



Highlights of [GAO-04-950T](#), a report to Chairman, Committee on Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Telework has received significant attention in Congress and the executive branch and is an increasingly popular flexibility among federal employees. In July 2003 GAO reported on the use of telework in the federal government (GAO-03-679). Not only is telework an important flexibility from the perspective of employees, it has also become a critical management tool for coping with potential disruptions in the workplace, including terrorism.

This statement highlights key practices GAO research identified as important to implementing successful telework initiatives. The statement then discusses efforts to coordinate and promote telework, and concludes with a review of OPM's May 2004 telework report.

What GAO Recommends

This testimony includes no new recommendations, but it does underscore prior GAO recommendations to which additional attention is needed. GAO has encouraged individual agency leaders to make use of all appropriate administrative authorities available to them, such as the telework initiative, to manage their people for results.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-950T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact J. Christopher Mihm at (202) 512-6806 or mihmj@gao.gov.

HUMAN CAPITAL

Key Practices to Increasing Federal Telework

What GAO Found

Much work remains to ensure that federal employees have the opportunity to telework. While individual agencies, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and the General Services Administration (GSA) are making progress, each has a role to play in expanding the use of this flexibility. Federal agencies can do more to ensure that as many employees as appropriate are provided an opportunity to participate in telework. The testimony highlights:

- To help agencies develop and implement a successful telework program, GAO identified a set of key practices for the implementation of successful telework programs at the agency level in our July 2003 report. However, some of the practices in particular merited additional attention from the agencies we examined. For example, agencies we studied had not provided full funding to meet the needs of their telework programs, nor had all established eligibility criteria to ensure that teleworkers were selected on an equitable basis. Obtaining support from top management for telework, addressing managerial resistance to the flexibility, and providing training and information on the telework program were also identified as challenges at the agencies we examined.
- As lead agencies for the governmentwide telework initiative, both GSA and OPM offer services and resources to support and encourage telework in the federal government. GAO noted in its July 2003 report that although OPM and GSA share responsibilities for the governmentwide telework initiative, past efforts were not well coordinated. In an October 2003 letter describing progress made since the issuance of the GAO report, GSA and OPM reported that a number of actions had been taken to improve coordination. The letter notes that the agencies signed a memorandum of understanding to reflect their unified approach to implementing telework. Revisions to the telework Web site were also noted in the letter, including the posting of a revised telework guide for managers. Additionally, training modules for managers and employees were developed. GAO did not evaluate how well coordinated efforts have been since the issuance of the July 2003 report.
- OPM's May 2004 telework report indicated that the percentage of eligible employees teleworking did not increase between 2002 and 2003, remaining at approximately 14 percent. This outcome, in light of the increased action taken by OPM and GSA, suggests that individual agencies, OPM, and GSA should seek to more fully understand the barriers to telework and take action to remove those barriers.