ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

Committed, Sustained Leadership Needed to Continue Progress

Why GAO Did This Study

The Architect of the Capitol (AOC) is responsible for the operation, maintenance, renovation, and new construction of the Capitol Hill complex, including the U.S. Capitol, the Library of Congress, and the Senate and House Office Buildings. In 2003, at the request of Congress, GAO issued a management review of AOC that contained recommendations designed to help AOC become more strategic and accountable. Subsequently, Congress directed GAO to monitor AOC's progress in implementing recommendations. This is the fourth status report on AOC's progress and summarizes GAO's assessment of AOC's overall progress and remaining actions in becoming more strategic and accountable, including AOC's responses to specific recommendations GAO made in January 2003 and subsequently. To assess AOC's progress, GAO analyzed AOC documents; interviewed AOC officials; and relied on the results of related GAO reviews, including reviews of the Capitol Visitor Center (CVC).

AOC generally agreed with GAO's assessment of its progress, but noted that 2 additional recommendations—1 on financial management practices and 1 on collecting worker safety data— should be considered implemented. GAO acknowledges AOC's efforts in these areas, but maintains that further steps are necessary to fully implement these recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-407.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Terrell Dorn at (202) 512-6923 or dornt@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

AOC has made progress in becoming more strategic and accountable, but critical actions are needed to sustain and build on this progress. To date, AOC has filled key leadership positions, revised its strategic plan, improved communication, and continued initiatives to improve internal controls and accountability. AOC is thus establishing a foundation for becoming more strategic and accountable. However, completing the transition to new leadership—including the transition to a new Architect of the Capitol (a position that is now vacant)—and other actions remain to bring about lasting improvements in performance. For example, AOC must integrate nine new managers into the agency while ensuring its continued progress. In addition, the Chief Operating Officer faces the challenge of performing the Architect of the Capitol's responsibilities and his own during the CVC project's completion and AOC's management transition. Furthermore, although AOC has revised its strategic plan to better focus on its mission and goals, it has not determined whether it can better deliver the services that support its mission and goals through outsourcing or in-house resources. Finally, a continued focus on communication and other areas that are key to greater internal control and accountability—including financial, information technology, and project management—is needed to sustain and further AOC's progress to date. For example, full implementation of AOC's cost accounting system—a key financial management initiative—is needed to more accurately track facilities management cost measures. Improvements in project management could be achieved, in part, by applying lessons learned in managing the CVC project.

Appendix I of this report summarizes AOC's progress on recommendations that GAO has made since January 2003 to help AOC establish a strong strategic management and accountability framework. This year, AOC has implemented 21 recommendations. For example, AOC implemented 6 of the strategic management recommendations, including the development of congressional protocols and the involvement of stakeholders in developing the revised strategic plan. For project management, AOC implemented 7 recommendations, including the development of performance measures. Implementing these 21 recommendations brings the total number of implemented or closed recommendations to 43 out of 64.

AOC's Progress in Implementing GAO's Recommendations

Issue area	Implemented or closed recommendations	Total recommendations
Strategic management	13	14
Human capital management	7	9
Financial management	1	4
Information technology management	3	7
Project management	9	13
Facilities management	0	2
Worker safety	5	8
Capitol Power Plant management	1	3
Recycling	4	4
Total	**43**	**64**

Source: GAO analysis of AOC data.

United States Government Accountability Office