TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Full Adoption of Sound Transition Planning Practices by GSA and Selected Agencies Could Improve Planning Efforts

Why GAO Did This Study

With the current governmentwide telecommunications contracts set to expire, the General Services Administration's (GSA) Federal Technology Service (FTS) and its customer agencies must prepare to transition their services to a new contract vehicle. The previous federal effort to transition telecommunications services proved to be a large, complex task.

GAO was asked to determine to what extent (1) selected agencies used sound practices in preparing for the transition and (2) GSA's FTS has prepared for the transition by addressing previous lessons learned and providing agencies with guidance on sound transition planning.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Attorney General and the Secretary of Energy perform the analyses necessary to identify required transition resources for their agencies.

In addition, GAO recommends that the Administrator of General Services provide guidance to GSA's customer agencies that reflects all of the sound transition planning practices.

In commenting on a draft of this report, the General Services Administration, the Department of Justice, the Department of Energy, and the Department of the Interior generally agreed with our recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-476.

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

What GAO Found

The agencies GAO reviewed—Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Energy, Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and GSA—were generally planning to employ sound transition planning practices (see table below). However, officials at two agencies stated they did not plan to fully identify necessary resources. Specifically, officials from the Department of Justice indicated they would not need additional funding for the transition, even though they could not provide an analytical basis for their decision, and officials from the Department of Energy believed their transition planning efforts would not require the identification of human capital needs. Without addressing all of the sound practices, agencies risk entering into a complex transition without the level of preparation necessary to ensure a smooth transition.

FTS has addressed the majority of the lessons learned from the previous transition. Areas that have not yet been fully addressed are securing incumbent contractor cooperation and establishing guidance on inventory management and validation processes. FTS plans to address all remaining lessons prior to contract award. FTS has also provided agencies with guidance that fully reflects two of the five sound transition planning practices. However, guidance has not addressed all aspects of the remaining three, including establishing an inventory maintenance process, using key management processes, identifying measures of success, and performing transition-specific risk assessments.

Although principal responsibility for the transition rests with individual agencies, FTS has an important program-level responsibility to plan and coordinate the transition. As a result, unless it works with agencies to address the full range of sound transition planning practices, agencies may not address the practices fully or consistently, which could, in turn, affect their level of preparation.

Sound Transition Planning Practices

Establish an accurate telecommunications inventory and an inventory maintenance process.
Perform a strategic analysis of telecommunications requirements and use this to shape the agency's management approach and guide efforts when identifying resources and developing a transition plan.
Establish a structured management approach that includes a dedicated transition management team, key management processes (project management, configuration management, and change management), and clear lines of communication.
Identify the funding and human capital resources that the transition effort will require.
Develop a transition plan that includes transition objectives, measures of success, a risk assessment, and a detailed time line.

Source: GAO.