



Highlights of [GAO-06-823](#), a report to congressional committees

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Immigration and Customs Enforcement Is Beginning to Address Infrastructure Modernization Program Weaknesses but Key Improvements Still Needed

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) fiscal year 2005 appropriations act provided \$39.6 million for Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) program to modernize its information technology (IT) infrastructure. The goals of the program—which consists of seven projects and is referred to as Atlas—include improving information sharing and strengthening security. As mandated by the appropriations act, the department is to develop and submit for approval an expenditure plan for Atlas that satisfies certain legislative conditions, including a review by GAO. In performing its review of the Atlas plan, GAO was asked to (1) determine whether the plan satisfies certain legislative conditions, (2) determine the status of our prior recommendations, and (3) provide any other observations about the plan and management of the program.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that DHS minimize Atlas program risks by, among other things, developing and implementing project plans consistent with elements of effective project planning. DHS did not provide additional substantive comments on this report recognizing that ICE had already agreed with the briefing contained in this report.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-823.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Randolph C. Hite at (202) 512-3439 or hiter@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

DHS's fiscal year 2005 expenditure plan, related documentation, and program officials' statements and commitments, satisfy or partially satisfy the legislative conditions set forth by Congress, including (1) meeting the capital planning and investment control review requirements established by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB); (2) complying with the DHS enterprise architecture; (3) complying with the acquisition rules, requirements, guidelines, and system acquisition management practices of the federal government; and (4) being reviewed and approved by DHS's Investment Review Board, the Secretary of DHS, and OMB.

A number of steps to address prior GAO recommendations are in progress or have been partially implemented (see table). For example, ICE issued a revised cost-benefit analysis in December 2005. However, this analysis did not address all key ICE mission requirements, such as sharing law enforcement and immigration information with external partners. In addition, it issued an updated security plan in April 2006, but the plan was missing important security management practices, or only partially addressed them.

Status of Actions to Implement GAO's Open Recommendations for Atlas

GAO recommendation	Status
1. Revise and update cost-benefit analysis.	Partially complete
2. Ensure program office is operational.	In progress
3. Develop and implement updated security plan and privacy impact assessment.	Partially complete
4. Develop and implement rigorous performance management practices.	In progress
5. Ensure that future expenditure plans fully disclose Atlas capabilities, schedule, cost and benefits to be delivered, as well as the acquisition strategy.	In progress

Source: GAO.

GAO also observed that current Atlas project plans do not include essential elements, such as a work breakdown structure of tasks to be performed, identification of project costs, analysis of constraints and risks, and review and approval by management and key stakeholders.

Thus, there is much that remains to be accomplished to minimize the risks associated with the Atlas program's capacity to deliver promised IT infrastructure capabilities and benefits on time and within budget. Given that hundreds of millions of dollars are to be invested, it is essential that DHS follow through on commitments to build the capacity to effectively manage the program. Moreover, expenditure plans need to relay reliable information about program commitments, including the benefits to be produced, the capabilities to be delivered, and the cost and schedule estimates to be met. By not providing this information in its fiscal year 2005 expenditure plan, the department is impeding congressional oversight and not providing a meaningful basis for measuring performance and ensuring accountability.