



Highlights of [GAO-05-516T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives.

Why GAO Did This Study

Since fiscal year 1995, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Kennedy Center) has received nearly \$203 million in federal funds to complete capital projects and intends to request an additional \$43 million in appropriations through fiscal year 2008. The Kennedy Center's Comprehensive Building Plan identifies these capital projects as necessary to renovate the Center and to meet or exceed relevant life safety and disabled access regulations. GAO was asked to examine (1) the progress the Center has made in completing key capital projects within estimated costs and the information it has communicated about this progress to key stakeholders; and (2) the status of the Center's plans to address fire life safety and disabled access requirements.

What GAO Recommends

GAO makes recommendations to the Chairman of the Kennedy Center Board of Trustees including increasing oversight and better complying with fire safety code. The Kennedy Center agrees that more oversight would be useful, but it is unsure what the best mechanism would be for providing such oversight. Furthermore, the Kennedy Center believes that it is in compliance with fire code, but agrees to seek third party review of its approach in addressing certain fire code deficiencies.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-516T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Mark L. Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or goldsteinm@gao.gov.

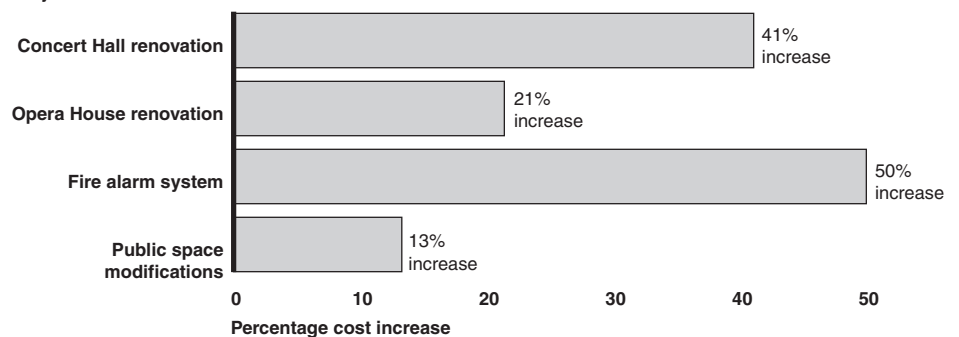
KENNEDY CENTER

Stronger Oversight of Fire Safety Issues, Construction Projects, and Financial Management Needed

What GAO Found

The Kennedy Center has achieved its goal of renovating the Opera House, Concert Hall, and plaza-level public spaces, and installed a building wide fire alarm system, but each of these projects exceeded its budget estimates, sometimes by substantial amounts. Project cost growth resulted from modifications made during the renovation process, due, in part, to the Kennedy Center's lack of knowledge of the building's site conditions. Unexpected site conditions and related challenges make renovation projects, like those undertaken by the Kennedy Center, difficult to complete. Modifications led to overtime charges paid to meet tight construction schedules. Also, the Center may have paid higher costs than necessary by negotiating the value of contract modifications after work was completed. The Kennedy Center lacks comprehensive policies and procedures related to capital improvements that could impact its ability to safeguard federal funds. Furthermore, our review of communication documents showed that Kennedy Center management did not always provide timely or accurate information on project cost growth and delays to its Board of Trustees or Congress.

Cost Over Initial Budgets for Selected Kennedy Center Projects



Source: GAO analysis of Kennedy Center data.

The Kennedy Center has worked to address fire life safety deficiencies, and improvements are ongoing, but after requesting and obtaining funds from Congress the Kennedy Center decided against its plan to meet fire safety code requirements by installing sprinklers and smoke evacuation systems in the Grand Foyer, the Hall of States, and the Hall of Nations. Furthermore, the Kennedy Center did not have its decisions independently reviewed nor did it clearly inform its Board or Congress that it was not spending the funds as planned. Two additional areas of concern are (1) doors in critical areas do not provide adequate protection from fire, and (2) the Millennium Stages have exit deficiencies and lack sprinkler and smoke evacuation systems required by code. The Kennedy Center has complied with disabled access requirements in renovated areas of the Center.