactive online tool that tracks the progress that Congress and federal agencies have made in reducing duplication, overlap, and fragmentation—and reducing costs and increasing revenue—that GAO identifies in its annual report. Fully addressing every action in this tool would result in tens of billions in savings for the federal government.

Explore Actions by All Areas

Select one or several checkboxes and click "GO" to explore the action items that we have identified by all areas. You can also then sort by status (open, open with some progress made, open with no progress made, and closed) by choosing from the drop-down menu.

Once you click on a specific area, you will see all of its related actions. You can also download the entire Action Tracker spreadsheet file (XLSX or CSV).

- Agriculture (9)
- Defense (55)
- Economic Development (12)
- Energy (13)
- General Government (73)
- Health (40)
- Homeland Security/Law Enforcement (28)
- Income Security (15)
- Information Technology (11)
- International Affairs (17)
- Science and the Environment (9)
- Social Services (10)
- Training, Employment, and Education (11)

Check All   **Uncheck All**   GO

Duplication & Cost Savings

GAO releases an annual report on opportunities to reduce fragmentation, overlap, and duplication, as well as reduce costs and increase revenue, for the federal government.

Share This:

- 2018 Overview
- Action Tracker
- By Duplication
- By Cost Savings
- Background

Background

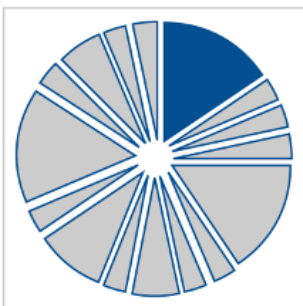**ABOUT THIS WORK** | **METHODOLOGY** | **RELATED LINKS & PRIOR YEAR REPORTS**

About This Work

The federal government is spending a lot more money than it is collecting, and addressing this issue will require changes to both federal spending and revenue policies.
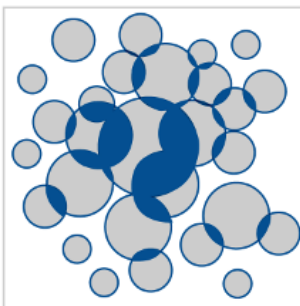
However, Congress and federal agencies could act now to address federal programs or activities that are fragmented, overlapping, or duplicative—which would save the government billions of dollars.

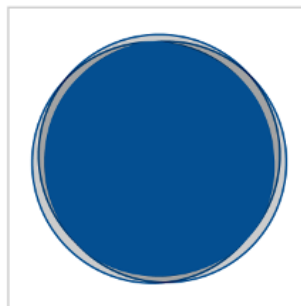**Definitions of Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication**

Fragmentation refers to those circumstances in which more than one federal agency (or more than one organization within an agency) is involved in the same broad area of national need and opportunities exist to improve service delivery.

Overlap occurs when multiple agencies or programs have similar goals, engage in similar activities or strategies to achieve them, or target similar beneficiaries.

Duplication occurs when two or more agencies or programs are engaged in the same activities or provide the same services to the same beneficiaries.

Source: GAO. | GAO-18-371SP

In our first 7 annual reports (2011 through 2017), GAO presented 724 actions to Congress or federal agencies. Congress and federal agencies have already addressed over half of these actions—resulting in over $175 billion in financial benefits.

In total (since 2011), Congress and federal agencies have:

- Addressed 376 actions
- Partially addressed 175 actions
- Not addressed 122 actions
- 51 other actions were consolidated or closed as not addressed

Methodology

To examine progress on fragmentation, overlap, and duplication, as well as cost savings and revenue enhancement, we review relevant legislation and documents such as budgets, policies, strategic and implementation plans, and guidance. We used the following criteria to assess the status of areas and actions.

- We determined that an area was "addressed" if all actions in that area were addressed; "partially addressed" if at least one action needed in that area showed some progress toward implementation but not all actions were addressed; and "not addressed" if none of the actions needed in that area were addressed or partially addressed.

- For Congress, we determined that an action was "addressed" if relevant legislation was enacted and addressed all aspects of the action needed; "partially addressed" if a relevant bill passed a committee, the House of Representatives, or the Senate during the current congressional session, or relevant legislation was enacted bu only addressed part of the action needed; and "not addressed" when a bill was introduced but did not pass out of a committee, or no relevant legislation was introduced. At the beginning of a new congressional session, we reapply the criteria—so the status of an action may move from "partially addressed" to "not addressed" if relevant legislation is not reintroduced from the prior congressional session.

- For the executive branch, we determined that an action was "addressed" if implementation of the action needed was completed; "partially addressed" when the action needed is in development, or started but not yet completed; and "not addressed" when the administration, the agencies, or both made minimal or no progress toward implementing the action needed.

- We determined that an action was categorized as "other" if it has been "consolidated" or "closed-not addressed" and will no longer be assessed. In most cases, "consolidated" actions were replaced or subsumed by new actions based on additional audit work or other relevant information. Actions are generally "closed-not addressed" when the action is no longer relevant due to changing circumstances.

In calculating our total financial benefits, we relied on individual estimates from a variety of sources, which considered different time periods and utilized different data sources, assumptions, and methodologies. The total represents a rough estimate of financial benefits.

We update the Action Tracker twice a year, in the spring and fall. For the most up-to-date status on the recommendations, please visit their related reports listed below.

Related Links & Prior Year Reports

Reports

- 2018 Annual Report
  GAO-18-371SP, April 26, 2018

- 2017 Annual Report
  GAO-17-491SP, April 26, 2017

- 2016 Annual Report
  GAO-16-375SP, April 13, 2016

- 2015 Annual Report
  GAO-15-404SP, April 14, 2015

- 2014 Annual Report
  GAO-14-343SP, April 8, 2014

- 2013 Annual Report
  GAO-13-279SP, April 9, 2013

- 2012 Annual Report
  GAO-12-342SP, February 28, 2012

- 2011 Annual Report
  GAO-11-318SP, March 1, 2011

- Evaluation and Management Guide
  GAO-15-49SP, April 14, 2015

WatchBlog Posts

- Saving Dollar Bills: Reducing Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication in Federal Programs
- A Check-Up on the Government's Fiscal Health
- Achieving Financial Benefits—One Action at a Time
- Shrinking DOD's Headquarters Could Mean Big Savings
- A Policymaker's Duplication and Cost Savings Toolkit
- An Analyst's Duplication and Cost Savings Toolkit
- Video on our Duplication and Cost Savings Work
- OMB's Reforms Can Help Agencies Better Manage Federal IT Projects
- 2014 Duplication and Cost Savings Report

Key Issues

- Managing for Results in Government
- Reducing Government-wide Improper Payments