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Highlights

Highlights of GAO-07-987, a report to congressional committees

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The National Archives and Records Administration's Fiscal Year 2007 Expenditure Plan

Why GAO Did This Study

Since 2001, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has been working to acquire the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) system. As required by law, the agency submitted its fiscal year 2007 expenditure plan to congressional appropriations committees, seeking the release of $23.4 million for the development of the system.

GAO's objectives in reviewing the expenditure plan were to (1) determine the extent to which the expenditure plan satisfied the legislative conditions specified in the appropriations act; (2) determine the extent to which NARA has implemented GAO's prior recommendations; and (3) provide any other observations about the expenditure plan and the ERA acquisition. GAO reviewed the expenditure plan and analyzed it against the legislative conditions and assessed NARA's progress in addressing prior recommendations.

In May 2007, GAO briefed staff of the Senate subcommittee and sent a copy of the briefing to the House and Senate subcommittee staffs.

What GAO Recommends

At this time, GAO is making no recommendations. However, continued agency attention will be important to help ensure the success of the project. In commenting on a draft of this report, the Archivist provided an update concerning the ERA cost and schedule.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-987.

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

As of May 2007, NARA's fiscal year 2007 expenditure plan fully satisfied five of the six legislative conditions and partially satisfied the remaining condition—that ERA conform to the agency's life cycle methodology. This methodology requires, among other things, that the agency develop an agencywide risk management plan. The agency developed this plan; however, it had not been approved by senior staff and signed by the Archivist of the United States. This plan was subsequently approved in July 2007.

NARA implemented all prior GAO recommendations. The agency (1) established a baseline and target architecture, a plan to transition from the baseline to the target, and an architecture review board; (2) revised four of five key acquisition policies and plans to comply with appropriate standards; and (3) developed a fiscal year 2007 expenditure plan that contains an appropriate level and scope of information needed for the Congress to understand its plans and commitments relative to system capabilities, benefits, schedules, and costs.

The ERA project experienced schedule delays and cost increases. According to NARA's analysis, the project was about 2 months behind schedule as of May 2007. In addition, the contractor projected the estimated cost at completion of the initial operating capability (IOC) to be about $570,000 over budget. Factors contributing to the delays included low productivity of contractor software programmers, difficulties in securing an acceptable contract to prepare the site that is to house the system, and problems with software integration. Although the contractor took actions to address the factors causing these delays and overruns, NARA concluded that the project schedule should be revised so that only limited functionality would be available by the initial operating capability date of September 7, 2007.

Subsequent to the GAO briefing, NARA officials and the contractor reported that the project had experienced additional delays and overruns. Thus, as of July 2007, the estimated date for completion of the IOC is delayed to March 31, 2008. NARA officials and the contractor project the estimated cost at completion the initial operating capability to be between $8 and $12 million over budget. They are also in the process of negotiating additional mitigating actions needed and changes to the project's cost and schedule.