

January 2003

# ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

## Management and Accountability Framework Needed for Organizational Transformation



G A O

Accountability \* Integrity \* Reliability



Highlights of GAO-03-231, a report to the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, Senate Committee on Appropriations, and the Subcommittee on Legislative, House Committee on Appropriations

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) plays an important role in supporting the effective functioning of the Congress and its neighboring institutions. With a budget of \$426 million, AOC is responsible for the maintenance, renovation, and new construction of all buildings and grounds within the Capitol Hill complex. GAO was mandated by the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2002, to conduct a comprehensive management review of AOC's operations to help identify improvements in strategic planning, organizational alignment, and strategic human capital management to help AOC better achieve its mission and to address long-standing program issues. To address these objectives, GAO reviewed AOC's legislative authority and internal documents, interviewed key AOC officials and senior managers, and conducted employee focus groups.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that AOC establish a strategic management and accountability framework, including strong management infrastructure and controls, to drive its agency transformation effort and to address long-standing program issues.

AOC generally agreed with our recommendations and is developing a plan to implement them.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-231](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-231)

To view the full report, 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](mailto:mihmj@gao.gov).

# ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

## Management and Accountability Framework Needed for Organizational Transformation

### What GAO Found

AOC is an agency working to transform itself and has planned management improvement efforts, such as a new strategic planning process, to help it make this transition. GAO found that without AOC establishing a management and accountability framework, it might have difficulty leading and executing its organizational transformation. Leading organizations undergoing transformation efforts draw from the following management and accountability components: (1) demonstrating top leadership commitment to organizational transformation, (2) involving key stakeholders in developing an organizationwide strategic plan, (3) using the strategic plan as the foundation for aligning activities, core processes, and resources to support mission-related outcomes, (4) establishing a communications strategy to foster transformation and create shared expectations and build involvement, (5) developing annual goals and a system for measuring performance, and (6) managing human capital and information technology strategically to drive transformation and to support the accomplishment of agency goals.

To support its transformation initiatives and to cope with shifting environments and evolving demands and priorities, AOC also should continue to develop its management infrastructure and controls. Establishing this management and accountability framework and further developing its management infrastructure and controls can also help AOC improve performance in program areas of long-standing concern to AOC's employees and congressional stakeholders—worker safety, project management, and recycling.

### AOC's mission is to preserve and enhance the Capitol and related facilities



Source: AOC; Hill International, Inc.

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**Abbreviations**

AOC	Office of the Architect of the Capitol
BCA	building condition assessment
CAA	Congressional Accountability Act of 1995
CFO	chief financial officer
COO	chief operating officer
DOD	Department of Defense
EAC	Employee Advisory Council
EEO	equal employment opportunity
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act
GSA	General Services Administration
HRMD	Human Resource Management Division
IT	information technology
OAP	Office of Attending Physician
OCODC	Office of the Chief of Design and Construction
OIRM	Office of Information Resource Management
OOC	Office of Compliance
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PHS	Public Health Service
PIC	Project Information Center
PMBOK	<i>A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge</i>
PMI	Project Management Institute

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United States General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

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January 17, 2003

The Honorable Robert F. Bennett  
Chairman  
The Honorable Richard J. Durbin  
Ranking Minority Member  
Subcommittee on Legislative Branch  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate

The Honorable Jack Kingston  
Chairman  
The Honorable James P. Moran  
Ranking Minority Member  
Subcommittee on Legislative  
Committee on Appropriations  
House of Representatives

In response to the management review of the Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) mandated by the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2002, this report discusses (1) improvements in strategic planning, organizational alignment, and strategic human capital management that would help AOC better achieve its mission and accomplish its strategic goals, (2) actions that AOC can take in other key areas of its management infrastructure, such as financial and information technology management, to improve its performance and better accomplish its goals, and (3) best practices and specific improvements in three key program areas of long-standing concern to AOC's congressional stakeholders and employees—worker safety, project management, and recycling. This report contains recommendations to the Architect of the Capitol for establishing a strategic management and accountability framework, including strong management infrastructure and controls, to drive its agency transformation effort and to address long-standing program issues.

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Please call me at (202) 512-6806 if you or your staff members have any questions concerning this report. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Christopher Mihm". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "M".

J. Christopher Mihm  
Director, Strategic Issues

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# Executive Summary

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## Purpose

The Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) plays an important role in supporting the effective functioning of the Congress and its neighboring institutions. With a budget of \$426 million, AOC is responsible for the maintenance, renovation, and new construction of all buildings and grounds within the Capitol Hill complex, such as the Capitol building, the House and Senate office buildings, the Library of Congress, and the Supreme Court. The historic nature and high-profile use of many of these buildings creates a complex environment in which to carry out this mission. AOC must also perform its duties in an environment that requires balancing the divergent needs of congressional leadership, committees, individual members of the Congress, congressional staffs, and the visiting public. The challenges of operating in this environment were compounded by the events of September 11, 2001, and their aftermath, including the October 2001 discovery of anthrax bacteria on Capitol Hill, and the resulting need for increased security and safety.

This review was mandated by the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2002.<sup>1</sup> Senate and House Appropriations Committee reports also asked GAO to help address certain management shortcomings at AOC that needed attention, with a focus on recommending solutions.<sup>2</sup> In April 2002, at the request of the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, Senate Committee on Appropriations, GAO submitted a statement for the record for AOC's appropriations hearing that outlined its preliminary observations on what AOC needed to do to improve its management. This report completes GAO's review. This report discusses (1) improvements in strategic planning, organizational alignment, and strategic human capital management that would help AOC better achieve its mission and accomplish its strategic goals, (2) actions that AOC can take in other key areas of its management infrastructure, such as financial and information technology management, to improve its performance and better accomplish its goals, and (3) best practices and specific improvements in three key program areas of long-standing concern to AOC's employees and congressional stakeholders—worker safety, project management, and recycling. This report also discusses actions taken to date by AOC and GAO recommendations for further enhancements. As mandated by the

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<sup>1</sup>Section 129(d) of Pub. L. No. 107-68, Nov. 12, 2001.

<sup>2</sup>Sen. Rep. No. 107-37 at 28, 29 (2001) and H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 107-148 at 73 (2001).



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Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2002, AOC is to develop a management improvement plan to address GAO's recommendations.<sup>3</sup>

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## Background

Organizationally, AOC is made up of a centralized staff that performs administrative functions and "jurisdictions" that handle their own day-to-day operations. These jurisdictions include the Senate Office Buildings, the House Office Buildings, the U.S. Capitol Buildings, the Library of Congress Buildings and Grounds, the Supreme Court Buildings and Grounds, the Capitol Grounds, the Capitol Power Plant, and the U.S. Botanic Garden. There are over 2,300 employees in AOC; nearly 1 out of every 3 employees is a member of a union. New requirements to meet long-standing labor and safety laws have added to the complexity of AOC operations. For example, the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (CAA) applied 11 civil rights, labor, and workplace laws to AOC as well as other legislative branch agencies.<sup>4</sup> CAA also requires AOC to meet standards set by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, which applied new life and fire safety codes, as well as other building codes, to the agency.

Across the federal government, fundamental questions are being asked about what government does; how it does it; and in some cases, who should do the government's business. The answers to these questions are driving agencies to transform their organizational cultures. AOC confronts many of these same issues. The experiences of successful major change management initiatives in large private and public sector organizations suggests that such initiatives can often take at least 5 to 7 years until they are fully implemented and the related cultures are transformed in a sustainable manner. To achieve such organizational transformation, agencies across the government will need to (1) elevate attention on management issues and transformation, (2) integrate various key management functions and transformation responsibilities, and (3) institutionalize accountability for addressing management issues and leading transformation.

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<sup>3</sup>Section 129(d) of Pub. L. No. 107-68, Nov. 12, 2001.

<sup>4</sup>Pub. L. No. 104-1, Jan. 23, 1995.

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## Results in Brief

AOC has demonstrated a commitment to organizational transformation through the management improvements it has planned and under way, such as commencing a new strategic planning effort that focuses on developing mission-critical goals. To build upon this commitment and achieve the magnitude of change needed, AOC needs to establish a management and accountability framework as the centerpiece of its transformation efforts. This framework includes (1) demonstrating top leadership commitment to organizational transformation, (2) involving key congressional and other stakeholders in developing an AOC-wide strategic plan, (3) using the strategic plan as the foundation for aligning activities, core processes, and resources to support mission-related outcomes, (4) establishing a communications strategy to foster transformation and create shared expectations and build involvement, (5) developing annual goals and a system for measuring performance, and (6) strategically managing AOC's human capital and information technology to drive transformation and to support the accomplishment of agency goals.

To support its transformation initiatives and to cope with shifting environments and evolving demands and priorities, AOC also should continue to develop its management infrastructure and controls in the areas of human capital, financial, and information technology management. Establishing a management and accountability framework and further developing its management infrastructure and controls can also help AOC improve the performance of program areas of long-standing concern to AOC's employees and congressional stakeholders—worker safety, project management, and recycling.

The change under way at AOC will require further long-term and concerted action on the part of AOC, the Congress, and other interested parties. Organizational transformation does not come quickly or easily. However, such transformation is possible through focused efforts and careful and thorough planning. In that regard, GAO makes recommendations to the Architect of the Capitol, and suggests that the Congress consider actions directed at supporting this transformation and improving the strategic and operational management of AOC. In responding to this report, AOC generally agreed with our findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

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## Principal Findings and Recommendations for Agency Action

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### Strategic Management Framework Needed to Achieve Transformation

AOC has demonstrated a commitment to organizational transformation through the management improvements it has planned and under way. AOC has recently (1) commenced a new strategic planning effort that focuses on developing mission-critical goals, (2) drafted congressional protocols patterned after GAO's protocols, (3) conducted client surveys in the Capitol, House, Senate, and Library of Congress jurisdictions, and (4) implemented a senior executive performance evaluation system.

To better serve the Congress, central AOC management needs to build the capability to define goals, set priorities, ensure follow-through, monitor progress, and establish accountability for results. Therefore, as a first priority, AOC needs to establish a management and accountability framework to help it lead and execute such organizational transformation. This framework includes (1) demonstrating top leadership commitment to organizational transformation, (2) involving key congressional and other stakeholders in developing an AOC-wide strategic plan, (3) using the strategic plan as the foundation for aligning activities, core processes, and resources to support mission-related outcomes, (4) establishing a communications strategy to foster transformation and create shared expectations and build involvement, (5) developing annual goals and a system for measuring performance, and (6) strategically managing AOC's human capital to support the accomplishment of agency goals.

Making such fundamental changes in AOC's culture will require a long-term, concerted effort. Given the nature and scope of changes needed and under way at AOC, it can demonstrate that progress is being made along the way by establishing action-oriented implementation goals over the long term, and a time line with milestone dates to track the organization's progress towards those achieving those implementation goals.

To implement the management and accountability framework, GAO found that AOC needs to (1) elevate attention on management issues and organizational transformation, (2) integrate various key management and transformation efforts, and (3) institutionalize accountability for addressing management issues and leading organizational transformation.

To adopt the elements of the management and accountability framework—strategic planning, organizational alignment, communications, performance measurement, and strategic human capital management—and build on efforts under way at AOC, GAO recommends that the Architect of the Capitol

- improve strategic planning and organizational alignment by involving key congressional and other external stakeholders in AOC’s strategic planning efforts and in any organizational changes that may result from these efforts;
- develop a comprehensive strategy to improve internal and external communications by completing the development of congressional protocols with stakeholder involvement and continuing to regularly measure customer satisfaction AOC-wide, among other strategies; and
- strengthen accountability for results by developing annual goals, measuring performance, and strategically managing human capital to support achieving those goals and measures.

The Architect should work with key congressional and other stakeholders to develop this plan.

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## Management Infrastructure and Controls Needed to Support Transformation Initiatives

The effectiveness with which AOC can use the management and accountability framework—leadership, strategic planning, organizational alignment, communications, performance measurement, and strategic human capital management—to achieve organizational transformation will depend in part on its ability to focus on management improvement in its day-to-day operations. A key factor in helping an agency to better achieve its mission and program outcomes and minimize operational problems is to implement appropriate internal control—or management controls. Effective internal control also helps in managing change to cope with shifting environments and evolving demands and priorities.

AOC has recently focused on improving its internal controls in a number of key areas: (1) improved budget formulation and execution processes, (2) begun preparations for producing auditable financial statements, and (3) begun drafting a policy to establish an agencywide approach to information technology management. AOC must continue to assess and evaluate its internal control to assure that the control activities being used

are effective and updated when necessary in the areas of human capital, financial, and information technology management.

GAO found that AOC will need to further develop and consistently apply transparent human capital policies and procedures in the area of leave, awards, and overtime and examine discrepancies in job classification and pay levels across the agency. AOC must also continue improving its approach to financial management to support effective and efficient program management. For example, it must continue to develop and implement effective budget formulation and execution policies and procedures that govern capital projects and operating activities AOC-wide. Finally, AOC will need to adopt an agencywide approach to information technology management to position itself to optimize the contribution of information technology to agency mission performance.

To continue to develop a management infrastructure and strengthen appropriate management controls, GAO recommends that the Architect of the Capitol

- strengthen and consistently implement AOC's human capital policies and procedures, and assess ways in which AOC management could better gather and analyze data on employee relations issues;
- continue to improve AOC's approach to financial management by developing strategies to institutionalize financial management practices that will support budgeting, financial, and program management at AOC; and
- adopt an agencywide approach to information technology management by establishing appropriate leadership and developing the policies, procedures, and tools needed to effectively and efficiently manage information technology resources across the agency.

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**Strategic Management Framework Important for Addressing Long-standing Worker Safety, Project Management, and Recycling Program Issues**

The need for AOC to put in place the management and accountability framework for organizational transformation, and the management infrastructure of financial, information technology, and other controls that support the transformation, cuts across the agency's programs and influences its performance in all areas critical to achieving its mission. Improvements in these areas can also contribute to improving the performance of program areas of long-standing concern to AOC's

employees and congressional stakeholders—worker safety, project management, and recycling.

AOC has made recent progress in all these areas. For example, AOC has (1) drafted a workplace safety and health master plan, (2) consulted with experts on how to structure its request for proposals for developing a long-term master plan for the Capitol Hill complex, and (3) improved recycling program coordination and client outreach.

However, significant opportunities exist to build on this progress to bring about lasting performance improvements. For example, the Architect has declared that safety is the agency's number one priority and established a target for reducing injuries. Nonetheless, relating safety to other pressing priorities and developing a clear strategy for how working safely will become the cultural norm, is still a work in progress at AOC. Similarly, AOC has adopted industry best practices for project management, but implementation is uneven and would benefit from stronger leadership and improvements in performance and financial management, priority setting, communication, and strategic management of human capital. Finally, although AOC has recently made improvements to the House and Senate recycling programs, contamination of recycled materials remains high, and the goals for the overall program remain unclear.

To improve worker safety, GAO recommends that the Architect of the Capitol enhance AOC's ongoing efforts to establish a strategy for the worker safety program by

- establishing safety program goals that are fully integrated with AOC's agencywide goals, performance measures for achieving the goals, and accountability for results;
- improving AOC's capacity to report hazards, conduct investigations and follow-up, and provide employee safety training that fully supports safety program goals;
- clarifying the role of the Congressional Office of Attending Physician to help AOC meet its safety goals; and
- establishing a senior management-level work group that will routinely discuss workers' compensation cases and costs, and developing strategies to reduce these injuries and costs.

To improve project management at AOC, GAO recommends that the Architect of the Capitol

- develop a Capitol Hill complex master plan and complete condition assessments of all buildings and facilities under the jurisdiction of AOC;
- develop a process for assigning project priorities that is based on clearly defined, well-documented, consistently applied, and transparent criteria;
- develop tools to effectively communicate priorities and progress of projects, as a part of a broader communication strategy;
- define project management-related performance measures to achieve mission-critical strategic and annual performance goals; and
- align project management staff and resources with AOC's mission-critical goals.

To improve recycling at AOC, GAO recommends that the Architect of the Capitol adopt a strategic approach to recycling by

- developing a clear mission and goals for AOC's recycling program, with input from key congressional stakeholders, as part of its proposed environmental master plan;
- developing a performance measurement, monitoring, and evaluation system that supports accomplishing AOC's recycling mission and goals; and
- examining the roles, responsibilities, and accountability of AOC's recycling program staff.

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## Matters for Congressional Consideration

The Congress should consider ways in which to elevate, integrate, and institutionalize accountability for addressing management issues and leading organizational transformational at AOC. One option would be to create a statutory Chief Operating Officer or similar position for AOC to improve its executive decision-making capacity and accountability.

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To help ensure that AOC implements its management improvement plan, the Congress should consider requiring AOC to provide periodic status reports on the implementation of its plan, including progress made and milestones not met, and any adjustments to the plan in response to internal or external developments.

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## Agency Comments

On November 20, 2002, we provided to the Architect of the Capitol a draft of this report for comment. We received written comments from the Architect, which are reprinted in appendix II. AOC also provided technical comments that were incorporated where appropriate.

In his written comments, the Architect stated that he is “dedicated to preserving and enhancing the national treasures entrusted to my agency’s care, and to providing high quality service to the Congress and our other clients.” He further stated “the GAO testimony provided in April 2002 and our discussions with GAO regarding the report resulted in our advancing improvement efforts at the [AOC].” The Architect generally agreed with our findings, conclusions, and recommendations and indicated that AOC is developing an implementation plan to adopt recommended management changes and that three themes—strategic planning, communications, and performance management—will be the primary focus of its immediate efforts. The Architect disagreed with our statement that AOC’s 5-year Safety Management Plan was drafted independent of its broader strategic planning effort. Although we believe that this statement was true at the time of our review, AOC has subsequently made efforts to improve the alignment between its draft strategic and worker safety plans. Therefore, we deleted this statement.



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# Introduction

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The Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) is responsible for maintaining and caring for the buildings and grounds primarily located in the Capitol Hill complex, such as the Capitol building, the House and Senate office buildings, the Library of Congress, and the Supreme Court. AOC is also responsible for making all necessary capital improvements within the complex, including major renovations and new construction. The historic nature and high-profile use of many of these buildings creates a complex environment in which to carry out this mission. For example, the U.S. Capitol building is, at once, a national capitol, museum, office building, ceremonial site, meeting center, media base, and tourist attraction. In making structural or other physical changes, AOC must consider the historical significance and the effect on each of these many uses. Further, AOC must perform its duties in an environment that requires balancing the divergent needs of congressional leadership, committees, individual members of the Congress, congressional staffs, and the visiting public. The challenges of operating in this environment were compounded by the events of September 11, 2001, and their aftermath, including the October 2001 discovery of anthrax bacteria on Capitol Hill, and the resulting need for increased security and safety.

Given the important role AOC plays in supporting the effective functioning of the Congress and neighboring institutions, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2002, mandated this review,<sup>1</sup> and Senate and House Appropriations Committee reports directed our review on certain management shortcomings at AOC that needed attention, with a focus on recommending solutions—strategic planning, organizational alignment, strategic human capital management, and financial management.<sup>2</sup> The committees also asked us to assess information technology, and three key program areas—worker safety, recycling, and project management—both to illustrate the management issues we are addressing and to help AOC identify best practices and areas for improvement in these important programs. This report also discusses actions taken to date by AOC and our recommendations for further enhancements. In April 2002, at the request of the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, Senate Committee on Appropriations, we submitted a statement for the record for AOC's appropriations hearing that outlined our preliminary observations on what

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<sup>1</sup>Section 129(d) of Pub. L. No. 107-68, Nov. 12, 2001.

<sup>2</sup>Sen. Rep. No. 107-37 at 28, 29 (2001), and H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 107-148 at 73 (2001).

AOC needed to do to improve its management.<sup>3</sup> This report completes our review. The act also requires AOC to develop a management improvement plan to address our recommendations.<sup>4</sup>

We recognize that this report outlines a large and complex agenda for achieving organizational transformation at AOC, and that AOC cannot tackle all these changes at once. The experiences of successful major change management initiatives in large private and public sector organizations suggest that such initiatives can often take at least 5 to 7 years until they are fully implemented and the related cultures are transformed in a sustainable manner. Nonetheless, this agenda provides the broad landscape of issues confronting AOC and is therefore important to crafting a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing AOC's challenges and setting appropriate priorities, even though by necessity it will have to be phased in over time. By drawing on the full potential of its management team, AOC can begin to take immediate steps on a number of actions, although we recognize that AOC will be able to implement some of these actions more quickly than others.

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## Background

In fiscal year 2002, AOC operated with a budget of \$426 million, which included \$237 million for capital expenditures associated with the construction or major renovation of facilities within the Capitol Hill complex. Organizationally, AOC has a centralized staff that performs administrative functions; what AOC refers to as "jurisdictions" handle their own day-to-day operations. These jurisdictions include the Senate Office Buildings, the House Office Buildings, the U.S. Capitol Buildings, the Library of Congress Buildings and Grounds, the Supreme Court Buildings and Grounds, the Capitol Grounds, the Capitol Power Plant, the U.S. Botanic Garden. There are over 2,300 employees in AOC; nearly 1 out of every 3 employees is a member of a union.

New requirements to meet long-standing labor and safety laws have added to the complexity of AOC operations. For example, the Congressional

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<sup>3</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *Architect of the Capitol: Management and Accountability Framework Needed to Lead and Execute Change*, [GAO-02-632T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 17, 2002).

<sup>4</sup>Section 129(d) of Pub. L. No. 107-68, Nov. 12, 2001.

Accountability Act of 1995 (CAA) applied 11 civil rights, labor, and workplace laws to AOC as well as other legislative branch agencies.<sup>5</sup> In particular, meeting the obligations of labor laws, such as the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute, while overcoming a history of poor labor-management relations has been a struggle. CAA also requires AOC to meet standards set by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, which applied new life and fire safety codes, as well as other building codes, to the agency. CAA established the Office of Compliance (OOC) to enforce the provisions of the act through inspections, investigations, and prosecution of potential violations. In addition, OOC provides education to employees and employing offices, and administers dispute resolution procedures if violations are found.

AOC has demonstrated a commitment to change through the management improvements it has planned and under way. For example, consistent with the preliminary observations we provided in our April statement, AOC has recently

- commenced a new strategic planning effort that focuses on developing mission-critical goals,
- drafted congressional protocols patterned after our protocols,
- conducted client surveys in the Capitol, House, Senate, and Library of Congress jurisdictions,
- implemented a senior executive performance evaluation system,
- improved budget formulation and execution processes,
- begun preparations for producing auditable financial statements,
- begun drafting a policy to establish an agencywide approach to information technology management,
- drafted a workplace safety and health master plan,

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<sup>5</sup>Pub. L. No. 104-1, Jan. 23, 1995.

- consulted with experts on how to structure its request for proposals for developing a long term master plan for the Capitol Hill complex, and
  - improved recycling program coordination and client outreach.
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## Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2002, directed us to conduct a comprehensive management study of AOC's operations. Under this mandate, we address three objectives: (1) What improvements in strategic planning, organizational alignment, and strategic human capital management would help AOC better achieve its mission and accomplish its strategic goals? (2) What actions can the AOC take to improve its overall management infrastructure in other key functional areas, such as financial management and information technology management, to improve its performance and better accomplish its goals? (3) What specific improvement can AOC make in selected program areas, including worker safety, project management, and recycling, vital to achieving its mission?

To address these objectives, we have been working constructively with AOC managers to understand their complex operating environment and the long-standing challenges they must address. In addition to the standard audit methods described below, as part of our constructive engagement, we provided AOC briefings and GAO reports on best practices in the areas we reviewed. For example, at AOC's request, GAO officials provided briefings on our own approach to strategic planning and establishing congressional protocols along with copies of our strategic planning and protocol documents. In addition, we provided GAO reports on areas such as strategic human capital management<sup>6</sup> and world-class financial management<sup>7</sup> and other guidance on GAO's human capital policies and procedures. Finally, upon request we provided details of our focus group methodology discussed below to assist AOC in replicating our approach in AOC jurisdictions we did not cover.

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<sup>6</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *A Model of Strategic Human Capital Management, Exposure Draft*, [GAO-02-373SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 2002).

<sup>7</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *Executive Guide: Creating Value Through World-class Financial Management*, [GAO/AIMD-00-134](#) (Washington, D.C.: April 2000).

For each of the management functions and the worker safety and health, recycling, and project management programs, we reviewed AOC's legislative authority and internal AOC documents, including selected AOC policies and procedures, internal and consultant reports on AOC management issues, reports by the Inspector General and GAO, and other reports on best practices.

To obtain management's perspective on the objectives, we interviewed key senior AOC officials, including the Architect; the Chief of Staff; the Assistant Architect; the Chief Financial Officer; the General Counsel; the Deputy Chief of Staff; the Director of Safety, Fire, and Environmental Programs; the Director of the Office of Labor Relations; and the Acting Chief of the Office of Design and Construction. We also interviewed AOC officials at the next level of management responsible for strategic planning, human resources, information technology, budget, accounting, project management, architecture, engineering, construction, and recycling. We also spoke to senior AOC managers and toured facilities in the following AOC jurisdictions: U.S. Capitol Building, House Office Building, Senate Office Buildings, Library Buildings and Grounds, Supreme Court, Capitol Power Plant, and the U.S. Botanic Garden. We interviewed the Inspector General to discuss the work his office had done on the management areas we reviewed.

In addition to formal interviews, AOC allowed us to attend as observers a number of key internal meetings, including two budget review meetings on budget formulation and execution progress and issues for two jurisdictions, three quarterly capital project review meetings to discuss the status of AOC projects, an August 2002 National Academy of Sciences workshop to discuss Capitol Hill complex-wide master planning efforts, and a June 2002 workshop by DuPont Safety Resources on strategies for safety excellence.

To obtain additional perspectives on the areas examined as part of our review and as an initial effort to support AOC planned efforts to begin to routinely obtain employee feedback, we used focus groups to gather employee and supervisor perceptions, opinions, and attitudes about working at AOC. For our focus groups at AOC, we were interested in obtaining (1) employees' views of what aspects of working at AOC were going well or needed improvement, (2) whether employees had the resources needed to perform their jobs, and (3) employees' perspectives on AOC's worker safety program. We contracted with the firm of Booz|Allen|Hamilton to conduct the focus groups and summarize and

analyze the results. We conducted 13 of these focus groups with employees randomly selected from the House and Senate Office Building jurisdictions, Capitol Power Plant, Senate Restaurants, and the Construction Management Division. We selected employees from these parts of AOC in accord with our specific review areas of worker safety and project management and also because they contained some of the largest employee populations. The other two focus groups consisted of randomly selected employee supervisors from the House and Senate jurisdictions. In all, we invited 200 employees to attend 15 focus groups and 127 employees participated.

To obtain a better understanding of project management at AOC, we also conducted a focus group with full-time AOC project managers. For the focus group, we asked about what is working well at the AOC in project management and where there might be areas for improvement. We also discussed (1) the project management process at AOC, (2) the project management environment, and (3) resources and tools used in performing project management duties at AOC. We invited 14 project managers and 8 attended. A more detailed discussion of our focus group objectives, scope, and methodology, including a list of our focus group questions is contained in appendix I.

To further understand how project management works at AOC, we conducted two in-depth case studies of projects currently under way—the relocation of the Senate Recording Studio and the modernization of the coal handling system at the Capitol Power Plant. We selected these case studies using the following criteria: both were drawn from AOC’s “hot”—or high priority—projects, one was a medium project and one was a large project, and one had a project manager from the central Assistant Architect’s office and the other from a jurisdiction. In addition both projects were on a critical path to the completion of other high priority AOC projects. Our methodology entailed reviewing relevant project documents as well as interviewing key internal and external stakeholders for the projects.

On November 20, 2002, we provided to the Architect of the Capitol a draft of this report for comment. We received written comments from the Architect. The Architect’s comments are reprinted in appendix II. AOC also provided technical comments that were incorporated where appropriate.

In his written comments, the Architect stated that he is “dedicated to preserving and enhancing the national treasures entrusted to my agency’s care, and to providing high quality service to the Congress and our other clients.” He further stated “the GAO testimony provided in April 2002 and our discussions with GAO regarding the report resulted in our advancing improvement efforts at the [AOC].” The Architect generally agreed with our findings, conclusions, and recommendations and indicated that AOC is developing an implementation plan to adopt recommended management changes and that three themes—strategic planning, communications, and performance management—will be the primary focus of its immediate efforts. The Architect disagreed with our statement that AOC’s 5-year Safety Management Plan was drafted independent of its broader strategic planning effort. Although we believe that this statement was true at the time of our review, AOC has subsequently made efforts to improve the alignment between its draft strategic and worker safety plans. Therefore, we deleted this statement. We performed our work in Washington, D.C., from November 2001 through September 2002 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.

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# Strategic Management Framework Needed to Achieve Transformation

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The Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) recognizes that because of the nature of the challenges and demands it faces, change will not come quickly or easily. AOC therefore must ensure that it has the policies, procedures, and people in place to effectively implement the needed changes. That is, to serve the Congress, central AOC management needs the capability to define goals, set priorities, ensure follow-through, monitor progress, and establish accountability. The themes we discuss in this chapter focus on building the capability to lead and execute organizational transformation. Therefore, as a first priority, AOC needs to establish a management and accountability framework by, among other things,

- demonstrating top leadership commitment to organizational transformation;
- involving key congressional and other stakeholders in developing its strategic plan;
- using its strategic plan as the foundation for aligning its activities, core processes, and resources to support mission-related outcomes;
- establishing a communications strategy to foster change and create shared expectations and build involvement;
- developing annual goals and a system for measuring performance; and
- strategically managing its human capital to drive transformation and to support the accomplishment of agency goals.

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## AOC Needs to Undergo Organizational Transformation

Across the federal government, fundamental questions are being asked about what government does; how it does it; and in some cases, who should do the government's business. The answers to these questions are driving agencies to transform their organizational cultures. This organizational transformation entails shifts from

- processes to results,
- stovepipes to matrixes,
- hierarchical to flatter and more horizontal structures,
- an inward focus to an external (customer and stakeholder) focus,



- micro-management to employee empowerment,
- reactive behavior to proactive approaches,
- avoiding new technologies to embracing and leveraging them,
- hoarding knowledge to sharing knowledge,
- avoiding risk to managing risk, and
- protecting turf to forming partnerships.

AOC confronts many of these same issues. For example, to serve its clients, AOC is organized along jurisdictional lines—stovepipes that are not fully matrixed. In this environment, AOC faces the challenge of how best to marshal its jurisdiction-based resources to address the strategic planning, performance management, human capital, project management, and other functional issues that cut across the organization. AOC also faces the challenge of how to shift from reacting to problems as they arise to getting in front of the problems to address root causes, while still responding to the day-to-day service needs of its clients. Change is always risky, but continuing to address problems with only short-term tactical solutions can be even riskier—AOC needs to develop the capacity to identify the risks to achieving its goals and manage them before crises occur.

Making such fundamental changes in AOC’s culture will require a long-term, concerted effort. The experiences of successful major change management initiatives in large private and public sector organizations suggests that such initiatives can often take at least 5 to 7 years until they are fully implemented and the related cultures are transformed in a sustainable manner. As a result, it is essential to establish action-oriented implementation goals over the long term and a time line with milestone

dates to track the organization's progress towards achieving those implementation goals.<sup>1</sup>

The nature and scope of the changes require the sustained and inspired commitment of the top leadership. Top leadership attention is essential to overcome organizations' natural resistance to change, marshal the resources needed to implement change, and build and maintain the organizationwide commitment to new ways of doing business. On September 9, 2002, the Comptroller General convened a roundtable of executive branch leaders and management experts to discuss the Chief Operating Officer concept and how it might apply within selected federal departments and agencies as one leadership strategy to address certain systemic federal governance challenges.<sup>2</sup> There was general agreement in the roundtable on a number of overall themes concerning the need for agencies to do the following:

- Elevate attention on management issues and organizational transformation. The nature and scope of the changes needed in many agencies require the sustained and inspired commitment of the top political and career leadership.
- Integrate various key management functions and transformation responsibilities. While officials with management responsibilities often have successfully worked together, there needs to be a single point within agencies with the perspective and responsibility—as well as authority—to ensure the successful implementation of functional management and, if appropriate, transformation efforts.
- Institutionalize accountability for addressing management issues and leading transformation. The management weaknesses in some agencies

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<sup>1</sup>For GAO products discussing the elements of successful transformation in more detail, see U.S. General Accounting Office, *Highlights of a GAO Forum on Mergers and Transformation: Lessons Learned for a Department of Homeland Security and Other Federal Agencies* [GAO-03-293SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: November 14, 2002), *Homeland Security: Critical Design and Implementation Issues*, [GAO-02-957T](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 17, 2002), *Managing for Results: Using Strategic Human Capital Management to Drive Transformational Change*, [GAO-02-940T](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 15, 2002), and *FBI Reorganization: Initial Steps Encouraging but Broad Transformation Needed*, [GAO-02-865T](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 21, 2002).

<sup>2</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *Highlights of a GAO Roundtable: The Chief Operating Officer Concept: A Potential Strategy to Address Federal Governance Challenges*, [GAO-03-192SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 4, 2002).

are deeply entrenched and long-standing and will take years of sustained attention and continuity to resolve. In addition, making fundamental changes in agencies' cultures will require a long-term effort.

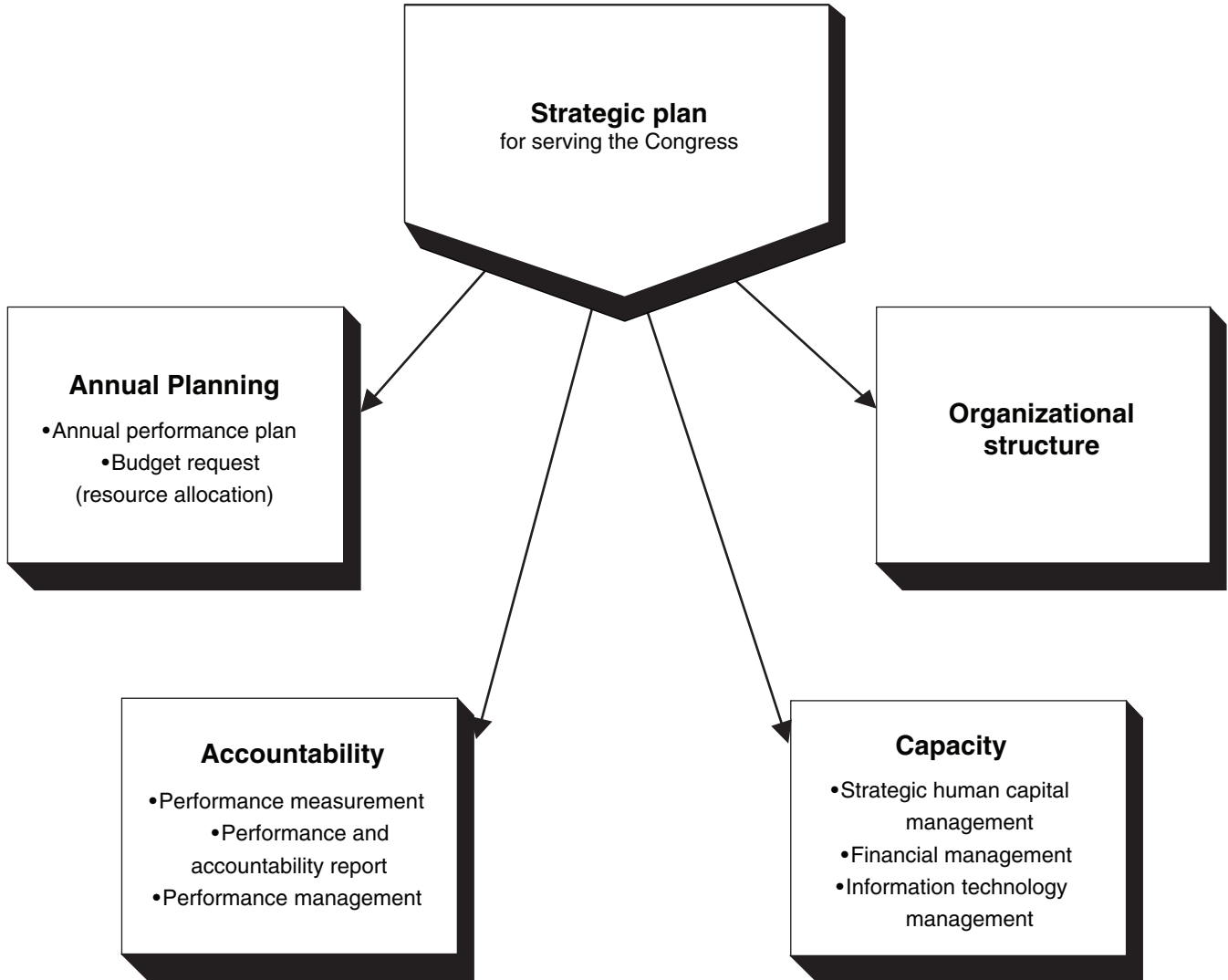
In our April 2002 statement, we noted that we were exploring options to strengthen AOC's executive decision-making capacity and accountability, including creating a Chief Operating Officer (COO) position, which could be responsible for major long-term management and cultural transformation and stewardship responsibilities within AOC. On July 25, 2002, the Senate passed S.2720, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2003, in which it established a Deputy Architect of the Capitol/COO. This official was to be responsible for the overall direction, operation, and management of AOC. In addition to developing and implementing a long-term strategic plan, including a comprehensive mission statement and an annual performance plan, the bill requires that the Deputy Architect be responsible for proposing organizational changes and new positions needed to carry out AOC's mission and strategic and annual performance goals. Regardless of whether the Congress decides to pursue a COO position for AOC, concerted efforts will be needed to elevate, integrate, and institutionalize responsibility for transformation at AOC.

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### Successful Organizations Align Their Activities, Core Processes, and Resources to Support Mission-Related Outcomes

In our prior work, we have concluded that for strategic planning to be done well, organizations must involve their stakeholders and align their activities, core processes, and resources to support mission-related outcomes. We found that leading results-oriented organizations consistently strive to ensure that their day-to-day activities support their organizational missions and move them closer to accomplishing their strategic goals. In practice, these organizations see the production of a strategic plan—that is, a particular document issued on a particular day—as one of the least important parts of the planning process. This is because they believe strategic planning is not a static or occasional event. It is, instead, a dynamic and inclusive process. If done well, strategic planning is continuous and provides the basis for everything the organization does each day. Therefore, it is important for an organization to go through the strategic planning process first, and then align the organization to accomplish the objectives of that plan. Figure 1 shows how an agency's strategic plan serves as the foundation for other strategic management initiatives, such as organizational realignment; performance planning, management, and reporting; and improvements to the capacity of the organization to achieve its goals.

Figure 1: Strategic Plan for Aligning AOC's Activities, Core Processes, and Resources to Support AOC's Mission-Related Outcomes



Source: GAO.

Since 1997, AOC and a number of its subsidiary offices and jurisdictions have attempted to implement strategic planning processes. In 1997, the Architect led the first effort to produce an AOC-wide strategic plan that laid out AOC's mission, vision, core values, strategic priorities, and goals and objectives. Similarly, a number of business units within AOC, such as the Human Resources Management Division, the Office of Inspector General, and the House Office Buildings jurisdiction have developed their own strategic plans, and the Capitol Buildings jurisdiction is developing a new master plan for the Capitol, but these plans do not flow directly from, and therefore are not necessarily consistent with, an AOC-wide plan.

According to AOC officials, turnover in key planning staff and inability to reach agreement on how to measure performance led AOC management to discontinue the AOC-wide strategic planning effort. Subsequently, in 2001 AOC shifted to a scaled-back strategic planning approach that focused on tasks to be completed in a number of key priority areas: (1) develop a process and establish realistic goals and priorities, (2) improve employee support by, for example, addressing space and equipment needs and improving communication about where the organization is going, (3) improve safety, (4) improve project delivery, and (5) focus on quality assurance. In our April 2002 statement, we stated that AOC needed to refocus and integrate its strategic planning efforts to identify and implement mission-critical goals for key results.

Consistent with the preliminary observations in our April 2002 statement, AOC renewed its organizationwide strategic planning process. AOC formed a task force of senior managers to develop a "straw" strategic plan that outlines AOC's mission; vision; core values; and long-term, mission-critical goals for fiscal years 2003 through 2007. When completed, AOC's strategic plan should provide the starting point and serve as a unifying framework for AOC's various business unit and jurisdictional planning efforts. The plan will also position AOC to answer questions such as what fundamental results does AOC want to achieve, what are its long-term goals, and what strategies will it employ to achieve those goals.

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## AOC Needs to Involve Key Congressional and Other Stakeholders in Developing Its Strategic Plan

Successful organizations we studied ensure that their strategic planning fully considers the interests and expectations of their stakeholders. Among the stakeholders of AOC are the appropriations and oversight committees and individual members of the Congress and their staffs, the management and staff of the Supreme Court, the Library of Congress, and the

Congressional Budget Office, AOC employees, and, of course, the American public.

AOC strategic planning efforts have not yet involved such outreach. To date, AOC's task force of senior managers has developed a straw 5-year strategic plan that outlines AOC's mission, vision, core values, and high level goals and objectives for the four strategic focus areas its has identified: strategic management and business initiatives, human capital, facilities management, and project management.<sup>3</sup> Consistent with our constructive engagement with AOC, we have provided several best practice briefings to the agency's leadership as requested. A senior GAO executive in GAO's Office of External Liaison briefed the Architect of the Capitol and other AOC senior managers on October 8, 2002, on our continuing process to update and revise our strategic plan. The briefing emphasized the need for continual stakeholder involvement. As a result, according to AOC, it recently defined its key stakeholders and a methodology for obtaining their feedback on the strategic plan.

In moving forward with its strategic planning efforts, it will be critical that AOC fully engage its stakeholders and obtain their buy-in to provide a strong foundation for any organizational or operating changes that may be needed to implement the plan. In contrast to previous strategic planning initiatives, AOC needs to move beyond a focus on actions to be completed quickly to a broader focus on the mission-critical, long-term goals needed to serve the Congress. Thus, stakeholder involvement will be especially important for AOC to help it ensure that its efforts and resources are targeted at the highest priorities. Just as important, involving stakeholders in strategic planning efforts can help create a basic understanding among the stakeholders of the competing demands that confront most agencies, the limited resources available to them, and how those demands and resources require careful and continuous balancing.

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## An AOC-Wide Communications Strategy Will Help Achieve Mission- Critical Goals

An effective communications strategy is a key success factor for organizations undergoing transformation. In a September 24, 2002, forum convened by the Comptroller General on mergers and transformation issues, there was consensus among the participants that communication is essential to organizational transformation. As we discussed in our April

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<sup>3</sup>Architect of the Capitol, *Draft Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2003-2007* (reflects comments from AOC Management Council meeting held June 18, 2002).

2002 statement, for successful implementation of strategic planning and change management, AOC must develop a comprehensive communications strategy for its internal and external customers. The Architect of the Capitol agrees that improving communications is one of his top priorities. As AOC continues to develop its strategic plan, it should consider how it can build such a communications strategy to help to achieve the organization's mission. It is also important for AOC to assess ways that it can measure the success of this strategy.

AOC continues to strengthen its internal communications by broadening participation in a series of regular meetings among its senior managers for decision making and routine sharing of information. For example, AOC has expanded participation in its management council meetings (biweekly meetings of AOC's senior managers to address agency business issues and priorities) to include jurisdictional superintendents and office directors.

In our April 2002 statement, we noted that AOC could strengthen its internal communications by developing a communications strategy that would help AOC's line employees understand the connection between what they do on a day-to-day basis and AOC's goals and expectations, as well as seek employee feedback and develop goals for improvement. We further stated that one way of implementing such a strategy is to conduct routine employee feedback surveys and/or focus groups. In addition, we continue to believe that AOC could benefit from knowledge sharing to encourage and reward employees who share and implement best practices across the various jurisdictions, teams, and projects.

The need for an organizationwide communications strategy is borne out by the results of the focus groups that we conducted with AOC employees and supervisors from June through July 2002. When we analyzed the results of the focus groups, several themes became apparent.<sup>4</sup> One of the themes cited by focus group participants involved supervisory communications and employee relations—specifically, that communications from supervisor to employee is insufficient. AOC plans to followup on our efforts by seeking employee feedback through focus groups and surveys. In a May 23, 2002, memorandum from the Architect to AOC's employees announcing the focus groups we conducted, the Architect stated that AOC

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<sup>4</sup>Crosscutting themes were found in majority view comments that were common across the jurisdictions, skills sets, and shifts we selected and represented the most pervasive issues coming out of the focus groups.

planned to gather the views of employees from the jurisdictions that we did not cover. Moreover, in its draft strategic plan, AOC noted that employee surveys is one strategy it plans to use to help achieve the human capital strategic goal of attracting, developing, and retaining diverse, satisfied, and highly motivated employees.

AOC must continue to improve its external communications and outreach by (1) further developing congressional protocols, (2) improving its accountability reporting, and (3) continuing to measure customer satisfaction with its services organizationwide. In our April 2002 statement, we encouraged AOC to consider developing congressional protocols, which would help ensure that AOC deals with its congressional customers using clearly defined, consistently applied, and transparent policies and procedures. After working closely with the Congress and after careful pilot testing, we implemented congressional protocols in 1999. In response to our preliminary observations concerning the need for such protocols at AOC, on June 17, 2002, GAO's Director of Congressional Relations and her staff briefed the Architect of the Capitol and AOC's senior managers on lessons learned from GAO's development of congressional protocols. They shared key lessons and success factors from our experiences in developing the protocols—that it is a time-consuming process that involves (1) the personal commitment and direction from the agency head, (2) senior management participation and buy-in, and (3) continuous outreach to and feedback from external stakeholders. As a result of our preliminary observations and our best practices briefing, AOC drafted an initial set of congressional protocols modeled after our congressional protocols. AOC noted that these protocols need to be finalized and distributed. In doing so, and consistent with the approach for AOC's strategic plan, AOC needs to continually involve its stakeholders in developing these protocols.

Although AOC is not required to comply with the 1993 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) because it is a legislative branch agency, we believe that AOC could adopt the reporting elements of GPRA to strengthen accountability and transparency by annually reporting program performance and financial information. For example, although GAO is a legislative branch agency, since fiscal year 1999, we have annually produced performance and accountability reports as well as our future fiscal year performance plan. Such results-oriented accountability reporting would help AOC communicate what it has accomplished, as well as its plans for continued progress to its external stakeholders.



In tandem with AOC's efforts to gather internal feedback from its employees, we noted in April 2002 that AOC's communications strategy should also include tools for gauging customer satisfaction with its services. Customer feedback is an expectation for AOC's senior managers and conducting client surveys is one proposed method in AOC's draft strategic plan to achieve the strategic objective related to facilities management. In June 2002, AOC made a concerted effort to gather the views of some of its clients through a building services customer satisfaction survey for the Senate, House, Capitol building, and Library of Congress jurisdictions, which it plans to conduct annually. The Architect of the Capitol indicated to the survey participants that he will use the results of the survey to initiate service improvements based on the priorities they identify. AOC surveyed a total of 1,883 congressional staff members and received 275 responses. The results of the survey were shared with the jurisdictions' superintendents. AOC plans to report the results to the congressional leadership and members of the Congress and to the Library of Congress. In response, the jurisdictional superintendents are developing "action plans" to address areas of concern that were raised in the surveys. Continued AOC efforts to routinely measure customer satisfaction AOC-wide with both its congressional customers as well as other customers, such as visitors to the Capitol Hill complex, will help AOC identify its service quality strengths, performance gaps, and improvement opportunities.

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### AOC Should Develop Annual Goals and Measure Performance

Another key action AOC needs to take is developing annual performance goals that provide a connection between the long-term strategic goals in the strategic plan and the day-to-day activities of managers and staff members. Measuring performance allows an organization to track the progress it is making toward its goals, gives managers crucial information on which to base their organizational and management decisions, and creates powerful incentives to influence organizational and individual behavior.

AOC's draft strategic plan for 2002 through 2007 describes a number of strategic objectives and outcomes for each of its four focus areas. For example, under Facilities Management, AOC has as a strategic objective to "provide safe, healthy, secure, and clean facilities to our clients." One of the outcomes described for this focus area is "satisfied visitors and occupants." The draft plan also lists a performance goal methodology. In the case of Facilities Management, the methodology is "client surveys," as we discussed above. According to the draft plan, AOC's strategic plan is to be

supplemented by more detailed functional plans that are developed along the same planning time line. These plans are to contain the tactical level actions, performance targets, and milestone data necessary to carry out agency-level strategies. The draft plan states that AOC will use both quantitative and qualitative performance goals and measures to demonstrate progress toward its strategic goals and objectives.

As AOC moves forward in developing its performance goals and measures, it should consider the practices of leading organizations we have studied that were successful in measuring their performance. Such organizations generally applied two practices. First, they developed measures that were (1) tied to program goals and demonstrated the degree to which the desired results were achieved, (2) limited to the vital few that were considered essential to producing data for decision making, (3) responsive to multiple priorities, and (4) responsibility linked to establish accountability for results. Second, the agencies recognized the cost and effort involved in gathering and analyzing data and made sure that the data they did collect were sufficiently complete, accurate, and consistent to be useful in decision making.

Developing measures that respond to multiple priorities is of particular importance for programs operating in dynamic environments where mission requirements must be carefully balanced. This is the case for AOC where the role of protecting and preserving the historic facilities under its control may occasionally conflict with its role of providing maintenance and renovation services to occupants who use the facilities to conduct congressional business. For example, according to AOC officials, following elections, new members of the Congress may ask AOC to modify office suites containing historic architectural features. In those cases, AOC must balance the members' needs for functional office design with its responsibility for protecting the architectural integrity of the rooms. Consequently, AOC, like other organizations, must weigh its mission requirements against its priorities. AOC could better gauge its success by first employing a balanced set of measures that encompasses its diverse responsibilities and requirements, such as maintaining historic facilities and satisfying customers and then benchmarking its results both internally—across its jurisdictions—as well as against other leading organizations with comparable facility management operations.

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## AOC Should Revisit Link between Its Performance Management Systems and Mission-Critical Goals in Its Strategic Plan

Once AOC has reached agreement with its stakeholders on its strategic plan, AOC should revisit both its senior executive and employee performance management systems to strengthen individual accountability to organizational goals and performance. AOC also has not yet aligned and cascaded its performance expectations with its mission-critical goals at all levels of the organization. As our September 2002 report on managing senior executive performance using balanced expectations noted, leading organizations use their performance management systems to achieve results, accelerate change, and facilitate communication throughout the year so that discussions about individual and organizational performance are integrated and ongoing.<sup>5</sup> Thus, effective performance management systems can be (1) strategic tools for organizations to drive internal change and achieve external results and (2) ways to translate organizational priorities and goals into direct and specific commitments that senior executives will be expected to achieve during the year. As we have reported in the past, another critical success factor for creating a results-oriented culture is a performance management system that creates a “line of sight” showing how individual employees can contribute to overall organizational goals.

In June 2002, AOC implemented a senior executive performance management system—informed by our human capital policies and flexibilities and structured around the Office of Personnel Management’s Executive Core qualifications—based on six performance requirements: results-driven, leading change, leading people, equal employment opportunity, business acumen, and building coalitions and communications. The senior executive performance management system is based on a balanced measures approach—an approach to performance measurement that balances organizational results with customer, employee, and other perspectives. As a part of this system, AOC instructed its senior executives to incorporate the agency’s strategic goals and responsibilities into their performance requirements and individual commitments for subsequent evaluation by the Architect.<sup>6</sup> The results-driven performance requirement for AOC’s senior executives provides the basis for results-oriented accountability. The senior executive performance

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<sup>5</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *Results-Oriented Cultures: Using Balanced Expectations to Manage Senior Executive Performance*, GAO-02-966 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 27, 2002).

<sup>6</sup>AOC Performance Review Process for Employees Serving at the Pleasure of the Architect, Order 430-2, June 15, 2002, p. 3.

management system—once aligned with the strategic goals and objectives in AOC’s strategic plan, will serve as an important means for helping AOC to achieve its desired organizational results.

In June 2000, AOC implemented a performance management system—Performance Communication and Evaluation System—for its General Schedule (up to GS-15) and Wage Grade employees (non-bargaining-unit employees). According to the Director of HRMD, approximately 875 bargaining unit and trades employees—about 38 percent of AOC’s workforce—were not covered by these systems. As a next step, AOC should align its employee performance management system with its senior executive system to strengthen individual accountability to organizational goals and performance. For example, as we discuss later in the report, although the incentive to focus on safety has been built into the performance appraisal system for employees, it is not addressed in the senior executive performance evaluation system. While AOC supports this concept, AOC’s senior officials stated that they must balance the need to move forward in aligning these systems with the need to provide continuity in the employee performance management system currently in place.

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## A Competency-Based Approach Can Help AOC Meet Its Human Capital Goals and Objectives

The establishment and integration of organizational competencies into performance management systems is another mechanism to create accountability for achieving mission-critical goals. Competencies, which define the skills or supporting behaviors that employees are expected to exhibit as they effectively carry out their work, can provide a fuller picture of an individual’s performance. Competencies can also help form the basis for an organization’s selection, promotion, training, performance management, and succession planning initiatives. Our August 2002 report on other countries’ performance management initiatives found that the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand are using competencies in their public sector organizations to provide a fuller assessment of individual performance.<sup>7</sup> GAO has also introduced a competency-based performance management system for analysts and specialists, driven by a best practice review of multidisciplinary professional service organizations in both the private and public sectors.

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<sup>7</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *Results-Oriented Culture: Insights for U.S. Agencies from Other Countries’ Performance Management Initiatives*, [GAO-02-862](#) (Washington, D.C.: August 2002).

AOC should consider developing core and technical competencies as the basis for its performance management systems. Agencywide core and technical competencies can serve as guidance for employees as they strive to meet organizational expectations. The core competencies should be derived from AOC's strategic plan and workforce planning efforts and reflect its core values.<sup>8</sup> All employees should be held accountable for achieving core competencies as AOC moves to transform its culture. As we reported in April 2002, AOC has added to its professional workforce by hiring new jurisdictional superintendents, deputy superintendents, budget and accounting officers, a Chief Financial Officer, a Director of Facilities Planning and Programming, and worker safety specialists. As AOC works toward developing a cadre of managerial and professional employees, the development of specific technical competencies can assist the agency in creating and developing a successful leadership and managerial team.

AOC has made progress in establishing supervisory, management, and executive competencies. AOC's Human Resources Management Division (HRMD) has also developed a competency model for its professional and administrative staff. HRMD intends to use this competency model to "reinforce its strategic focus ... and outline the workforce requirements necessary to develop a highly competent cadre of human resources staff dedicated and committed to providing high-quality, timely and responsive human resources services to managers and employees of the AOC."<sup>9</sup> As AOC's efforts move forward, it will identify opportunities to refine and/or develop technical competencies in other managerial and professional areas critical to achieving its mission, including project management, worker safety, financial management, and information technology. AOC can draw from best practices guidance and professional associations and certifications to assist it in developing these technical competencies. Some tools available to identify appropriate competencies are offered by the Joint Financial Management Improvement Program for financial management, and the Project Management Institute for project management.

After AOC has established its core and technical competencies, it can use these competencies as the basis for the performance requirements of its

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<sup>8</sup>AOC's core values are professionalism, respect and diversity, integrity, loyalty, stewardship, teamwork, and creativity.

<sup>9</sup>Office of the Architect of the Capitol, *HRMD's Model for Success*, (Washington, D.C.: October 1999).

performance management systems for both senior executives and employees. The combination of a competency-based performance management system linked to mission-critical goals could provide AOC with a world-class mechanism for holding its workforce accountable for achieving its mission.

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### AOC Needs to Determine Agency Workforce Needs and Assess Progress by Collecting and Analyzing Workforce Data

AOC does not currently collect and analyze workforce data in a comprehensive way that would allow it to determine its workforce needs and to measure its progress in achieving its human capital strategic goals and objectives. The ability to collect and analyze data will greatly enhance AOC's ability to acquire, develop, and retain talent, while allowing it to effectively plan for the needs of its workforce.

High-performing organizations use data to determine key performance objectives and goals that enable them to evaluate the success of their human capital approaches. Reliable data also heighten an agency's ability to manage risk by allowing managers to spotlight areas for attention before crises develop and identify opportunities for enhancing agency results. Collecting and analyzing data are fundamental building blocks for measuring the effectiveness of human capital approaches in support of the mission and goals of an agency. AOC needs to develop a fact-based, comprehensive approach to the collection and analysis of accurate and reliable information across a range of human capital activities. AOC recognizes the need to comprehensively collect and analyze workforce data and has requested about \$1 million in its fiscal year 2003 budget for an automated system to assist it in recruitment, classification, workforce management, and succession planning.

Appropriate data sources and collection methods are necessary to measure progress in meeting AOC's human capital goals and objectives. For example, in order for AOC to determine if it is meeting equal employment opportunity (EEO) and diversity requirements—one of its strategic objectives—it must first establish a reliable data gathering method. We found that AOC does not have comprehensive procedures in place to track its progress to assess whether it is achieving its goal of a diverse workforce. Based on reliable data, AOC can then monitor its progress in meeting EEO requirements and develop appropriate intervention strategies if it is not.

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## Strategic Workforce Planning Would Help AOC Identify Workforce Needs and Develop Strategies to Fill Gaps

AOC can benefit from strategically identifying its current and future workforce needs and then creating strategies to fill any gaps. AOC recognizes the need to conduct workforce planning; however, it has not yet initiated this effort. According to the principles embodied in our *Model of Strategic Human Capital Management*, effective organizations incorporate human capital critical success factors, such as integration and alignment, and data-driven human capital decisions as strategies for accomplishing their mission and programmatic goals and results.<sup>10</sup> Strategic workforce planning and analysis is one such approach that can help AOC to effectively align its resources with agency needs.

Workforce planning efforts linked to strategic program goals and objectives can help the organization to identify such needs as ensuring a diverse labor force, succession planning for scarce skill sets, and other competencies needed in the workforce. For example, in AOC's draft strategic plan, human capital is one of the four strategic planning focus areas. The strategic goal associated with the human capital focus area is to attract, develop, and retain diverse, satisfied, and highly motivated employees with the skills, talents, and knowledge necessary to support the agency's mission. AOC established several strategic objectives to achieve this goal. One of the objectives is to develop a human capital plan designed to acquire, develop, and retain a talented workforce while integrating and aligning human capital approaches, equal opportunity requirements, and organizational performance. Specifically, an effective strategic workforce planning effort will entail

- determining how many employees AOC needs to accomplish its mission-critical goals;
- assessing the skills and competencies of the employees currently available to do this work (develop an employee skills and competencies inventory);
- determining gaps in the number, skills, and competencies of the employees needed to do this work;

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<sup>10</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *A Model of Strategic Human Capital Management*, GAO-02-373SP (Washington, D.C.: March 2002).

- developing a training and recruitment plan for filling the gap, including a focus on the diversity and EEO goals of the organization;
- creating a succession plan to address workforce gaps created by employees exiting the organization; and
- evaluating the contribution that the results of these strategic workforce planning efforts make to achieving mission-critical goals.

AOC does not currently have workforce planning efforts under way, although it does recognize the need to strategically plan for its workforce and has requested funding for four positions in its fiscal year 2003 budget to create an organization and workforce management team within the Office of the Architect.<sup>11</sup> The purpose of this proposed team is to conduct workforce planning and analysis. The team would work collaboratively with AOC's HRMD, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, and other agency managers to focus on skill mix, resource needs, and succession planning.

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## Conclusions

AOC faces many challenges as it seeks to better serve the Congress. This report lays out a complex agenda for organizational transformation at AOC that includes developing the capacity to lead and execute change and becoming a more results-oriented, matrixed, client-focused, and proactive organization. AOC has indicated that it is committed to the long-term effort necessary to improve its service to the Congress and has already begun to make some improvements in areas such as strategic planning, client outreach, and accountability of senior management for achieving results. To make lasting improvements, AOC must continue on this path by

- demonstrating top leadership commitment to long-term change;
- involving key congressional and other stakeholders in developing its strategic plan;
- using its strategic plan as the foundation for aligning activities, core processes, and resources to support mission-related outcomes;

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<sup>11</sup>AOC, *FY 2002 Budget Estimates*, January 2002.



- establishing a communications strategy to foster change and create shared expectations and build involvement;
- developing annual goals and a system for measuring performance; and
- strategically managing its human capital to drive transformation and to support the accomplishment of agency goals.

AOC's needs to improve its executive decision-making capacity and accountability in order to help (1) elevate attention on management issues and transformation, (2) integrate various key management and transformation efforts, and (3) institutionalize accountability for addressing management issues and leading transformation.

One option for addressing the transformation issues that AOC faces is to create a COO or similar position that would be accountable for achieving change at AOC.

Making such fundamental changes in AOC's culture will require a long-term, concerted effort. In developing a management improvement plan to address the recommendations in this report, it is essential that AOC work with key congressional and other stakeholders to establish action-oriented implementation goals over the long term, and a time line with milestone dates to track the organization's progress towards achieving those implementation goals.

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## Recommendations for Agency Action

In order to adopt the elements of the management and accountability framework—strategic planning, organizational alignment, communications, performance measurement, and strategic human capital management—and build on efforts under way at AOC, we recommend that the Architect of the Capitol

- improve strategic planning and organizational alignment, by involving key congressional and other external stakeholders in AOC's strategic planning efforts and in any organizational changes that may result from these efforts;
- develop a comprehensive strategy to improve internal and external communications, by

- providing opportunities for routine employee input and feedback,
- completing the development of congressional protocols by involving stakeholders,
- improving annual accountability reporting through annual performance planning and reporting, and
- continuing to regularly measure customer satisfaction AOC-wide; and
- strengthen performance measurement and strategic human capital management, by
  - developing annual goals and measuring performance,
  - creating a “line of sight” by linking AOC’s senior executive and employee performance management systems to mission-critical goals,
  - establishing agencywide core and technical competencies and holding employees accountable for these competencies as a part of the performance management system,
  - developing the capacity to collect and analyze workforce data, and
  - identifying current and future workforce needs and developing strategies to fill gaps.

In developing a management improvement plan to address the recommendations in this report, we also recommend that the Architect of the Capitol establish action-oriented implementation goals over the long term and a time line with milestone dates to track the organization’s progress towards achieving those implementation goals. The Architect should work with key congressional and other stakeholders to develop this plan.

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## Matters for Congressional Consideration

The Congress should consider ways in which to elevate, integrate, and institutionalize accountability for addressing management issues and leading organizational transformation at AOC. One option would be to create a statutory COO or similar position for AOC to improve its executive decision-making process and accountability.

To help ensure that AOC implements its management improvement plan, the Congress should consider requiring AOC to provide periodic status reports on the implementation of its plan, including progress made and milestones not met, and any adjustments to the plan in response to internal or external developments.

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## Agency Comments

In his comments on this chapter, the Architect agreed with our recommendations and discussed the current efforts AOC has under way in response, including the development of a plan to implement our recommendations. For example, AOC is currently conducting an agencywide strategic planning effort—with stakeholder involvement—focused on developing mission-critical goals and action plans for mission-critical programs, such as facilities management, project management, and human capital. AOC has also formed a team to develop a comprehensive communications strategy to improve its internal and external communications. To strengthen transparency and accountability, as we recommended AOC plans to produce an annual performance plan that outlines the specific actions, milestones, and performance measures planned to achieve its goals for that year and an annual accountability report on progress achieved. In the area of strategic human capital management, AOC stated that it would implement our recommendations in a phased approach that will entail firmly establishing its overall strategy before aligning individual performance management programs to that strategy. AOC plans to explore the benefits of expanding the use of core and technical competencies agencywide, but wants first to ensure that the use of competencies is appropriate for all occupations and jurisdictions. The Architect's comments are reprinted in appendix II.

# Management Infrastructure and Controls Needed to Support Organizational Transformation Initiatives

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The effectiveness with which the Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) can use the management reforms discussed in chapter 2—strategic planning, organizational alignment, performance management, improved internal and external communications, and strategic human capital management—to achieve organizational transformation will depend in part on its ability to focus on management improvement in its day-to-day operations. A key factor in helping an agency to better achieve its mission and program outcomes and identify and manage risks while leveraging opportunities is to implement appropriate internal control.<sup>1</sup> Internal control is a major part of managing an organization. It comprises the plans, methods, and procedures used to meet missions, goals, and objectives and, in doing so, supports performance-based management. Internal control also serves as the first line of defense in safeguarding assets and preventing and detecting errors and fraud. In short, internal control, which is synonymous with management control, helps government program managers achieve desired results through effective stewardship of public resources. Effective internal control also helps in managing change to cope with shifting environments and evolving demands and priorities. As programs change and as agencies strive to improve operational processes and implement new technological developments, management must continually assess and evaluate its internal control to assure that the control activities being used are effective and updated when necessary.

Other aspects of AOC's management infrastructure will also require continued management attention to support its new focus on achieving reforms in mission-critical areas of facilities management, project management, strategic planning, and human capital management. AOC will need to further develop and consistently apply transparent human capital policies and procedures in the areas of leave, awards, and overtime and examine discrepancies in job classification and pay levels across the agency. AOC must continue improving its approach to budgeting and financial management to support effective and efficient program management. Finally, AOC will need to adopt an agencywide approach to information technology (IT) management to position itself to optimize the contribution of IT to agency mission performance.

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1 (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

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## Standards for Internal Control Can Provide a Strong Foundation for Organizational Transformation

AOC has made a number of important and positive efforts to improve its internal control. For example, in response to our 1994 report that AOC's personnel management system did not follow many generally accepted principles of modern personnel management, AOC developed and implemented basic personnel policies and procedures that are designed to meet the guidelines set forth by the Architect of the Capitol Human Resources Act and the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (CAA).<sup>2</sup> More recently, AOC has been developing standard policies and procedures to address various worker safety hazards. In the area of financial management, AOC has contracted for the development of AOC-wide accounting policies and procedures. For information security, in March 2002, AOC completed a partial risk assessment of its systems environment focusing on systems controlled by its Office of Information Resource Management (OIRM), and used that assessment to develop a security plan to address the identified vulnerabilities. These efforts are helping AOC to construct a sound foundation on which to build a high-performing organization.

However, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* reflects a broader approach to control that addresses, for example, how an agency demonstrates its commitment to competence, how it assures effective and efficient operations, how it communicates the information needed throughout the agency to achieve all its objectives, and how it monitors performance. As AOC moves forward in addressing the management reforms we discuss in this report, it should consider how adopting these standards for internal control could provide a strong foundation for institutionalizing the organizational transformation under way.

Internal control should provide reasonable assurance that the objectives of the agency are being achieved in the following categories:

- effectiveness and efficiency of operations, including the use of the entity's resources;

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<sup>2</sup>See Pub. L. No.103-283, July 22, 1994, Sec. 312, Architect of the Capitol Human Resources Act.

- reliability of financial reporting, including reports on budget execution and financial statements and other reports for internal and external use; and
- compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

A subset of these objectives is the safeguarding of assets. Internal control should be designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding prevention of or prompt detection of unauthorized acquisition, use, or disposition of an agency's assets.

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### Internal Control Is a Continuous, Built-in Component of Operations

Internal control is not one event, but a series of actions and activities that occur throughout an entity's operations and on an ongoing basis. Internal control should be recognized as an integral part of each system that management uses to regulate and guide its operations rather than as a separate system within an agency. In this sense, internal control is management control that is built into the entity as a part of its infrastructure to help managers run the entity and achieve their aims on an ongoing basis.

People are what make internal control work. The responsibility for good internal control rests with all managers. Management sets the objectives, puts the control mechanisms and activities in place, and monitors and evaluates the control. However, all personnel in the organization play important roles in making it happen.

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### Framework for Internal Control

Five standards provide a general framework for the minimal level of quality acceptable for internal control in government and provide the basis against which internal control is to be evaluated:

- **Control environment.** Management and employees should establish and maintain an environment throughout the organization that sets a positive and supportive attitude toward internal control and conscientious management. For example, as AOC implements its new strategic planning process, it will need to demonstrate a positive and supportive attitude toward performance-based management by using the plan as the basis for all its programmatic decisions.
- **Risk assessment.** Internal control should provide for an assessment of the risks the agency faces from both external and internal sources. For

example, as part of AOC's ongoing strategic planning process, AOC needs to continually assess the risks to achieving its objectives, analyze the risks, and determine what actions should be taken.

- **Control activities.** Internal control activities help ensure that management's directives are carried out. The control activities should be effective and efficient in accomplishing the agency's control objectives. As AOC identifies areas for management improvements, it also needs to define the policies, procedures, techniques, and mechanisms it will use to enforce management's directives. For example, as AOC works to improve its information systems acquisition management to standardize its acquisition processes, it will need to establish control activities to ensure the processes are applied consistently and correctly for each acquisition project.
- **Information and communications.** Information should be recorded and communicated to management and others within the entity who need it and in a form and within a time frame that enables them to carry out their internal control and other responsibilities. For example, as AOC develops new performance and financial information to support program management, the information needs to be communicated in a way that meets users needs and time frames.
- **Monitoring.** Internal control monitoring should assess the quality of performance over time and ensure that the findings of audits and other reviews are promptly resolved. For example, as AOC develops new performance and financial information, it should ensure that this information is both useful to and used by program managers for purposes of managing program performance.

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## Strengthening Human Capital Policies, Procedures, and Processes

AOC is working towards transforming its culture and instituting regularized personnel policies, procedures, and processes, but there are still areas for improvement. In addition to internal control standards, we have found that there are key practices that can assist agencies in effectively using human capital flexibilities. In broad terms, human capital flexibilities represent the policies and procedures that an agency has the authority to implement in managing its workforce to accomplish its mission and to achieve its goals. These practices include educating managers and employees on the availability and use of flexibilities, streamlining and improving administrative processes, and building transparency and accountability into the system.

Comments from a majority of our focus group participants indicate that supervisors are not perceived to have applied awards, overtime, and leave policies consistently; that there was supervisory favoritism; and that grade and pay levels are not consistent across jurisdictions and shifts. AOC has been addressing these concerns by developing a comprehensive leave policy and a strategy for communicating this policy, reviewing perceived inequities in job classification, and issuing specific guidelines and procedures for its employee awards program. AOC should continue to develop consistent and transparent human capital policies and procedures and communicate them. AOC has various offices and an employee council engaged in improving employee relations. AOC's senior managers could benefit from comprehensively collecting and analyzing data from these groups to allow it to determine its employee relations needs, and to measure its progress in achieving its strategic human capital goals and objectives. AOC has recently established its Office of the Ombudsperson, but should realign the office's reporting relationship directly to the Architect to ensure that it is adhering to professional standards of independence.

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**AOC Should Continue to  
Develop and Communicate  
Consistent Human Capital  
Policies and Procedures**

Effective organizations establish clear and consistent human capital policies and procedures with clearly stated expectations for both employees and supervisors and ensure that there is accountability for following these procedures accordingly. According to internal control standards, such consistent procedures help to create a control environment that encourages employee trust in management.

A majority of our focus group participants perceived that supervisors applied awards, overtime, and leave policies inconsistently and that there was supervisory favoritism. For example, some employees stated that supervisors determine on their own when an employee is entitled to sick or annual leave and are not consistent when allowing some employees to take off time from work. Others remarked that there were varying procedures for signing into work and grace periods for lateness were not consistently applied for every employee. Several employees commented that access to working overtime was uneven and felt as if only favored employees had the opportunity to work overtime. In addition, several employees believe that favoritism resulted in uneven and unfair distribution of work, and that hiring and promotions frequently are not based on qualifications and experience but on personal connections.



AOC has been addressing employees' concerns by developing a comprehensive leave policy and a strategy for communicating this policy. According to AOC's Director of HRMD, AOC has drafted an agencywide comprehensive leave policy—which it expects to issue in November 2002—and is developing a strategy to communicate this policy internally. The issuance of a comprehensive agencywide leave policy is one way in which employees' perceptions of inconsistent treatment by supervisors could be diminished. The policy could also provide a mechanism to hold supervisors and senior managers accountable for its fair and consistent application.

Inconsistencies in grade and pay levels across jurisdictions and shifts was another area of concern noted by a majority of the focus group participants. The perception expressed in focus groups was that employees in other AOC jurisdictions in similar positions and in other federal agencies were classified at higher grade levels, even though their job duties were similar. AOC's HRMD Director told us that the division is aware that many AOC employees are concerned about possible misclassification and has received many requests from employees to review job classifications.<sup>3</sup> According to AOC's Employment and Classification Branch Chief, most of the employees who have raised concerns about how their jobs are classified have been upgraded. As a result, AOC is engaged in an ongoing initiative to review certain position descriptions that have not been updated for some time across jurisdictions and to reclassify them, if needed.

Employee rewards and recognition programs are an important human capital flexibility that is intended to provide appropriate motivation and recognition for excellence in job performance and contributions to an agency's goals. In our December 2002 report on the effective use of human capital flexibilities, we report that agencies must develop clear and transparent guidelines for using flexibilities and then hold managers and supervisors accountable for their fair and effective use, and that agency managers and supervisors must be educated on the existence and use of flexibilities.<sup>4</sup> The Architect's Awards Program, which is AOC's employee rewards and recognition program, is in its second year of operation.

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<sup>3</sup>AOC generally uses Office of Personnel Management General Schedule Qualifications Standards for position classification.

<sup>4</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *Human Capital: Effective Use of Flexibilities Can Assist Agencies in Managing Their Workforces*, GAO-03-2 (Washington, D.C.: December 2002).

However, several implementation issues remained to be resolved. For example, a majority of the focus group participants felt that the program is not applied consistently across the jurisdictions and shifts for all employees. Some focus group participants also mentioned that they were promised awards by their supervisors for their good work on projects but never received them. Other views expressed by some members of the focus groups were that awards might be distributed, but only to certain members of a project team, even though everyone in the unit had worked on the same project or that supervisors did not always want to fill out the paperwork needed to make an award.

In March 2002, AOC issued a policy containing responsibilities and procedures, for the administration of the employee rewards and recognition program.<sup>5</sup> However, as borne out by our focus group results, supervisors may be applying this policy inconsistently. AOC can strengthen and gain support for this program by holding managers and supervisors accountable for the fair and effective use of its rewards and recognition program as a useful tool for motivating and rewarding employees.

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### AOC Management Should Comprehensively Collect and Analyze Data from Employee Relations Groups

In April 2002, we stated that to improve labor-management relations, we would explore the relationships between AOC's various offices engaged in addressing employee relations. Several AOC offices and one employee group provide employees with assistance in resolving disputes or in dealing with other employment-related issues. These offices not only work to resolve disputes, but are also in a position to alert management to systemic problems and thereby help correct organizationwide issues and develop strategies for preventing and managing conflict.

- The Equal Employment Opportunity and Conciliation Program Office was created to include an affirmative employment program for employees and applicants and procedures for monitoring progress by AOC in ensuring a diverse workforce.<sup>6</sup> The office serves to promote a nondiscriminatory work environment and works to resolve employment concerns informally.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>AOC's *Human Resources Manual*, Order 451-1, March 14, 2002.

<sup>6</sup>See Pub. L. No. 103-283, July 1994, Sec. 312, Architect of the Capitol Human Resources Act.

<sup>7</sup>AOC Draft Memo from Acting EEO Director, AOC EEO/CP Annual Report, fiscal year 2000.

- AOC's Office of the Ombudsperson, formerly called the Employee Advocate, was staffed in 2002 and provides advice and counsel to non-bargaining-unit employees concerning employment policies, employment practices, or other employment-related matters.<sup>8</sup>
- The AOC Employee Advisory Council (EAC), created in 1995, has renewed its efforts to ensure its role of providing a voice for AOC employees on workplace and safety issues, and is another avenue for non-bargaining-unit employees to bring their concerns to management. The EAC consists of AOC employees, and its purpose is to help address AOC policy, procedures, work products and methods, and other issues that relate to the overall efficiency and safety of the agency, as well as the fair treatment of employees.<sup>9</sup>

It is not clear whether there is a coordinated approach to tracking agencywide patterns of employee relations issues among these offices and the EAC. If this information were to be collected and analyzed by AOC's senior managers, it could provide a useful source of information to alert management of the status of employee relations. The advantages of an agencywide tracking method need to be balanced in a way so as not to compromise employee confidentiality. As discussed in chapter 2, AOC has established a strategic human capital goal and corresponding objectives related to acquiring, developing, and retaining a talented and diverse workforce. We believe that AOC senior managers could benefit from gathering and analyzing these data, in conjunction with results from the additional employee focus groups that AOC plans to conduct, to help determine how well it is meeting its human capital strategic goal and objectives.

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<sup>8</sup>H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 106-796 at 41 (2000).

<sup>9</sup>AOC Memo, March 7, 2002, on EAC.

In assessing the functions of these employee relations groups, we also assessed the Ombudsperson position at AOC to determine whether it adhered to the standards of practice for ombudsmen established by professional organizations. Ombudsmen provide an informal option to deal pragmatically with conflicts and other organizational climate issues. In April 2001, we reported that ombudsmen are expected to conform to professional standards of practice that revolve around the core principles of independence, neutrality, and confidentiality.<sup>10</sup> In our discussion with the AOC Ombudsperson, she stated that she was familiar with the standards for ombudsmen and that she provided services confidentially and neutrally. According to AOC officials, the AOC Ombudsperson reports to the Administrative Assistant to the Architect of the Capitol or his or her authorized designate, but not directly to the Architect. In our April 2001 report, the Ombudsman Association Standards of Practice define independence as functioning independent of line management, with the ombudsman having a reporting relationship with the highest authority in an organization. In addition, the American Bar Association's ombudsman standards for independence discuss that the ombudsman's office must be and appear to be free from interference in order to be credible and effective. If the Ombudsperson were to directly report to the Architect and not through another senior manager, the core principle of independence would be strengthened.

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## Continue Improving Financial Management to Support Program Management

AOC faces significant challenges in building sound budget and financial management functions into the culture of the organization. Accurate and reliable budget formulation and execution and reliable financial accounting and reporting are important basic functions of financial control and accountability and provide a basis for supporting good program management. In the past, AOC has lacked reliable budgets for both projects and operations and has lacked internal policies and procedures to effectively monitor budget execution. In addition, AOC has lacked accounting policies and procedures needed to properly account for and report financial information especially in accounting for, controlling, and reporting assets, including inventory. Moreover, AOC has not prepared auditable financial statements.

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<sup>10</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *Human Capital: The Role of Ombudsmen in Dispute Resolution*, GAO-01-466 (Washington, D.C.: April 13, 2001).

A Chief Financial Officer (CFO) position was established at AOC, which the Architect filled in January 2002, in response to direction from the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, Senate Committee on Appropriations that AOC begin essential financial management reforms.<sup>11</sup> The new CFO is a member of the Architect's Senior Policy Committee and, in carrying out his role in establishing a foundation of financial control and accountability at AOC, he is responsible for the activities of the Budget Office, the Accounting Office, and the Financial Systems Office. Among his first actions, the new CFO assembled a financial management team with the experience needed to establish a strong foundation of financial control and accountability by filling key budget and accounting officer positions.

As discussed in our executive guide on best practices in financial management,<sup>12</sup> a solid foundation of control and accountability requires a system of checks and balances that provides reasonable assurance that an entity's transactions are appropriately recorded and reported, its assets protected, its policies followed, and its resources used economically and efficiently for the purposes intended. The CFO, who has endorsed the executive guide as a road map for making improvements to financial management at AOC, has recognized the need for this foundation of financial control and accountability as well as the challenges his organization faces in establishing such checks and balances AOC-wide. Those challenges include

- developing and implementing effective budget formulation and execution policies and procedures that govern capital projects and operating activities AOC-wide,
- developing and implementing formal financial accounting and reporting policies and procedures and related operating procedures,
- developing and implementing internal controls and monitoring the reliability of financial information and safeguarding of assets,
- implementing and operating the new financial management system, and

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<sup>11</sup>S. Rep. No. 107-37, at 29 (2001).

<sup>12</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *Executive Guide: Creating Value Through World-class Financial Management*, GAO/AIMD-00-134 (Washington, D.C.: April 2000).

- preparing auditable comprehensive entitywide financial statements.

In response to these challenges, the CFO has set a goal for AOC to prepare auditable AOC-wide financial statements for the first time for fiscal year 2003 and has made measurable progress in this and other areas in establishing a sound foundation of control and accountability at AOC. For example, some of the financial management team's achievements to date include

- deploying phase two of the new accounting system AOC-wide, including continuing system support and periodic training;
- revising budget formulation guidance to include requirements for specific minimum detail needed to justify capital projects requested and support construction cost estimates;
- conducting an AOC-wide budget execution review to evaluate the effectiveness of AOC's budget execution;
- conducting an AOC-wide inventory to establish a basis for closing accounting records for fiscal year 2002 and a establishing a beginning balance for fiscal year 2003;
- developing a basis for valuing and classifying certain AOC assets, including property and equipment; and
- contracting for the development of AOC-wide accounting policies and procedures needed to establish internal control and prepare first-time financial statements.

A significant factor in the achievements to date is the experience the new financial team brings to AOC in carrying out the fundamentals of sound financial management and the fact that the initiatives fall under the direct control of the CFO. However, much work remains to be done on an AOC-wide basis. Going forward, the CFO faces challenges, including

- having program managers routinely provide critical project justification and cost information and obligation plans;
- establishing AOC-wide accounting and control procedures, such as controls over the receipt and use of inventory; and

- finding a way to interface financial information with the AOC Project Information Center system.

Implementing these and other financial-control and accountability-related initiatives will require the buy-in and support of key non-financial managers and staff. As the finance team seeks to build a foundation of financial accounting and control into the organization's culture, top management must demonstrate a commitment to making and supporting the needed changes throughout the organization. As noted in our executive guide, leading organizations identified leadership as the most important factor in successfully making cultural changes.

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## AOC Could Benefit from an Agencywide and Disciplined Approach to IT Management

IT can be a valuable tool in achieving an organization's mission objectives. Our research of leading private and public sector organizations shows that these organizations' executives have embraced the central role of IT to mission performance.<sup>13</sup> More specifically, these executives no longer regard IT as a separate support function, but rather view and treat it as an integral and enabling part of business operations. As such, they have adopted a corporate, or agencywide, approach to managing IT under the leadership and control of a senior executive, who operates as a full partner with the organization's leadership team in charting the strategic direction and making informed IT investment decisions.

Complementing a centralized leadership of IT management, leading organizations have also implemented certain institutional or agencywide management controls aimed at leveraging the vast potential of technology in achieving mission outcomes. These management controls include using a portfolio-based approach to IT investment decision making, using an enterprise architecture, or blueprint, to guide and constrain IT investments, following disciplined IT system acquisition and development management processes, and proactively managing the security of IT assets.

AOC currently relies heavily on IT in achieving its mission objectives.<sup>14</sup> As an example, AOC uses the Computer Aided Facilities Management system to request and fulfill work orders for maintenance of the Capitol and the

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<sup>13</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *Maximizing the Success of Chief Information Officers: Learning From Leading Organizations*, GAO-01-376G, (Washington, D.C.: February 2001).

<sup>14</sup>AOC has budgeted \$13 million for IT systems in fiscal year 2003.

surrounding grounds. In addition, it uses the Records Management system to archive architectural drawings pertaining to the U.S. Capitol, Library of Congress, Botanic Garden, and other buildings. According to AOC's Chief Administrative Officer, the agency's reliance on IT will increase in the future.

Despite the importance and prevalence of IT at AOC, the agency's current approach to managing IT is not consistent with leading practices, as is described in the following five sections. Until AOC embraces the central role of IT to mission performance and implements an agencywide and disciplined approach to IT management, it is not positioned to optimize the contribution of IT to agency mission performance.

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## AOC Needs a Senior Executive with Agencywide Responsibility and Authority for IT Management

Our research of private and public sector organizations that effectively manage IT shows that these organizations have adopted an agencywide approach to managing IT under the leadership of a chief information officer or comparable senior executive, who has the responsibility and authority for managing IT across the agency.<sup>15</sup> According to the research, these executives function as members of the leadership team and are instrumental in developing a shared vision for the role of IT in achieving major improvements in business processes and operations to effectively optimize mission performance. In this capacity, leading organizations also provide these individuals with the authority they need to carry out their diverse responsibilities by providing budget control and management support for IT programs and initiatives.

Currently, AOC does not have a senior-level executive who is responsible and accountable for IT management and spending across the agency, and AOC does not centrally oversee IT, according to AOC's OIRM Director. Rather, budget and acquisition authority is vested in each AOC organizational component that is acquiring a given IT asset. With such a decentralized approach to IT management and spending, AOC does not have an individual focused on how IT can best support the collective needs of the agency, and thus is not positioned to effectively leverage IT as an agencywide resource.

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<sup>15</sup>[GAO-01-376G](#).



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## AOC Should Have an Agencywide, Portfolio-Based Approach to IT Investment Management

If managed wisely, IT investments can vastly improve mission performance. If not, IT projects can be risky, costly, and unproductive investments. Our best practices guide, based on research of private and public sector organizations that effectively manage their IT investments, outlines a corporate, portfolio-based approach to IT investment decision making that includes processes, practices, and activities for continually and consistently selecting, controlling, and evaluating competing IT investment options in a way that promotes the greatest value to the strategic interest of the organization.<sup>16</sup>

The first major step to building a sound IT investment management process is to be able to measure the progress of existing IT projects to identify variances in cost, schedule, and performance expectations, and take corrective action, if appropriate, and to establish basic capabilities for selecting new IT proposals. To do this, the organization needs to establish and implement processes and practices for (1) operating an IT investment board responsible for selecting, controlling, and evaluating IT investments and that includes both senior IT and business representatives, (2) providing effective oversight for ongoing IT projects throughout all phases of their life cycle, (3) identifying, tracking, and managing IT resources, (4) ensuring that each IT project supports the organization's business needs, and (5) establishing criteria for selecting new IT proposals.

The second major step toward effective IT investment management requires that an organization continually assess proposed and ongoing projects as an integrated and competing set of investment options. That is, the organization should consider each new investment part of an integrated portfolio of investments that collectively contribute to mission goals and objectives. To do this, the organization needs to establish and implement processes and practices for (1) developing and implementing criteria to select investments that will best support the organization's strategic goals, objectives, and mission, (2) using these criteria to consistently analyze and prioritize all IT investments, (3) ensuring that the optimal IT investment portfolio with manageable risks and returns is selected and funded, and

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<sup>16</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *Information Technology Investment Management: A Framework for Assessing and Improving Process Maturity*, Version 1, [GAO/AIMD-10.1.23](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 2000).

(4) overseeing each IT investment within the portfolio to ensure that it achieves its cost, benefit, schedule, and risk expectations.

AOC has not satisfied the components of either of these two major steps, and as a result does not currently have an agencywide, portfolio-based approach to IT investment management. For example, AOC has not developed the processes and established the key management structures, such as an investment review board, needed to manage and oversee IT investments. However, according to the OIRM Director, he has several activities under way to facilitate the agency's movement to such an approach, should AOC choose to do so. These include

- developing an IT capital planning and investment guide that is to define key elements of a portfolio-based approach to IT investment management and acquiring an automated tool to facilitate its implementation,
- introducing new IT budget categories and collecting corresponding fiscal year 2004 budget information to track and control IT investments,<sup>17</sup> and
- reassessing the role of its Information Technology Standards and Architecture Committee, including how and when the committee reviews projects, what projects are reviewed, and what information is provided to the committee.<sup>18</sup>

Because the OIRM Director could not provide us with drafts or more detailed information on these activities, characterizing them as under development, we could not determine the extent to which these activities address the basic tenets of effective IT management. However, these

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<sup>17</sup>These categories are as follows: *Infrastructure*—IT systems, including networks and personal computers, that have an IT cost focus and are necessary for daily operation and maintenance; *Utility*—IT systems, including payroll and billing, that do not have a business focus, but are mission-critical; *Enhancement*—IT systems that have a business focus, such as supply chain management; and *Frontier*—IT systems, including e-commerce and customer tracking, that improve business performance.

<sup>18</sup>The Information Technology Standards and Architecture Committee currently sets IT policy relating to software and hardware standards and reviews agencywide IT projects for conformance with architecture standards.

activities are currently limited because they are confined to OIRM, which is not positioned to implement effective IT investment management on its own. Achieving an agencywide, portfolio-based approach to IT investment management needs the full support and participation of AOC's senior leadership. Until this occurs, AOC will continue to be limited in its ability to effectively leverage IT to achieve mission goals and objectives.

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### AOC Needs to Establish the Management Foundation to Effectively Develop an Enterprise Architecture

Our experience with federal agencies has shown that attempting to modernize IT environments without an enterprise architecture to guide and constrain investments often results in systems that are duplicative, not well integrated, unnecessarily costly to maintain and interface, and ineffective in supporting mission goals. Managed properly, architectures can clarify and help optimize the interdependencies and interrelationships among related corporate operations and the underlying IT infrastructure and applications that support them. The development, implementation, and maintenance of architectures are recognized hallmarks of successful public and private organizations that effectively leveraged IT in meeting their mission goals.

An enterprise architecture—as defined in federal guidance, and as practiced by leading public and private sector organizations—acts as a blueprint and defines, both in logical terms (including business functions and applications, work locations, information needs and users, and the interrelationships among these variables) and in technical terms (including IT hardware, software, data communications, and security) how the organization operates today, how it intends to operate tomorrow, and a road map for transitioning between the two states.<sup>19</sup> This guidance also defines a set of recognized key practices (management structures and processes) for developing and implementing an enterprise architecture. Among other things, these practices include the following:

- The head of the enterprise should recognize that the enterprise architecture is a corporate asset for systematically managing institutional change by supporting and sponsoring the architecture effort and giving it a clear mandate in the form of an enterprise policy statement. Such support is crucial to gaining the commitment of all

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<sup>19</sup>Chief Information Officers Council, *A Practical Guide to Federal Enterprise Architecture*, version 1.0 (Washington, D.C.: February 2001).

organizational components of the enterprise, all of which should participate in developing and implementing the enterprise architecture.

- The enterprise architecture effort should be directed and overseen by an executive body, empowered by the head of the enterprise, with members who represent all stakeholder organizations and have the authority to commit resources and to make and enforce decisions for their respective organizations.
- An individual who serves as the chief enterprise architect, and reports to either a chief information officer or comparable senior executive, should lead the enterprise architecture effort and manage it as a formal program. A formal program entails creating a program office, committing core staff, implementing a program management plan that details a work breakdown structure and schedule, allocating resources and tools, performing basic program management functions (e.g., risk management, change control, quality assurance, and configuration management), and tracking and reporting progress against measurable goals.
- The enterprise architecture should conform to a specified framework.

AOC does not have an enterprise architecture or the management foundation needed to successfully develop one. Thus far, AOC's architecture activities are confined to OIRM, and they consist of meeting with peer agencies, such as the U.S. Capitol Police, to learn about their architecture development experiences, and selecting a framework to use in developing the architecture. OIRM officials also told us that they are finalizing an approach for developing the architecture.

AOC has much to do and accomplish before it will have either the means for developing an architecture or the architecture itself. Central to what remains to be done is AOC's executive leadership providing a clear mandate for the architecture and for managing its development consistent with recognized best practices and federal guidance. To do less risks producing an incomplete architecture that is not used to effectively guide and direct business and technology change to optimize agencywide performance.

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## AOC Should Define and Implement Institutional Processes for Acquiring and Developing IT Systems

Our experience with federal agencies has shown that the failure to implement rigorous and disciplined acquisition and development processes can lead to systems that do not perform as intended, are delivered late, and cost more than planned. The use of disciplined processes and controls based on well-defined and rigorously enforced policies, practices, and procedures for system acquisition and development can reduce that risk. Such processes for managing system acquisition/development are defined in various published models and guides, such as Carnegie Mellon University's Software Engineering Institute's Capability Maturity Model<sup>SM 20</sup>. Examples of key processes from this model include the following:

- *Requirements management* describes processes for establishing and maintaining a common and unambiguous definition of requirements among the acquisition team, the system users, and the software development contractor. Requirements management includes documenting policies and procedures for managing requirements, documenting and validating requirements, and establishing baselines and controlling changes to the requirements.
- *Test management* describes processes for ensuring that the software/system performs according to the requirements and that it fulfills its intended use when placed in its intended environment. Test management includes developing a test plan, executing the plan, documenting and reporting test results, and analyzing test results and taking corrective actions.
- *Configuration management* describes processes for establishing and maintaining the integrity of work products throughout the life cycle process. Configuration management includes developing a configuration management plan; identifying work products to be maintained and controlled; establishing a repository or configuration management system for tracking work products; and approving, tracking, and controlling changes to the products.
- *Quality assurance* describes processes for providing independent verification of the requirements and processes for developing and producing the software/system. Quality assurance includes developing a

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<sup>20</sup>Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute, *Software Acquisition Capability Maturity Model*, version 1.03, (March 2002), and *Software Capability Maturity Model*, version 1.1 (February 1993).

quality assurance plan, determining applicable processes and product standards to be followed, and conducting reviews to ensure that the product and process standards are followed.

- *Risk management* describes processes for identifying potential problems before they occur and adjusting the acquisition to mitigate the chances of the problems occurring. Risk management includes developing a project risk management plan; identifying and prioritizing potential problems; implementing risk mitigation strategies, as required; and tracking and reporting progress against the plans.
- *Contract tracking and oversight* describes processes for ensuring that the contractor performs according to the terms of the contract. Contract tracking and oversight includes developing a plan for tracking contractor activities, measuring contractor performance and conducting periodic reviews, and conducting internal reviews of tracking and oversight activities.

OIRM has defined some of these key processes, but it has not defined others, and some that are defined are not complete. Moreover, the processes that have been defined have not been adopted and implemented agencywide. In 1995, OIRM developed its *Information Systems Life Cycle Directive* that defines policies and procedures for software development and acquisition. This directive fully addresses the tenets of two key process areas—requirements management and test management—and partly addresses the tenets of two other areas— quality assurance and configuration management. For example, for quality assurance, the directive includes the need to conduct quality assurance reviews to ensure that product and process standards are followed; however, it does not address the need to first identify the process and product standards to be followed or the development of a quality assurance plan. Similarly, for configuration management, the directive includes requirements for developing and executing a plan; identifying work products to be maintained and controlled; and tracking, controlling, and releasing work products and items. However, it does not include requirements for a repository or for a configuration management system that supports tracking and controlling changes to work products. Finally, the directive does not address two key process areas—risk management and contract tracking and oversight.

The OIRM Director told us that OIRM plans to improve its directive and acquire tools to facilitate its implementation. These efforts, if properly

implemented and adopted, could allow AOC to institutionalize disciplined processes for system development and acquisition management. Until AOC implements agencywide, disciplined processes for managing the development and acquisition of IT systems, it risks investing in systems that do not perform as intended, are delivered late, and cost more than planned.

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### AOC Should Develop an Effective Information Security Program

Effective information security management is critical to AOC's ability to ensure the reliability, availability, and confidentiality of its information assets, and thus its ability to perform its mission. If effective information security practices are not in place, AOC's data and systems are at risk of inadvertent or deliberate misuse, fraud, improper disclosure, or destruction—possibly without detection. Our research of public and private sector organizations recognized as having strong information security programs shows that their programs include (1) establishing a central focal point with appropriate resources, (2) continually assessing business risks, (3) implementing and maintaining policies and controls, (4) promoting awareness, and (5) monitoring and evaluating policy and control effectiveness.<sup>21</sup>

AOC has taken important steps to establish an effective information security program, but much remains to be done. In May 2001, the OIRM Director established and filled an IT security officer position. The officer's responsibilities include planning and coordinating security risk assessments, developing IT security policies, conducting security training, and evaluating the effectiveness of IT security policies and controls. In March 2002, the Security Officer completed a partial risk assessment of AOC's systems environment focusing on systems that are controlled by OIRM, and used that assessment to develop a security plan to address the identified vulnerabilities. The plan contains steps to develop user access and network administrator account policies, as well as a security awareness and training program.

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<sup>21</sup>U.S. General Accounting Office, *Executive Guide: Information Security Management, Learning From Leading Organizations*, GAO/AIMD-98-68 (Washington, D.C.: May 1998), and *Information Security Risk Assessment: Practices of Leading Organizations, A Supplement to GAO's May 1998 Executive Guide on Information Security Management*, GAO/AIMD-00-33 (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

However, the Security Officer has since resigned and the position is vacant. Moreover, because the Security Officer was the only staff member dedicated to these tasks, the OIRM Director stated that AOC has yet to begin addressing the tasks outlined in the security plan. Currently, AOC is attempting to hire a new security officer and plans to hire an information systems security specialist. Until AOC addresses the elements of an effective security program, it will not be in a position to effectively safeguard its data and information assets.

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## Conclusions

The effectiveness with which AOC can use the elements of the management and accountability framework—strategic planning, organizational alignment, improved internal and external communications, performance management, and strategic human capital management—to achieve organizational transformation will depend in part on its ability to focus on management improvement in its day-to-day operations. A key factor in helping AOC to better achieve its mission and program outcomes and identify and manage risks while leveraging opportunities is to implement and strengthen appropriate internal controls. As it transforms the agency, AOC will need to ensure that it adopts management controls by (1) further developing and consistently applying transparent human capital policies and procedures, (2) continuing to improve its approach to budgeting and financial management to support effective and efficient program management, and (3) adopting an agency wide approach to IT management to position itself to optimize the contribution of IT to agency mission performance.

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## Recommendations for Agency Action

In order to continue to develop a management infrastructure and strengthen appropriate management controls, we recommend that the Architect of the Capitol take the following actions:

Strengthen AOC's human capital policies, procedures, and processes by

- continuing to develop and implement agencywide human capital policies and procedures, and holding management and employees accountable for following these policies and procedures;
- assessing ways in which AOC management could better gather and analyze data from the various employee relations offices and EAC while maintaining employee confidentiality; and



- establishing a direct reporting relationship between the Ombudsperson and the Architect, consistent with professional standards.

Continue to improve AOC's approach to financial management by developing strategies to institutionalize financial management practices that will support budgeting, financial, and program management at AOC. Such strategies could include developing performance goals and measures and associated roles aimed at increasing the accountability of non-financial managers and staff, such as jurisdictional superintendents, program managers, and other AOC staff—whose support is critical to the success of AOC's financial management initiatives—and ensuring that these staff receive the training needed to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities.

Adopt an agencywide approach to IT management by doing the following:

- Establishing a chief information officer, or comparable senior executive, with the responsibility, authority, and adequate resources for managing IT across the agency, who is a full participant in AOC's senior decision-making processes, and has clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities.
- Developing and implementing IT investment management processes with the full support and participation of AOC's senior leadership. Specifically, the Architect must develop a plan for developing and implementing the investment management processes, as appropriate, that are outlined in our IT investment guide.<sup>22</sup> At a minimum, the plan should specify measurable tasks, goals, time frames, and resources required to develop and implement the processes. The Architect should focus first on the management processes associated with controlling existing IT projects and establishing the management structures to effectively implement an IT management process.

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<sup>22</sup>[GAO/AIMD-10.1.23](#).

- Developing, implementing, and maintaining an enterprise architecture to guide and constrain IT projects throughout AOC. The Architect should implement the practices, as appropriate, as outlined in the Chief Information Officer Council’s architecture management guide.<sup>23</sup> As a first step, the Architect should establish the management structure for developing, implementing, and maintaining an enterprise architecture by implementing the following actions:
  - developing an agencywide policy statement providing a clear mandate for developing, implementing, and maintaining the architecture;
  - establishing an executive body composed of stakeholders from AOC mission-critical programs offices to guide the strategy for developing the enterprise architecture and ensure agency support and resources for it; and
  - designating an individual who serves as a chief enterprise architect to develop policy and lead the development of the enterprise architecture, and manage it as a formal program.
- Requiring disciplined and rigorous processes for managing the development and acquisition of IT systems, and implementing the processes throughout AOC. Specifically, these processes should include the following:
  - quality assurance processes, including developing a quality assurance plan and identifying applicable process and product standards that will be used in developing and assessing project processes and products;
  - configuration management processes, including establishing a repository or configuration management system to maintain and control configuration management items;
  - risk management processes, including developing a project risk management plan, identifying and prioritizing potential problems,

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<sup>23</sup>Chief Information Officers Council, *A Practical Guide to Federal Enterprise Architecture*, version 1.0 (Washington, D.C.: February 2001).

implementing risk mitigation strategies, as required, and tracking and reporting progress against the plans; and

- contract tracking and oversight processes, including developing a plan for tracking contractor activities, measuring contractor performance and conducting periodic reviews, and conducting internal reviews of tracking and oversight activities.
- Establishing and implementing an information security program. Specifically, the Architect should establish an information security program by taking the following steps:
  - designate a security officer and provide him or her with the authority and resources to implement an agencywide security program;
  - develop and implement policy and guidance to perform risk assessments continually;
  - use the results of the risk assessments to develop and implement appropriate controls;
  - develop policies for security training and awareness and provide the training; and
  - monitor and evaluate policy and control effectiveness.<sup>24</sup>

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## Agency Comments

In his comments on this chapter, the Architect generally agreed with our recommendations and discussed the relevant efforts AOC has under way in the areas of human capital policies, financial management, and IT management. For example, the Architect stated that AOC has formed a team including representatives from all key offices and employee groups to explore the development of a confidential process to track employee relations issues agencywide. In the area of financial management, the Architect underscored a number of initiatives under way, including the piloting of financial management training for line managers and staff and indicated that AOC's implementation plan will include a strategy for incorporating financial management best practices throughout AOC.

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<sup>24</sup>[GAO/AIMD-98-68](#).

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**Chapter 3**  
**Management Infrastructure and Controls**  
**Needed to Support Organizational**  
**Transformation Initiatives**

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Finally, the Architect stated that IT is a key enabler of AOC's strategy for organizational improvement and that OIRM will work closely with the Senior Policy Committee to establish an agencywide approach to IT management. The Architect cautioned that fully implementing the information technology framework that we laid out will take considerable time, but that AOC's implementation plan will include a more specific approach to developing and implementing this framework. The Architect's comments are reprinted in appendix II.

# Strategic Management Framework Important for Addressing Long-standing Worker Safety, Project Management, and Recycling Issues

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In the preceding chapters, we discussed the need for the Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) to put in place the management and accountability framework needed for organizational transformation—leadership, strategic planning, organizational alignment, communications, and performance measurement—and the management infrastructure of financial, information technology, and other controls that support the transformation. The management and accountability framework needed for transformation and the management infrastructure of financial, information technology, and other controls cut across AOC's programs and influence its performance in all areas critical to achieving its mission. Improvements in these areas can also ameliorate the performance of program areas of long-standing concern to AOC's employees and congressional stakeholders—worker safety, project management, and recycling. In recent years, AOC has had among the highest worker injury rates in the federal government. Furthermore, AOC's annual appropriations for capital projects have increased substantially in recent years, placing AOC at greater risk of project delays and cost overruns. Finally, high rates of contamination of recyclable materials continue to detract from accomplishing the environmental goals of AOC's recycling programs.

AOC has made recent progress in all these areas. However, significant opportunities exist to build on this progress to bring about significant, lasting performance improvements. For example, the Architect has declared that safety is the agency's number one priority and established a target for reducing injuries. Nonetheless, relating safety to other pressing priorities and developing a clear strategy for how working safely will become the cultural norm, is still a work in progress at AOC. Similarly, AOC has adopted industry best practices for project management, but implementation is uneven and hampered by weaknesses in leadership, performance and financial management, priority setting, communication, and strategic management of human capital. Finally, although AOC has recently made improvements to the House and Senate recycling programs, contamination of recycled materials remains high, and the goals for the overall program remain unclear.

**AOC's Worker Safety Efforts Are Substantial, but AOC Needs to Develop a Strategic Approach to Achieve a Safer Workplace**

Worker safety at AOC has been the subject of congressional scrutiny for the past several years because AOC had higher injury and illness rates than many other federal agencies and substantially higher rates than the federal government as a whole, as seen in table 1.

**Table 1: Federal Agencies with the Highest Injury and Illness Rates, Fiscal Years 1999 through 2001**

1999		2000		2001	
Agency	Rate	Agency	Rate	Agency	Rate
All federal government	3.91	All federal government	3.95	All federal government	3.98
Immigration and Naturalization Service	14.14	<b>Architect of the Capitol</b>	17.90	Presidio Trust	14.97
Architect of the Capitol	14.11	Immigration and Naturalization Service	14.04	Immigration and Naturalization Service	13.44
Bureau of Engraving and Printing	12.76	U.S. Mint	13.47	Architect of the Capitol	11.02
National Park Service	12.16	Bureau of Indian Affairs	12.69	National Park Service	10.92
U.S. Mint	10.52	Bureau of Engraving and Printing	12.28	U.S. Mint	10.38

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Note: Job related injuries and illnesses per 100 employees as recorded under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act program.

The Architect responded to these concerns by declaring safety the agency's top priority and undertaking a number of initiatives that correspond to the components of an effective safety program, as identified by safety experts and federal safety agencies. These core components include management commitment, employee involvement, identification, analysis and development of controls for problem jobs, education and training, and medical management. Key among AOC's activities is the planned development and implementation, by 2005, of about 43 specialized safety programs on topics ranging from handling asbestos to working safely in confined spaces. These programs are designed to help AOC comply with federal safety and health regulations. Fifteen of these specialized programs

have been approved; none have yet been fully implemented across all of AOC's jurisdictions.

AOC's efforts are commendable and AOC employees who participated in our focus groups noted positive changes in worker safety. As a next step, AOC needs to integrate the safety goals in its draft *Safety Master Plan* with AOC's strategic goals in its overall strategic plan, and to develop performance measures to assess its progress in achieving these goals. The Director of AOC's Safety, Fire, and Environmental Programs, who oversees AOC's workplace safety program, has acknowledged that the two strategic planning efforts must be further integrated. Also, AOC has established mechanisms to foster employee involvement, such as encouraging employees to report job-related injuries and hazards. Building on these efforts, AOC needs to establish a formal mechanism for reporting to ensure complete reporting of hazards. AOC's approach to identifying, analyzing, and developing controls for problem jobs is inconsistent and does not ensure that all workplace hazards are being addressed. Moreover, AOC has provided a significant amount of training to its employees, but the training activities could be better linked to AOC's safety goal of changing its workplace culture to increase staff awareness, commitment, and involvement in safety and health. Finally, AOC's medical management activities could be better coordinated with the worker safety program, so that information about workplace injuries and illnesses could be more widely shared and used to better target prevention efforts.

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## **Effective Safety and Health Programs Depend on a Set of Core Components**

Safety experts and federal safety agencies agree that, to build an effective safety program, organizations must take a strategic approach to managing workplace safety and health. This objective is generally accomplished by establishing a safety program built upon a set of six core program components, which, together, help an organization lay out what it is trying to achieve, assess progress, and ensure that safety policies and procedures are appropriate and effective. The six core components of an effective safety and health program are (1) management commitment, (2) employee involvement, (3) identification of problem jobs, (4) analysis and development of controls for problem jobs, (5) education and training, and (6) medical management. Table 2 lists these components, along with a description of the key activities upon which each component is built.

**Chapter 4**  
**Strategic Management Framework Important**  
**for Addressing Long-standing Worker Safety,**  
**Project Management, and Recycling Issues**

**Table 2: Components of an Effective Safety and Health Program and How They Are Demonstrated**

Component <sup>a</sup>	Supporting activities
Management commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish goals for the program, collect reliable data, and evaluate results.</li> <li>• Establish program responsibilities of managers and employees for safety and health in the workplace and hold them accountable for carrying out those responsibilities.</li> <li>• Communicate to the staff the program's importance.</li> </ul>
Employee involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish mechanisms to get employees involved in the program, such as creating committees or teams to receive information on problem jobs or areas.</li> <li>• Establish procedures for employees to report job-related fatalities, injuries, illnesses, incidents, and hazards; ensure that employees are not discouraged from reporting job-related fatalities, injuries, illnesses, incidents, and hazards.</li> <li>• Establish regular channels of communication with employees regarding worker safety issues.</li> </ul>
Identification of problem jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up on employee reports of fatalities, injuries, illnesses, incidents, and hazards.</li> <li>• Review injury logs or other data to identify problem areas.</li> <li>• Conduct inspections of the workplace to identify incidents and hazards causing injuries, illnesses, or fatalities.</li> </ul>
Analysis and development of controls for problem jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through investigation or other analysis, identify hazards present in problem jobs.</li> <li>• Develop controls for problem jobs by brainstorming with employees or other methods.</li> <li>• Follow up to ensure that hazards are abated and controls are effective.</li> </ul>
Education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide general awareness training to all employees so they can recognize hazards and risks; learn procedures for reporting job-related fatalities, injuries, illnesses, incidents, and hazards; and become familiar with the program.</li> <li>• Provide targeted training to specified groups of employees because of the jobs they hold, the hazards they face, or their roles in the program.</li> </ul>
Medical management <sup>b</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage early reporting of symptoms and ensure that employees do not fear reprisal or discrimination.</li> <li>• Ensure a prompt evaluation by a medical provider.</li> <li>• Provide employees who have work-related medical conditions with restricted or light duty employment.</li> </ul>

Sources: OSHA, *Safety and Health Program Management Guidelines*, Issuance of Voluntary Guidelines, Federal Register 54:3904-3916 (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 26, 1989) and U.S. General Accounting Office, *Private Sector Ergonomics Programs Yield Positive Results*, GAO/HEHS-97-163 (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 27, 1997).

<sup>a</sup>Different terminology is often used to describe these components. For example, identification of problem jobs is sometimes referred to as hazard identification and assessment. Analysis and development of controls for problem jobs is sometimes referred to as hazard prevention and control. The terms used here are identical to those used in our prior work.

<sup>b</sup>An organization may have a medical management program without necessarily having a safety and health program.



Our April 2002 statement assessed AOC's efforts in implementing the first four components. Since that time, we have assessed AOC's activities in the remaining two areas: education and training and medical management. We also met with DuPont Safety Resources<sup>1</sup> and the Department of Defense to discuss best practices in worker safety.

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**Management Commitment:  
Safety Program's  
Importance Has Been  
Communicated, but Goals  
Need to Be Integrated with  
Agency Goals and  
Performance Measures  
Need to Be Developed**

AOC has undertaken a number of actions that demonstrate its commitment to worker safety. As a next step, it needs to develop safety program goals that are integrated with broader agency goals. In an effort to highlight the importance of worker safety, the Architect proclaimed safety to be the agency's top priority in fiscal year 2001, and established the goal of reducing total injuries and illnesses by 10 percent each year through fiscal year 2005. As we reported in April 2002, AOC further demonstrated its commitment by devoting additional resources to safety, such as increasing staffing levels in its central safety office and assigning safety staff to seven of its eight jurisdictions. Additionally, AOC has consulted with the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)<sup>2</sup> on how to record illnesses and injuries and with the congressional Office of Compliance on how to comply with OSHA requirements. AOC has also contracted with DuPont Safety Resources to provide a baseline assessment of AOC's safety activities and to provide best practices briefings for AOC senior executives and safety specialists for adopting a safety culture, including key components of an effective safety and health program. AOC has also contracted with the Department of Health and Human Services' Public Health Service (PHS),<sup>3</sup> which is developing AOC's

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<sup>1</sup>DuPont Safety Resources is a part of DuPont's Safety and Protection business segment, which provides consulting and training services on worker safety, contractor safety, ergonomics, and asset effectiveness to public and private sector customers.

<sup>2</sup>OSHA was established under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 to "Assure so far as possible every working man and woman in the Nation safe and healthful working conditions." This mandate involves the application of a set of tools by OSHA (e.g., standards development, enforcement, and compliance assistance), which enable employers to maintain safe and healthful workplaces.

<sup>3</sup>According to the PHS, it is one of the nation's seven uniformed services and consists of approximately 6,000 officers, who serve under the leadership of the U.S. Surgeon General. Its mission is to provide highly trained and mobile health professionals who carry out programs to promote the health of the nation, understand and prevent disease and injury, assure safe and effective drugs and medical devices, deliver health services to federal beneficiaries, and furnish health expertise in times of war or other national or international emergencies.

43 specialized safety programs, providing safety training, and identifying hazards associated with AOC job tasks. AOC is developing a 5-year *Safety Master Plan* that, when completed, is to be used as a road map to identify its safety goals and philosophy, establish priorities, assign responsibilities, and identify project and funding needs. AOC employees who participated in our focus groups also noted positive changes in communicating worker safety. Many participants felt that AOC takes safety-related incidents seriously and that there has been an increased emphasis on safety.

To achieve a safer workplace, AOC needs to integrate the safety goals in its draft *Safety Master Plan* with the strategic goals in its draft Strategic Plan. The Director of AOC's Safety Program has acknowledged that as a next step, the two strategic planning efforts must be integrated. Private sector best practices indicate that an organization needs safety goals that are consistent and integrated with other organizational goals. Safety goals should be well integrated into the organizational culture so that it becomes second nature for employees to perform all tasks safely, and so that there is little tolerance for unsafe work practices.

AOC has not yet developed performance measures to assess progress in achieving these safety goals. AOC officials have indicated that the development and implementation of the 43 specialized safety programs is their primary focus, and they plan to implement all of these programs by fiscal year 2005. Although 15 of these programs have been written and approved by the Architect, the standard operating procedures that are needed to fully implement these programs in the jurisdictions have not been approved. AOC's draft *Safety Master Plan* currently provides information about the development and expected approval dates for the remaining programs, but does not provide other milestones or performance measures for the full implementation of these programs in the jurisdictions, including the anticipated time frames for developing and approving the standard operating procedures. Identifying interim milestones would help AOC assess its progress in achieving its fiscal year 2005 completion target and underscore for AOC employees and external stakeholders the importance AOC places on worker safety.

The only performance measure that AOC has developed for assessing the worker safety program is a 10 percent reduction in injuries. This measure was based on a general sense of how much of a reduction would be achievable overall and how high the goal should be to motivate improvements. As we reported in April 2002, AOC is measuring its progress in achieving this reduction using the number of claims for compensation for workplace injuries and illnesses under the Federal Workers' Compensation Program. However, it provides an incomplete picture of the overall level of safety because the number of claims in any organization can be affected by factors not directly related to safety, such as poor morale among employees or a lack of knowledge about how or when to file a claim. Also, the use of these data as a measure of safety program performance is not directly comparable to key measures used in the private sector, which uses "OSHA recordables" to assess worker safety.<sup>4</sup> We reported in April 2002 that AOC had begun to collect these data on a limited basis. Since that time, AOC has begun to develop a more standardized approach to collect and track OSHA recordables. AOC is also trying to formalize partnerships with the Office of Compliance and OSHA to provide technical assistance that could facilitate standardizing these data.

Moreover, AOC employees at all levels need to be held accountable for achieving the safety goals. For example, the first goal in AOC's draft *Safety Master Plan*—providing a safe and healthful environment through the identification and elimination of hazards—has as an objective to ensure that all facilities, processes, and equipment include safety considerations in their design, development, and implementation to eliminate hazards. Yet, at this stage, AOC has not fully linked employee performance with the achievement of these safety goals and objectives. For example, there was a recurring observation made by focus group participants that time constraints to complete jobs and supervisory pressure adversely affect attention to safety. Although the incentive to focus on safety has been built into the performance appraisal system for employees, it is not addressed for senior managers and does not apply to employees who do not participate in AOC's performance appraisal system.

We also reported in April 2002 that AOC needed to clearly define roles, responsibilities, and authorities of safety personnel at the central and

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<sup>4</sup>An OSHA recordable is any work-related injury or illness that results in death, loss of consciousness, days away from work, restricted work activity or transfer, or medical treatment beyond first aid.

jurisdictional levels. According to the central and jurisdictional safety staffs, AOC has now clearly defined their respective roles and responsibilities. However, it is still unclear how they are being held accountable for achieving the safety program's goals. The central safety office staff are responsible for the overall management of the 43 specialized programs, and they rely on the jurisdictional safety specialists to develop the specific procedures necessary for AOC to fully implement these programs. The jurisdictional safety specialists report to jurisdictional superintendents and not to the Director of Safety, Fire, and Environmental Programs, and they have other safety responsibilities and tasks, such as training and investigating accidents and injuries. Because jurisdictional safety specialists must focus on safety priorities as established by superintendents and line managers in their jurisdictions, they have limited time to spend on developing procedures to implement the specialized safety programs.

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**Employee Involvement:**  
**AOC Has Established**  
**Mechanisms for**  
**Involvement, but Complete**  
**Reporting of Hazards Is Not**  
**Assured**

AOC has a number of mechanisms to obtain employee involvement in its safety program and encourages employees to report injuries and hazards. AOC now needs to establish a formal reporting mechanism in order to provide assurance that these safety data are complete. AOC has established employee safety committees at both the jurisdictional and senior management levels. The jurisdictional committees, referred to as Jurisdictional Occupational Safety and Health committees, include frontline employees and jurisdictional specialists who perform a variety of activities ranging from training to accident investigations. The senior management committee, referred to as the Safety, Health, and Environmental Council, or SHEC, consists of superintendents and AOC safety staff. This committee meets quarterly and addresses various topics on an ad hoc basis. As we reported in April 2002, establishing these committees is a positive step toward achieving employee involvement. In its baseline assessment of AOC, DuPont Safety Resources cited these mechanisms as a strength of the agency's worker safety program.

Employee involvement also includes establishing procedures for employees to report job-related illnesses, injuries, incidents, and hazards and encouraging them to do so. In April 2002, the Architect issued a memorandum encouraging employees to report all injuries and illnesses, regardless of severity. Many of the focus group participants indicated that they generally felt comfortable reporting injuries, incidents, and hazards. However, there were participants in some focus groups who indicated that they were hesitant to report hazards because they were not sure how

seriously their supervisors would treat these reports. Many participants commented that they did not feel protected from safety and health hazards. For example, some participants said that they were not adequately prepared to deal with hazardous substances. In that respect, policies and procedures for reporting accidents should also apply to hazards and other conditions that may lead to accidents. The recent implementation of a performance appraisal system that holds frontline employees under this system accountable for observing and promptly reporting safety issues to supervisors is a very encouraging step. If effectively implemented, this appraisal system will also help ensure that employees will be encouraged to report hazards, that supervisors will take those reports seriously, and that senior managers will be accountable for acting on these reports.

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**Identification, Analysis, and Development of Controls for Problem Jobs: AOC's Inconsistent Approach Does Not Ensure a Risk-Based Approach to Addressing Workplace Hazards**

AOC has a number of procedures in place to identify the underlying hazards that make jobs dangerous and to develop remedies for those hazards. However, these efforts are inconsistent and do not ensure that corrective actions are taken to eliminate hazards and prevent future injuries and illnesses. A comprehensive, consistently implemented system is critical to providing AOC with the assurance that its efforts are risk based—targeted directly toward identifying and abating those factors leading to the most severe and frequent incidents, accidents, and hazards.

We reported in April 2002 that AOC has provided some assurance that accidents are being investigated and hazards addressed by placing safety specialists in several jurisdictions. Yet, there is no consistent AOC-wide system for conducting investigations and follow-up to ensure that workers across the jurisdictions are receiving the same level of protection. In the absence of an AOC-wide system, we found that some of the jurisdictions have (1) developed their own specific procedures for conducting investigations, (2) involved different staff members in the investigations, and (3) developed their own forms to gather accident or incident data. However, there were a few focus group participants who questioned whether sufficient controls existed to ensure that supervisors acted on all reports, particularly those that are not documented. We found that only two of AOC's eight jurisdictions have procedures for tracking hazard reports and the follow-up actions taken to address those reports, even when there has not been an accident. In the absence of consistent AOC-wide processes for conducting investigations, we found generally ad hoc or infrequent efforts to use existing information from either the internal workers' compensation database or from other sources to look for common problem areas to identify potentially hazardous jobs.

Because AOC has not yet established an agencywide procedure to ensure that all jurisdictions perform at least a basic level of investigation and data gathering, it does not have the means for assuring that actual and potential causes of accidents will be abated. DuPont Safety Resources also found that AOC could improve its investigation process, and in 1998, the Office of Compliance recommended that AOC develop a system to routinely investigate accidents or hazardous situations and to ensure that hazards are corrected.

AOC has recognized the need to have better information on problem jobs and is beginning to make several improvements in this area. For example, AOC has contracted with PHS to conduct agencywide job hazard analyses. Eventually, this information on job hazards will be integrated with the agency's Computer Aided Facility Management System, although AOC has not set a date for when this will be accomplished. Also, AOC has procured a data system—the Facility Management Assistant system—that it plans to use for recording and monitoring the results of inspections. According to AOC safety officials, this system should help safety personnel identify potential problem areas. However, this system is not scheduled for full implementation until later in fiscal year 2003. Finally, as a part of its long-term effort to develop its 43 specialized safety programs, AOC has included at least 2 programs, scheduled to be implemented by the end of fiscal year 2005 that will address “Mishap Prevention and Reporting” and “Hazard Abatement and Inspections,” but these programs have yet to be developed or approved. In the meantime, at the recommendation of DuPont Safety Resources, AOC has convened several work groups composed of safety and other relevant staff to help improve accident and near-miss reporting and investigations, which we hope will guide AOC's efforts to develop an agencywide system for conducting investigations and follow-up.

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**Education and Training:  
Activities Could Be More  
Supportive of Improving the  
Safety Culture;  
Effectiveness Evaluated in  
Achieving a Safer  
Workplace**

AOC has adopted a compliance-based approach to providing safety training to its employees. However, this type of training is not sufficient, in itself, to achieve AOC's long-range goal of instilling safety as a basic organizational value. In fiscal year 2001 alone, AOC reported that it provided over 13,000 hours of formal training to its employees. Most of this training is driven by federal safety and health regulations, which provide the basis for AOC's 43 specialized safety programs. This safety training, covering such topics as asbestos management, is offered by or through AOC's HRMD. AOC safety specialists and supervisors have also provided informal training—such as general safety awareness talks—to frontline staff in the jurisdictions. These

efforts were acknowledged in our focus groups, as almost all of the focus group participants reported receiving safety training in the last 12 months.

In addition to helping AOC achieve compliance, training should support AOC's safety goal of changing workplace culture to increase staff awareness, commitment, and involvement in safety and health. Comments from DuPont Safety Resources' representatives and some AOC safety specialists suggest that in order to change the safety culture, AOC could target its safety awareness training so that it better motivates employees at all levels to incorporate safety into all aspects of their work. Many focus group participants reported that they did not understand how some of the training provided was pertinent to their work. Once AOC has gathered the safety data it needs to help it assess the areas of highest risk for hazards, injuries, accidents, and illnesses, AOC's safety training could also be targeted to address these high-risk areas.

A comprehensive approach to evaluate the effectiveness of training includes assessments of changes in employee behaviors and how the training influences organizational results. While AOC performs quality control assessments for each course offered, it has not evaluated the overall effectiveness of its training activities to determine if they are helping AOC achieve a safer workplace and improving the safety culture. In this regard, as noted above, the majority of the formal training provided is required by federal safety and health regulations, and although AOC routinely obtains feedback from employees and subject matter experts on the quality of individual courses, there is little effort to evaluate whether these courses are having an impact on AOC employees' work habits, so it is not clear to AOC if this training is effective in achieving this objective.

AOC safety and HRMD staffs have not yet established a systematic process to identify training needs for individual employees to help ensure the safety program's success. Instead jurisdictional safety specialists, working with HRMD, are developing this training on an ad hoc basis. For example, according to the House jurisdiction safety specialist, supervisors needed additional skills to fully understand their role in the safety program. The House jurisdiction worked through HRMD and the National Safety Council of Maryland to deliver this type of training to supervisors in the House.

Also, the procedures and responsibilities for monitoring training requirements for the safety program are not well defined. Currently, the HRMD staff, the central safety office staff, jurisdictional safety specialists, and frontline supervisors share responsibilities for monitoring safety

training. HRMD maintains a central record of AOC-sponsored training courses and employees' training attendance but does not identify when employees need training. As a result, jurisdictional safety specialists and frontline supervisors must determine when employees need required training and ensure that they receive such training. For example, jurisdictional safety specialists are tracking this information themselves using individual systems, thus leading to inconsistencies across jurisdictions and potentially duplicative record-keeping activities. AOC's draft *Safety Master Plan* refers to a "tickler"<sup>5</sup> that, once developed, is to be included in the central training system and will identify training needs for individual employees. This tool, in addition to a system that inventories employees' certifications and licenses, should be valuable in helping AOC employees stay abreast of their safety training needs and requirements.

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**Medical Management:  
Activities Can Be Better  
Coordinated with AOC's  
Safety Program So  
Potentially Useful  
Information Can Be  
Routinely Shared**

AOC's medical management activities are carried out by several offices with no central coordination, so valuable information about workplace injuries and illnesses is not routinely shared or best used to target prevention efforts. Overall, AOC's medical management activities are aimed at reducing the incidence and severity of work-related injuries and illnesses and controlling workers' compensation costs, which have changed little over the last several years. (See figure 2). AOC has partnered with the congressional Office of the Attending Physician (OAP) to conduct OSHA-mandated medical examinations for AOC employees exposed to hazardous substances, while HRMD has developed a return-to-work program that offers modified-duty assignments to enable recovering employees to return to work as soon as practical. HRMD also provides active outreach to AOC employees to keep them informed about their rights and duties with respect to the federal workers compensation program. In addition, HRMD follows up on reports of program abuses through private investigations and ongoing contact with the Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs.

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<sup>5</sup>A file that serves as a reminder and is arranged to bring matters to timely attention. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th Edition (Springfield, MA), 1977.

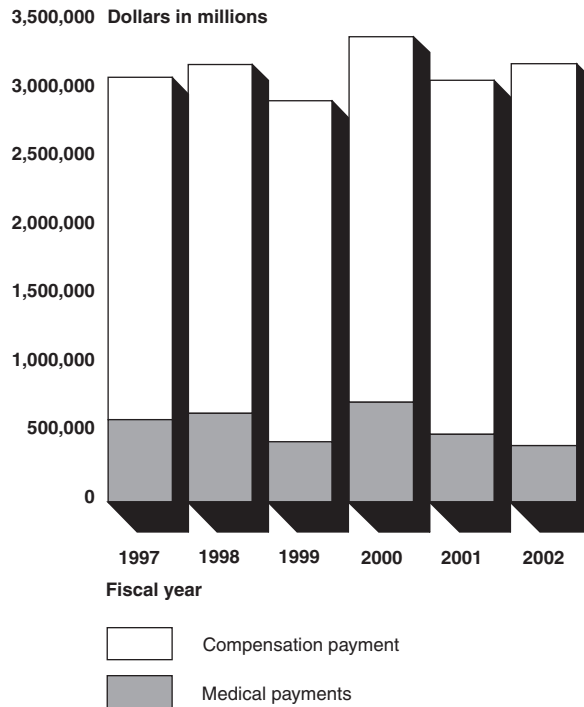


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**for Addressing Long-standing Worker Safety,**  
**Project Management, and Recycling Issues**

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**Figure 2: AOC Workers' Compensation Payments, Fiscal Years 1997 through 2002**



Source: Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs and AOC.

Although these activities generally support AOC's safety program, we have observed a lack of clarity regarding the roles of the many offices involved in these efforts. Medical management activities typically involve a number of separate entities, including human resources staff, health care providers, occupational health and safety experts, employees, and managers. To be effective, these activities require a high level of coordination among these entities. However, the lack of clarity at AOC has led to a limited exchange of important information that could be used to improve the safety program's performance.

In particular, the role of OAP could be more clearly defined and expanded, in accordance with the 1998 *Memorandum of Understanding* between AOC and OAP.<sup>6</sup> OAP provides primary care and emergency, environmental, and occupational health services in direct support of members of the Congress, their staffs, pages, visiting dignitaries, and tourists.<sup>7</sup> As specified in the *Memorandum of Understanding*, OAP conducts OSHA-mandated medical examinations for AOC employees exposed to hazardous substances, provides first aid for many AOC employees, and approves modified-duty assignments for recovering AOC employees.<sup>8</sup> However, the *Memorandum of Understanding* allows a broader role for OAP in providing medical expertise, which could potentially include providing valuable data on the hazards causing injuries and illnesses at AOC, providing trend information on the results of medical examinations, and helping AOC standardize reporting procedures. According to the Director of AOC's Safety, Fire, and Environmental Programs, as many as 30 percent of AOC's reported injuries are probably not serious enough to warrant medical treatment. However, it is difficult to determine the severity of reported injuries without better injury data, underscoring the need for standardized reporting procedures. OAP could be instrumental in helping AOC develop these procedures.

AOC central safety staff and HRMD could coordinate more to facilitate the exchange of information to further control workers' compensation costs. In particular, HRMD staff uses injury data primarily for processing workers' compensation claims, but the central safety office does not systematically or routinely analyze these data to better understand and address the causes of injuries and illnesses. Also, superintendents do not routinely receive data on the costs associated with injuries in each jurisdiction, so they are not fully aware of them. Having these data would help AOC hold these managers accountable for reducing these costs. Furthermore, although

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<sup>6</sup>*Memorandum of Understanding Between the Office of the Architect of the Capitol and the Office of the Attending Physician*, signed December, 1998, effective date: January 4, 1999.

<sup>7</sup>OAP was established in 1928 and employs about 37 staff, 17 of whom are nurses employed by AOC. OAP also treats justices of the Supreme Court and maintains a liaison with military and civilian hospitals to facilitate necessary referrals of patients requiring hospitalization.

<sup>8</sup>Medical surveillance examinations are required by OSHA for employees whose jobs expose them to known hazards, such as arsenic or benzene. These examinations are conducted at scheduled intervals, that is, yearly, in order to detect health problems in exposed employees early enough to prevent or limit the progression of a work-related disease by limiting further exposure and by offering timely medical intervention.

HRMD encourages supervisor involvement in identifying and overseeing modified-duty assignments that would enable AOC to engage injured workers in productive work to reduce injury costs, some jurisdictional staff we spoke with generally do not feel it is their responsibility to do so. One way to ensure that information is fully disclosed and analyzed is to provide a regular forum, such as a work group of superintendents, HRMD staff, OAP staff, and safety specialists, to discuss new and ongoing claims. This strategy has been adopted by the Department of Defense (DOD) and has proved to be useful in managing workers' compensation claims and costs, according to DOD officials who specialize in this area. By focusing management attention on workers' compensation claims and costs, AOC may provide a clearer incentive for staff at all levels to be more actively involved in modified-duty assignments and in other safety activities.

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## Conclusions

AOC has taken significant steps toward implementing the necessary components of an effective worker safety and health program, and the level of effort it has devoted to worker safety is unquestionable. However, achieving a safer workplace at AOC will depend in part on AOC's ability to integrate the safety goals in its draft *Safety Master Plan* with the strategic goals in its draft Strategic Plan to bring about long-term cultural change so that there is little tolerance for unsafe work practices. AOC's potential to realize success is greater if it develops safety goals and measures that are fully integrated with AOC's other agencywide goals; this is the best way to ensure that management and employees are clear about where safety stands in relation to the many other work priorities AOC faces every day. For example, in order to ensure that AOC achieves its fiscal year 2005 completion target for the 43 specialized safety programs, we believe that identifying interim milestones and measures would help AOC assess its progress in achieving its target.

AOC could also benefit from having clearly defined and documented policies and procedures for reporting hazards, much like those that exist for injuries and illnesses, for this is the best way to ensure that AOC fully understands problem areas. There is also merit to having consistent procedures for conducting investigations and follow-up, so AOC will be assured that potential hazards are being addressed consistently in all jurisdictions.

Regarding its safety training and medical management activities, AOC has made initial efforts to incorporate the knowledge and skills of various offices to help the safety program. Nonetheless, there are untapped

resources within AOC that could be better utilized to help the safety program achieve its goals. For example, training that is more directly linked to AOC's goal of adopting a safety culture, as well as more effective assessments of that training, will help AOC achieve its goals more efficiently. Also, AOC could benefit from a clearer definition of responsibilities for tracking and recording training that is received. AOC could also make better use of OAP's resources. There are a number of additional functions OAP can provide for AOC that we believe are consistent with the current *Memorandum of Understanding*, such as providing valuable data on the hazards causing injuries and illnesses at AOC. We also believe that a senior-management group that routinely discusses workers' compensation claims and costs will help highlight these issues to all managers, and ultimately make managers more accountable for reducing these costs. By taking advantage of these opportunities, AOC could ensure that these medical management activities are better linked to the goals of the safety program and the overall mission of the agency.

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## Recommendations for Agency Action

To enhance AOC's ongoing efforts to establish a strategy for the worker safety program by establishing safety program goals that are fully integrated with AOC's agencywide goals, we recommend that the Architect of the Capitol

- identify performance measures for safety goals and objectives, including measures for how AOC will implement the 43 specialized safety programs and how superintendents and employees will be held accountable for achieving results;
- establish clearly defined and documented policies and procedures for reporting hazards similar to those that apply to injury and illness reporting;
- establish a consistent, AOC-wide system for conducting investigations and follow-up;
- establish a safety training curriculum that fully supports all of the goals of the safety program and further evaluate the effectiveness of the training provided;
- assign clear responsibility for tracking and recording training received by AOC employees, including maintaining an inventory of employees' certifications and licenses;

- clarify and explore the possibility of expanding the role of OAP in helping AOC meet its safety goals, consistent with the broad responsibilities laid out in the 1998 *Memorandum of Understanding* between AOC and OAP; and
- establish a senior management work group that will routinely discuss workers' compensation cases and costs, and develop strategies to reduce these injuries and costs.

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## AOC Has Identified Best Practices for Project Management, but Implementation Is Uneven

AOC is responsible for the maintenance, operation, preservation, and development of the buildings and grounds primarily located within the Capitol Hill complex. The historic nature and high-profile use of many of these buildings create a complex environment in which to carry out this mission. As a part of that mission, AOC is responsible for making all necessary capital improvements within the complex, including major renovations and new construction. Over the next few years, four high-profile capital projects are expected to cost over a half billion dollars: the \$265 million Capitol Visitors' Center project, the \$122.3 million Supreme Court Modernization project, the \$81.8 million West Refrigeration Plant Expansion project, and a combined \$72 million for the House and Senate Perimeter Security projects initiated following the events of September 11, 2001.

The magnitude of AOC's recent projects and the recent growth in annual appropriations highlights the importance of managing this large portfolio of projects according to leading industry practices. As shown in figure 3, AOC's annual appropriations for capital projects has increased over the last 10 years from \$23.6 million in fiscal year 1994 to \$190.3 million in fiscal year 2003. AOC's capital appropriations peaked in fiscal year 2001 at \$279 million due to a \$244 million emergency supplemental appropriation following the terrorist attacks—over a 700 percent increase above the original capital appropriation. The growth in capital appropriations is most evident in the last 5 years: the average capital appropriation from fiscal years 1999 through 2003 was \$186.5 million, while the average capital appropriation over the previous 5 years was \$35.6 million.

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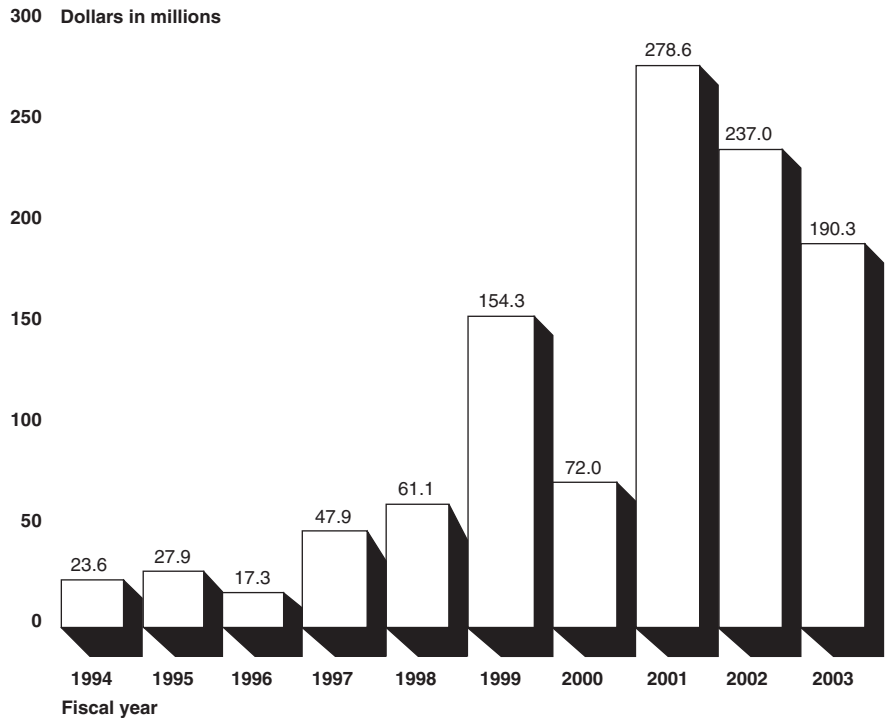
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**Figure 3: AOC Annual Appropriations for Capital Projects from Fiscal Years 1994 through 2003**



Source: AOC.

Notes: The fiscal year 2003 capital project appropriation is the amount requested by AOC. Annual appropriations for capital projects do not include appropriations related to the Supreme Court jurisdiction.

AOC's Office of the Chief of Design and Construction (OCODC) is responsible for the planning, design, and construction of capital projects vital to achieving the agency's mission. The office also provides technical assistance to AOC jurisdictions as they handle their day-to-day operations. The office is divided into separate divisions that provide the direct and indirect services that are required throughout a project's life cycle: (1) Architecture Division, (2) Engineering Division, (3) Construction Management Division, and (4) Technical Support Division. The office also has a Planning and Programming Division, which is not currently staffed, and there is a proposal for a separate Project Management Division.

As of May 2002, OCO DC had a total of 128 full time equivalents, excluding Davis-Bacon workers assigned to the Construction Branch. Responsibility for the management of individual projects, including schedule, budget, scope, and quality, primarily falls to architects and engineers who are assigned as project managers. However, AOC jurisdiction staff can also be assigned as project managers for capital projects within their jurisdictions. As of July 2002, AOC had 83 individuals—58 from the Office of Design and Construction and 25 from AOC jurisdictions—listed as project managers in some capacity. The majority, however, are not dedicated solely to the task of project management. AOC supplements its staff by contracting for many of the design, construction, and construction management services.

AOC divides capital projects into four categories:

- small capital projects—those valued at less than \$250,000 and estimated to take an average of 1 year to complete;
- medium capital projects—those valued from \$250,000 to \$5 million and estimated to take an average of 3 years to complete;
- large capital projects—those valued at more than \$5 million and estimated to take an average of 5 years to complete; and,
- large capital projects with construction managers—those valued at more than \$20 million and estimated to take an average of more than 5 years to complete.

As of June 2002, AOC’s workload consisted of 30 small capital projects, 94 medium capital projects, 12 large capital projects, and, 4 large capital projects with construction managers. This does not include hundreds of other projects, such as floor plan redesigns, sketches, and jurisdiction-funded projects that are a core part of OCO DC responsibilities.

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### **AOC Has Recognized the Need to Improve Its Project Planning and Delivery Processes**

AOC recognizes that a disciplined project management process can help it complete capital projects on schedule, on budget, within scope, and of the highest quality. In 1999, AOC initiated several reviews of its project planning and delivery processes by independent consultant firms. The goal of the reviews was to streamline the agency’s processes and staff organization based upon “best practices” drawn from AOC and industry, as well as to address a management concern that a lack of continuity in project management resulted in a loss of effectiveness and efficiency in

overall project delivery. As a result of these initiatives, AOC sought to create a consistent process to which all projects and project managers adhere, create a system where project managers are dedicated to individual projects from “cradle-to-grave”—that is, from a project’s initiation to its completion, and increase the use of consultants to reduce the burden on in-house staff.

According to AOC, the best practices process took a year to develop and a year to implement. The policies and procedures are codified in various manuals produced and updated by AOC since 1999, two of which have recently been finalized.<sup>9</sup> Since then, AOC has continued to review its best practices initiatives. For example, the consulting firm CenterLine Associates is assessing how the best practice standards and procedures have been applied across five capital projects.<sup>10</sup> The effort is expected to identify improvements that can be incorporated into AOC standards, policies, and procedures, as well as identify areas to be covered in future project-delivery training sessions. AOC is also implementing a formal process for planning and budgeting for its capital projects, adapted from the DOD’s military construction budgeting process, that is intended to clearly define requirements and priorities, and requires that requests be reviewed, validated, and approved before submission to the Congress. This formal process augments the policy requiring a 100 percent complete design before AOC requests construction funds.

As AOC moves forward with its project management initiatives and consistent with the strategic management framework discussed in chapter 2, AOC needs to ensure that it has the overall infrastructure in place to effectively implement and take full advantage of the best practices that are designed to improve project planning, design, and construction management:

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<sup>9</sup>The manuals include the AOC Project Managers Manual, which defines the roles and responsibilities of the project manager (Final, October 2002); the A/E Design Manual, which defines the requirements and deliverables from architectural and engineering consultants hired by AOC (Final, July 2002); the PIC User Guide, which details how project-related information should be entered into the Project Information Center system (Interim, November 2001); and the AOC Design Standards, which defines design practice and quality levels for facilities constructed for AOC (Draft, October 2002).

<sup>10</sup>The five projects undergoing review are the Rayburn House Office Building Sprinkler/Telecom project, the Cannon House Office Building Garage Repairs project, the Dirksen Senate Office Building Infrastructure Modernization project, the Fort Meade Book Storage Facility Module I project, and the Relocation of the House Page Dormitory project.



- top leadership commitment,
- master planning for the Capitol Hill complex,
- transparent process to prioritize projects,
- strategy and tools to communicate,
- outcome-oriented goals and performance measures,
- proper alignment of staff and resources, and
- strategic human capital management.

Without these elements, AOC and the Congress have no assurance that the project management initiatives are being employed to their fullest potential. Consequently, AOC cannot be assured that the capital projects it is managing can be completed on schedule, on budget, and within scope and are of high quality and meet the needs of their customers.

#### Top Leadership Commitment

As with other critical management issues, the sustained commitment of top leadership will be vital to the success of AOC's project management initiatives. On an ongoing basis, AOC leadership must set the clear expectation that staff adhere to the established best practice policies and procedures and then hold project management staff and contractors accountable for meeting this expectation. However, several project managers stated that they rely more heavily on their own experiences than on the specific policies and procedures laid out in the project manager manuals. One AOC official with project management responsibilities specifically noted, with respect to the best practices, that he did not know "if any of it was required," but that if something was required he would be doing it.

AOC officials responsible for overall project management can also show leadership by initiating a shift in the way AOC supervises its projects from solely focusing on crisis management to more active oversight. Several senior OCODC officials noted that their principal supervisory role is to resolve problems faced by project management staff. Interaction between project managers and senior management then is often limited to times when they "kick problems upstairs." This reactionary approach leaves open the possibility that other risks or opportunities exist that are not being addressed. We are not suggesting, however, that AOC supervisors engage in

micromanagement of the project managers' day-to-day activities. Rather, more active supervision would help ensure that project managers are held accountable for following best practices, achieving measurable results or outcomes, meeting the needs of clients, and communicating routinely with project stakeholders—both internal and external.

### Master Planning for the Capitol Hill Complex

AOC's best practice initiatives are intended to begin with a planning process that incorporates four sets of plans: a 20-year master plan, a 10-year facility assessment, a 5-year capital spending plan, and a 1-year jurisdiction plan. All capital projects are supposed to be consistent with those planning efforts, except for projects requested by individual members of the Congress outside of the normal budget cycle. However, AOC does not yet have a master plan or a facility assessment plan, nor does AOC have formalized capital spending or jurisdiction plans.

In July 2001, at the direction of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, AOC contracted with the National Academy of Sciences (National Academy) to hold a planning workshop to determine the scope of a Capitol Hill complex Master Plan.<sup>11</sup> Based on the results of the workshop, which was held September 23 through 24, 2002, AOC will develop a request for proposal for the master plan. While these initial efforts are positive steps, the overall effort has been slow to take shape given that the workshop took place over a year after the Senate's directive. Moreover, as stated in chapter 2, AOC needs to tie its various long-term planning initiatives, including the master planning effort, to the agencywide strategic planning effort and obtain stakeholders' input throughout the process. This message was reinforced by participants in the National Academy's workshop, who explained that the master plan must be guided by a vision statement for the Capitol Hill complex, which is developed with stakeholder input and consistent with AOC's strategic plan.

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<sup>11</sup>S. Rep. No. 107-37 at 29 (2001).

A key component of a master plan is building condition assessments (BCA), which are systematic evaluations of an organization's capital assets. Such assessments will help AOC to "evaluate deferred maintenance and funding requirements; plan a deferred maintenance reduction program; compare conditions between facilities; establish baselines for setting goals and tracking progress; provide accurate and supportable information for planning and justifying budgets; facilitate the establishment of funding priorities; and develop budget and funding analyses and strategies."<sup>12</sup>

A number of AOC executives agreed that BCAs are a necessary first step to a comprehensive preventive maintenance program. However, according to AOC officials, AOC has never completed formal condition assessments of the facilities it is responsible for maintaining. Senior AOC and jurisdiction executives also stated that preventive maintenance of AOC's assets has never been a major focus. According to AOC officials, AOC's recent pilot effort to conduct an assessment of the Capitol Building was unsuccessful due to miscommunication of expectations between the agency and the contractor performing the assessment. Without BCAs, the agency has no assurance that it has fully documented the Capitol Hill complex's preventive maintenance needs and cannot develop an overall plan with which to address those needs. As a result, AOC is unable to assure the Congress that the facilities in the Capitol Hill complex will be effectively and efficiently maintained and preserved consistent with the historic and high-profile nature of those facilities.

AOC recently formed a condition assessment team with representatives from each of the larger jurisdictions to develop a detailed statement of work that specifies exactly what is required of a BCA contractor. When conducted, the BCAs must be carried out consistently across all jurisdictions to help ensure that all assets are evaluated in the same manner and that AOC-wide priorities can be set and trade-offs made. The project manager focus group participants also pointed out that the BCAs will require substantial involvement from employees of many of the jurisdictional shops who will be asked to provide technical information, logistical support, and other forms of assistance to the assessment teams. Therefore, AOC must also plan for and set aside resources required by AOC jurisdictions for the effort. According to the National Research Council,

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<sup>12</sup>National Research Council, *Stewardship of Federal Facilities: A Proactive Strategy for Managing the Nation's Public Assets* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1998), p. 43.

using a risk-based approach, the initial assessments should focus on life, health, and safety issues and on critical building system components needed to operate effectively.<sup>13</sup>

AOC also needs staff dedicated to ensuring that the master plan and building condition assessments are successfully completed. AOC officials told us they had hired a new Director of Facilities Planning and Programming in early December 2002. AOC officials stated that they are in the process of hiring an assistant planner and an assistant programmer. Because these individuals and the office would be the champions for the master planning and building condition assessment efforts, it is important that AOC fully staff the office with qualified individuals.

#### Transparent Process to Prioritize Projects

An agencywide strategic plan and a complexwide master plan will help AOC determine priorities and then communicate them both internally to employees and externally to clients. In the absence of a strategic plan and a master plan to help determine overall priorities, AOC does not have a transparent process to prioritize its current projects. In the near term, a transparent process that incorporates stakeholder input would allow AOC to prioritize projects in a well documented manner. In the long term, AOC would be able to integrate the guidance of the strategic plan and master plan within a transparent priority setting process.

AOC assigns a priority designation for each of the projects in its appropriations request—1-A, 1-B, 1-C, and 2-A, 2-B, and so on through 3-C at the lowest end of the priority scale. These priorities are further categorized as Life Safety, Americans with Disabilities Act, Security, Cyclical Maintenance, Improvement, and Technology-Management Systems. According to an OCOCD official, each jurisdiction prioritizes capital projects and safety programs on a building-by-building basis for the coming fiscal year. Priorities are determined based on the subjective decisions made by jurisdiction officials and not on predefined criteria. The priorities are then converted into the 1-A, 1-B, etc., priority designations by the Budget Office staff.

However, based on our review, it is not clear that project managers use this prioritization scheme to guide their day-to-day activities. The only

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<sup>13</sup>National Research Council, *Stewardship of Federal Facilities: A Proactive Strategy for Managing the Nations's Public Assets* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1998), p. 96.

practical, day-to-day prioritization of projects we found being used was a “hot projects” list. Projects were placed on the list by a group of senior OCO DC officials who based their decisions on two undefined, subjective criteria: (1) time sensitivity and (2) high dollar volume. According to one AOC official, however, the process for placing priority projects onto the list is neither formal nor consistently applied. In fact, the official stated that the current hot project list needs to be updated to reflect fiscal year 2003 projects.

We also found a general consensus among AOC officials and project managers that prioritization of projects is a major weakness at the agency. Many lamented that AOC is unable to manage client requests for projects effectively. More specifically, AOC lacks a process that can communicate, both internally and externally, the trade-offs in prioritizing one project over another or how individual projects fit within a broader AOC framework. The confusion about overall agency priorities has also led to confusion about what individual priorities should be.

#### Strategy and Tools to Communicate

Upon establishing priorities, AOC must then incorporate the communication of priorities and progress of projects within an agencywide communications strategy. Internally, that means AOC needs to communicate its priorities to staff and provide details on how related projects are linked to one another. However, we found that AOC lacks the project management tools necessary to assist in doing these tasks. For example, officials responsible for overall project management use the Project Information Center (PIC) system to prioritize work and ascertain the progress of individual projects. However, PIC is not capable of producing a unified document that shows schedules of active projects, their interrelationships, and required staffing. Without a resource-loaded master project planning document, it is difficult to determine the effect of priority changes and to quantify project manager staffing requirements.

AOC also needs to communicate the agency’s overall priorities to its clients and report progress on projects of importance to clients. The strategic and master planning efforts and BCAs discussed above will assist AOC in determining its project priorities. As discussed in chapter 2, an effort to establish congressional protocols could also help the agency determine how those priorities should be communicated, as well as how individual project priorities will be reported.

AOC has made strides in communicating with its clients on the progress of projects. For example, AOC has developed a web site that includes a

Capitol Hill complex map of several ongoing projects. However, opportunities exist for additional progress in how AOC communicates with clients and reports progress to the Congress. Also, at the direction of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, AOC has begun issuing quarterly capital project reports on the status of all ongoing capital projects.<sup>14</sup> However, the reports we reviewed described the status of all ongoing capital projects without highlighting those projects that were behind schedule, over budget, or otherwise of interest to clients. AOC needs to begin to incorporate stakeholder feedback to better structure this reporting mechanism. For example, in our April 2002 statement, we discussed the possibility of using a “reportable events” approach to accountability reporting that is based on predefined, risk-based events that would trigger a report to the Congress and prompt immediate attention.<sup>15</sup>

However, the information reported is only as good as the information entered into the PIC system, which is the source of all project-related information. We have found that the data produced by the system and reported out by AOC are questionable because project managers do not consistently update the information in PIC. For example, a majority of the participants in the project manager focus group said they failed to consistently put information into the system because they viewed PIC as an administrative burden that provided no direct benefit to their own day-to-day activities. Additionally, our case studies showed that the project managers do not always keep PIC completely updated. For example, the Senate Recording Studio project had a current working estimate listed in PIC that was nearly double the amount appropriated for the project. Although we were told that the estimate was outdated, the information had not been updated in the PIC system. AOC officials recognize the inadequate data entry into PIC. In response, an OCODC official has recently met with all of AOC’s project managers to reinforce the importance of keeping PIC updated and to instruct them on how and what needs to be entered. While this is a positive step designed to improve the documentation of project information, AOC would benefit from more routine, systematic reviews of PIC data to uncover pervasive problems and their root causes.

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<sup>14</sup>S. Rep. No. 107-37 at 28 (2001).

<sup>15</sup>[GAO-02-632T](#).

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Outcome-Oriented Goals and  
Performance Measures for  
Project Management

As we discussed in chapter 2, AOC needs to work with its stakeholders to determine its long-term strategic goals for project management and develop annual performance goals that provide a connection between long-term goals and the day-to-day activities of its managers and their staff. This effort will enable AOC to track its progress, provide critical information for decision making, and create incentives for individual behavior by providing a basis for individual accountability.

In its draft strategic plan, AOC has identified facilities management and project management as two “focus areas,” and defined strategic goals for each focus area. However, AOC has not yet clearly defined the outcome-oriented goals and performance measures in each focus area. For example, as an outcome within the project management focus area, AOC lists “Projects and related services are executed and delivered on time and on budget.” To further clarify its goals, AOC could define terms such as “projects and related services” and establish quantitative performance measures for outcomes such as “on time” and “on budget.” Because AOC lacks specific measures, it is unclear whether AOC will be able to assess its current performance baseline, or how AOC will seek to improve. For example, it is unclear to internal and external AOC stakeholders if AOC’s goal is to improve on time delivery by a percentage point, or if it is to achieve some undefined standard. As AOC moves forward and establishes goals and measures for project management, it will be in a better position to consider how to balance competing needs, such as client satisfaction and quality against the need to meet deadlines and stay within budgets.

Alignment of Project  
Management Staff and  
Resources to Achieve Mission-  
Critical Goals

In June 2002, AOC officials responsible for overall project management identified several changes that were needed to improve the delivery of capital projects. Primarily, AOC recognized that the current “soft matrix” approach of assigning mostly architects and engineers as project managers who are assisted by task leaders from various sub-disciplines was ineffective because, according to an AOC report on a proposed staff realignment within the Office of the Assistant Architect, there was no “clear objective, no supervisory authority that can exercise accountability over the Project Managers, and no clear lines of communication.”<sup>16</sup> AOC officials responsible for project management proposed to senior AOC executives the creation of a new and independent Project Management Division, led with strong leadership, to “improve accountability, enforce

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<sup>16</sup>AOC, Office of the Assistant Architect, Proposed Reorganization, June 6, 2002.

organizational discipline, focus on client service needs, and tailor the skills of existing staff to necessary tasks.”

The proposed staff realignment, which is in its early stages of implementation, is a good step within the framework of implementing best practices, particularly the concept of dedicated, cradle-to-grave project managers. However, AOC must ensure that this and other interim steps ultimately support the agency in meeting mission-critical goals and objectives as it develops the agencywide strategic plan. Moving forward with this realignment will require AOC to determine which individuals have the skills to be dedicated projects managers, as well as to identify the specific projects they should manage. Officials within OCODC recognize that not all of the architects and engineers who are currently assigned as project managers have the requisite skills for the job. With qualified staff, however, the realignment will ultimately address accountability issues by clarifying roles and responsibilities and creating true cradle-to-grave project management staff. Many of the project managers in our focus group stated that they are currently being asked to wear “too many hats,” which often distracts them from their primary duty to manage projects, and wanted AOC to move more quickly to a dedicated project management staff environment. We also observed that the initially slow progress of the Relocation of the Senate Recording Studio project and the Coal Handling Modernization project improved once dedicated project managers were assigned.

However, a missing component of the realignment proposal is the role of supervisors in the new project management division. AOC has not yet defined who will supervise the project managers, the number of supervisors that will be needed, nor the approach they will take with respect to supervision. AOC needs to evaluate all of these issues and integrate the role of day-to-day supervisors into the new Project Management Division.

## Strategic Human Capital Management

As discussed in chapter 2, strategic human capital management can transform an agency into a results-oriented organization by aligning employee performance with goals and by providing tools to better plan its workforce needs. AOC has taken initial steps to address the strategic workforce analysis criteria set forth in chapter 2, by identifying its project management workforce needs in its staff realignment proposal. That plan detailed tactical approaches to reassigning current project management staff and determining where additional staff would be placed within a restructured OCODC. Consistent with the strategic human capital



challenges it faces in other areas, AOC has opportunities to strengthen its efforts for its project management workforce as well. Developing a set of core technical competencies for project management and implementing a training and development program for those competencies are two areas requiring particular attention.

AOC has not developed project management-specific technical competencies that define for what project managers will be held accountable. Defined competencies are important for ensuring that the right people are employed in the right positions and that they are routinely held accountable for their work. As a basis for developing these competencies, AOC can refer to standards developed by leading professional organizations. For example, the Project Management Institute (PMI) has published *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* (PMBOK) that organizes the components of project management into nine knowledge areas: project integration management, project scope management, project time management, project cost management, project quality management, project human resources management, project communications management, project risk management, and project procurement management. Other entities have successfully used these knowledge areas as the basis for developing technical competencies. For example, the Australian government uses PMBOK as the basis for its National Competency Standards for Project Management.

As a next step, AOC could identify and implement training programs that are linked to the core and technical competencies required of project managers. Doing so is an essential component of building an effective and professional project management staff. To date, it is unclear whether AOC's training fully supports the implementation of best practices throughout the agency. For example, some project manager focus group participants noted that they were not given initial orientation that familiarized them with AOC, including services provided by other offices, or that familiarized them with their ultimate client—the Congress. And if AOC is to effectively implement best practices, newly hired project managers must be trained in the policies and procedures and all project managers must receive ongoing best practice training as policies and procedures are revised. We found that neither of the project managers for the case studies we reviewed was provided best practice training when they were first hired, and one was not provided a copy of the project manager manual. AOC officials also stated that they have not yet provided updated best practices training sessions for

project managers, although they said they plan to use the ongoing best practices assessments mentioned above to tailor such training.

Finally, AOC should require professional development certification and training, although this may not need to be provided internally by AOC. PMI administers a globally accepted and recognized professional certification program for project managers, which requires a specific level of education and experience, adherence to a code of professional conduct, successful completion of an examination, and ongoing continuing education requirements.

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## Conclusions

As AOC moves forward with its project management initiatives, several elements are critical to the thorough implementation of best practices that are designed to improve project planning, design, and construction management. Project management could be improved by demonstrating top leadership commitment to change, planning, establishing outcome-oriented goals, and strategically managing human capital to achieve those goals. A Capitol Hill complex-wide master planning effort, including building condition assessments, will help AOC establish long-term priorities. Similarly, a transparent process to prioritize agency capital projects will help AOC clarify its short-term (1 to 5 years) focus. As a part of a broader communication strategy, effective reporting mechanisms will help AOC convey these long- and short-term priorities, as well detail the progress of projects to stakeholders. Clearly defining project-management-related measures will also help AOC achieve mission-critical strategic and annual performance goals. Finally, the alignment of project management staff and resources in accordance with best practices policies and procedures will help institutionalize those practices and help AOC meet mission-critical goals. Without these elements, AOC and the Congress have no assurance that the project management initiatives are being employed to their fullest potential. Consequently, AOC cannot be assured that the capital projects it is managing can be completed on schedule, on budget, and within scope and are of high quality and meet the needs of their customers.

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## Recommendations for Agency Action

To improve project management—project planning, design, and construction—at AOC, we recommend that Architect of the Capitol

- develop a Capitol Hill complex master plan and complete condition assessments of all buildings and facilities under the jurisdiction of AOC;
- develop a process for assigning project priorities that is based on clearly defined, well documented, consistently applied, and transparent criteria;
- develop tools to effectively communicate priorities and progress of projects, as a part of a broader communication strategy;
- define project-management-related performance measures to achieve mission-critical strategic and annual performance goals; and
- align project management staff and resources with AOC's mission-critical goals.

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## AOC Needs to Build on Current Efforts by Adopting a Strategic Approach to Recycling

Programs that separate and collect recyclable materials from the waste stream produce numerous benefits. It is estimated that recycling 1 ton of paper saves 17 mature trees, 3.3 cubic yards of landfill space, 7,000 gallons of water, 380 gallons of oil, 4,100 kilowatt hours of energy, and 60 pounds of air pollutants. Recently, AOC has taken several steps to improve the effectiveness of its office recycling programs; however, it could increase the benefits derived from its recycling program by taking a more strategic approach. Such an approach would include revisiting and clarifying recycling mission and goals as part of an AOC planned environmental strategy, measuring and monitoring performance against goals to gauge and improve program effectiveness, and reexamining the roles and responsibilities of the recycling program staff to ensure accountability for achieving recycling goals. We provide observations on how AOC could improve recycling results by organizationally replicating its own and others' best practices.

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## AOC Has Taken Steps to Improve Effectiveness of Recycling Programs

AOC is responsible for implementing recycling programs for much of the Capitol Hill complex. Consistent with the preliminary observations in our April 2002 statement, AOC, both centrally and at the jurisdiction level, has taken recent steps to improve the overall effectiveness of its recycling programs. Some of the steps include

- adopting a consultant’s recommendation to simplify the Senate’s recycling program to improve participation and increase effectiveness,
- developing a draft set of performance indicators and starting to collect data,
- increasing recycling promotion and education efforts,
- surveying recycling clients in the House to determine if the program is meeting their needs, and
- sharing information on recycling promotion and education strategies among the House and Senate recycling program managers.

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### **AOC’s Recycling Program Has Made Limited Progress in Achieving Typical Recycling Goals**

Office recycling programs can have a variety of environmental and financial benefits. A typical goal is reducing to the extent possible the amount of solid waste sent to landfills. Another typical goal is generating as much revenue as possible from the sale of the recyclable materials collected. A key to achieving either goal is making the recycling program as easy as possible for employees to use. Generally, the less sorting, decision making, and walking required by individual participants, the more successful the program will be. Although the two goals of waste reduction and revenue generation are not mutually exclusive, the relative importance placed on these goals generally affects the design of the recycling program implemented.

Specifically, a recycling program with the goal of generating revenue, commonly referred to as a source separation program, is more complicated, expensive, and difficult to implement than a program designed for waste reduction. This is because separating a greater variety of recyclable materials at the source requires more resources for educating clients and the recycling staff, collecting the recyclable materials, and monitoring for compliance. The complexity of source separation, unfortunately, also increases the likelihood of contamination of the recyclable materials collected (potentially recyclable materials are mixed together with other categories of recyclables or wet waste), reducing their value and increasing the volume of waste sent to landfills. Given the complexity and potential performance problems with a source separation program, an organization needs to analyze the costs and benefits of such a program compared to other, simpler options to determine whether such a program will be cost-effective.

High levels of contamination have prevented the House and Senate recycling programs from substantially achieving either waste reduction or revenue generation. AOC's recycling contractor does not pay for high-grade (e.g., white copy) paper with greater than 5 percent contamination or mixed-grade (e.g., glossy or colored) paper with greater than 10 percent contamination. From fiscal years 2001 through 2002, AOC did improve its recycling results. According to General Services Administration (GSA) data, the rate of contamination of recyclable paper products collected dropped from 70 percent in fiscal year 2001 to 55 percent in fiscal year 2002 in the House jurisdiction and from 60 percent to 37 percent in the Senate jurisdiction. However, although AOC avoided the cost of disposing of the waste, the contaminated materials generated no revenue. The recycling contractor may sort and recycle some of this contaminated waste, but some potentially recyclable materials may be too contaminated and will ultimately go to a landfill.

During fiscal year 2002, the Senate jurisdiction implemented a consultant's recommendation to change from a source separation to a simpler combined-paper recycling program. According to the consultant's report, simplifying the program by reducing the amount of source separation required could both increase revenue and decrease the contamination levels. In contrast, the House jurisdiction continues to operate a more complex source-separation program. Similar to the conclusions made in the review of the recycling program operations for the Senate program, a recently completed consultant study of the House program made the point that a mixed-paper program is easier to administer and usually leads to increased participation, decreased contamination, and less collection time. However, the consultant's report did not recommend making any changes to the House's program at this time because it found the existing program to be "user-friendly" and accepted. Nonetheless, given the high rates of contamination in the House recycling program, AOC needs to closely monitor contamination to determine if a simpler program design is warranted.

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**AOC Needs to Revisit and Clarify Recycling Mission and Goals as Part of Its Planned Environmental Strategy**

AOC's goals for its recycling programs are unclear. AOC has not documented any mission and goals for its recycling programs. We found various references—albeit indirect and inconsistent—to AOC recycling goals. For example, a 1999 audit by the AOC Inspector General, indicated that AOC is pursuing the goal of waste reduction. A similar goal is indicated in the position description of the AOC Resource Conservation Program Manager. In contrast, the position descriptions for the House and Senate

recycling program managers state that these managers are responsible for, among other things, increasing the financial returns of their programs.

If AOC's goal is to generate as much revenue as possible through a source separation program, then based on the high rate of contamination it will need to design a program that is much more aggressive in terms of the education, training, and equipment it provides to participants and the collection staff. However, if the goal is reducing the volume of waste sent to landfills, then AOC should implement a simpler program, requiring as little separation as possible to increase participation and compliance as was done in the Senate. In addition, AOC has made some effort to expand its recycling program to other facilities within the Capitol Hill complex, such as the Botanic Garden, the Page Dormitory, and—in response to our recent suggestion—the Capital Power Plant. Furthermore, according to AOC officials, AOC recycles fluorescent lamps, batteries, scrap metal, and some computer equipment and has required its contractors to recycle their construction debris. However, it has no formal plans to expand its recycling programs to include other types of recyclable materials, such as waste from its own landscaping or construction activities. Incorporating these materials into its overall recycling program could improve AOC's overall performance in reducing waste sent to landfills. However, AOC management stated that adequate resources are not presently available to carry out such expanded recycling programs, although it has requested funding for an additional position in fiscal year 2003 to assist the recycling program manager, allowing for further expansion of the recycling program.

AOC recycling program staff recently discussed their view that the mission of their recycling programs ought to be primarily reducing waste sent to landfills rather than maximizing recycling revenues. AOC management stated that it would be important to obtain input from congressional stakeholders before making any changes to the mission or goals of the program. Furthermore, clarifying the goals of the program is something AOC management would address only as part of the long-term environmental management plan for the Capitol Hill complex that it plans to undertake after completing its Safety Master Plan. Consistent with the communication strategy we outline in this report, AOC will need to seek input from its stakeholders to determine the most appropriate mission and goals for its recycling program(s). Whether the resulting program is Capitol Hill complex-wide or is tailored to meet the specific requirements of the House or Senate, AOC needs to clarify whether the primary focus of the recycling program is to reduce the total amount of waste sent to landfills, to generate a desired level of revenue, or both.

**AOC Needs to Develop a Performance Measurement, Monitoring, and Evaluation System That Supports Accomplishment of Recycling Mission and Goals**

As discussed in our April 2002 statement, to support the accomplishment of AOC’s recycling mission and goals, a performance measurement system should (1) show the degree to which the desired results were achieved, (2) be limited to the vital few measures needed for decision making, (3) be responsive to multiple priorities, and (4) establish accountability for results. Also, as part of its responsibility for handling waste from government facilities, including recyclable materials, the GSA has developed a guide that describes a number of steps an agency can take to measure and monitor recycling efforts that could be useful to AOC in developing its system. These steps are listed in table 3.

**Table 3: Ten Steps Identified by GSA for Best Administering a Recycling Program**

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Purpose and example</b>
1. Determining the building profile	Purpose: To ascertain the types of materials to be recovered in a recycling program and identify any special restrictions or requirements. Example: Does the storage space have sprinklers or will special containers be required?
2. Determining the waste stream size	Purpose: To manage and reduce a building’s waste stream; data on the total size of the waste stream are compiled. Example: Obtain monthly reports showing the amount of waste hauled.
3. Analyzing the waste stream	Purpose: To determine the quantity of various types of recyclable materials included in the waste stream. Example: Develop an estimate of the quantity of recyclable material collected daily.
4. Determining the amount recycled	Purpose: To show how much is being diverted from the waste stream. Example: The recycling contractor provides a monthly report showing the amounts and types of materials recycled.
5. Tracking the information	Purpose: To determine the percentage of the total waste stream diverted by recycling. Example: Data are entered on a regular basis, for example, monthly, and totaled at the end of the fiscal year.
6. Reporting the information	Purpose: To report status of the program to management and to offices participating in the program. Example: Reports to offices keep employees informed about how their efforts are helping the environment and measuring progress and goals.
7. Reducing the waste stream	Purpose: To determine whether trash includes recyclable materials that are improperly discarded and opportunities to recycle other materials (e.g., construction debris, discarded/leftover carpeting, or scrap metal). Example: Meet with office representatives to ascertain their container needs and find out what types of waste they generate.
8. Assessing the program	Purpose: To determine how well the program is working. Example: Observe whether employees understand how the program works or what modifications might be necessary.

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**Chapter 4  
Strategic Management Framework Important  
for Addressing Long-standing Worker Safety,  
Project Management, and Recycling Issues**

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*(Continued From Previous Page)*

9. Educating employees	Purpose: To provide employees with reasons for recycling and a description of how the program works; to reduce the container contamination by giving detailed instructions on what is and is not acceptable. Example: An environmental team consisting of building management and participating offices would promote and educate employees.
10. Monitoring and evaluating program	Purpose: To be aware of fluctuations in the volume of recycled materials collected in an effort to identify the cause and determine whether associated waste disposal costs can be reduced. Example: Periodically review waste disposal costs and assess whether the program implemented has had an impact.

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Source: U.S. General Services Administration, *Recycling Program Desk Guide* (Washington, D.C.: March 2001).

In response to the Senate Committee on Appropriations' requirement for quarterly updates on the recycling program in the Senate, AOC developed a performance measurement system that it is using to monitor both the Senate and the House recycling programs.<sup>17</sup> Initially, the indicators on which AOC collected data included, among other things, a two-digit increase in tonnage recycled, revenue generated from the sale of recyclables, market prices for various recycled materials, customer satisfaction, education of participating offices, results of desk side container inspections, status of equipping offices with recycling containers, rate of office participation, and training of recycling collection staffs.

Consistent with the preliminary observations in our April 2002 statement, AOC significantly reduced the number of indicators it is collecting and reporting to two: total tonnage collected by type of material and total tonnage contaminated. This more focused approach to measuring the effectiveness of its program is noteworthy. As AOC revisits its program mission, goals, and design, it will have opportunities to reexamine and refine its performance measurement efforts to ensure that it has the right set of performance measures to support program monitoring and decision making.

The absence of AOC recycling program goals does not allow measures to be linked to a desired level of performance and thus AOC cannot demonstrate the extent to which performance is achieved. For example, AOC seeks to decrease contamination rates for recyclable materials collected, but does not state a goal for a desired level of contamination against which to measure progress. As shown in table 3, steps 2 and 3, AOC should determine how much waste the Capitol Hill complex generates

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<sup>17</sup>S. Rep. No. 107-37 at 10 (2001).



overall and analyze how much of that waste could be recycled. AOC officials have told us that they plan to conduct such an analysis as part of its future, long term environmental management plan and use the information to form the basis of AOC's overall waste reduction goals.

Furthermore, AOC should develop its performance measurement system with input from recycling program staff members to ensure that the data gathered will be sufficiently complete, accurate, and consistent to be useful in decision making. As AOC clarifies its goals and performance measures for its recycling program, it will likely identify opportunities to create a balanced set of measures that respond to multiple priorities, such as increasing customer satisfaction while also achieving recycling performance goals. Consistent with our preliminary observations, AOC recycling program staff has begun surveying its clients to obtain feedback on their satisfaction with the program. This performance information could be a useful addition to the set of measures AOC is currently collecting and monitoring.

After establishing its mission and goals and building a performance measurement system, the next key step for AOC is to put performance data to work. As shown in table 3, steps 4 through 8 and step 10 provide guidance on ways to monitor and evaluate program performance. AOC has proposed a quarterly monitoring system. Such monitoring of performance against goals will enable AOC program managers to identify where performance is lagging, investigate potential causes, and identify actions designed to improve performance.

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**Reexamine Roles,  
Responsibilities, and  
Number of AOC Recycling  
Program Staff Members**

The roles and responsibilities of AOC's recycling program staff members have evolved in recent years, without the guidance of a clearly defined mission and goals. In revisiting its recycling program mission and goals, AOC should also reexamine the roles and responsibilities of its program staff members to ensure that they are performing the right jobs with the necessary authority. AOC recently changed the responsibilities of its recycling program management positions to incorporate a greater focus on program planning and evaluation. However, according to these staff members, much of their time is spent in day-to-day program implementation activities, leaving little time to fulfill their expanded roles.

The AOC Resource Conservation Manager, originally responsible for only the AOC hazardous waste program, currently is responsible for planning and developing policies and programs for an AOC-wide approach to waste

management, analyzing waste removal programs, developing and presenting briefing and training materials on agency recycling efforts, and serving as the administrator and technical representative for the recycling collection contract. However, according to the Resource Conservation Manager, about half of her effort is devoted to hazardous waste management activities. She has little time and no staff to carry out the broad, agencywide planning and evaluation activities required by the position.

In fiscal year 2001, AOC replaced its recycling coordinator position with a Recycling Program Manager position in the House and Senate jurisdictions. These positions are responsible for working with other Capitol Hill complex recycling specialists to carry out agencywide recycling, planning and developing recycling policies and programs, reviewing program effectiveness and monitoring implementation (e.g., compliance inspections), and analyzing the financial returns of waste recycling contracts. However, the House Recycling Program Manager told us that her current focus has been primarily on implementation activities, such as providing recycling equipment to offices, limiting the time available to focus on other responsibilities, such as program monitoring and evaluation. However, according to this manager, the recent hiring of an assistant to focus on operations will allow her to devote more time to recycling program management activities.

As previously stated, AOC needs to provide a results-oriented basis for individual accountability. With respect to recycling, AOC has neither established clear goals nor assigned accountability for achieving results. Because program implementation occurs in the House and Senate jurisdictions, AOC needs to incorporate its desired recycling goals into its performance management system and cascade those goals down through the jurisdictions to the individuals responsible for program implementation.

Overlapping responsibilities for planning, education, monitoring, and evaluation between the Resource Conservation Manager and jurisdiction recycling program managers raise questions about the appropriate number of staff members and mix of responsibilities needed to carry out AOC's recycling programs at the central and jurisdictional levels. For example, the jurisdiction recycling managers focus primarily on the implementation of the recycling program, including equipping offices, educating participants, and collecting recyclable materials. Furthermore, the AOC Resource Conservation Manager has little time and no staff to carry out broad

management and oversight responsibilities. As a result, little capacity exists to carry out the planning, development, monitoring, and evaluation of AOC's recycling programs on an AOC-wide basis.

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## Conclusions

Although the Architect of the Capitol has managed an office recycling program in the House and Senate jurisdictions for more than a decade, high levels of contamination present in the materials collected has prevented it from fully realizing either the environmental or financial benefits that it could have achieved. Adopting a more strategic approach to recycling—clarifying AOC's recycling mission and goals to assess whether it has the right program design, organization, and implementation strategies in place to achieve desired results, measuring and monitoring performance against goals, and reexamining the roles and responsibilities of the recycling program staff to ensure accountability for achieving recycling goals—could improve the environmental results of the program. AOC officials have indicated that the recycling program will be included in an overall environmental master plan that it will develop in 2003. We agree with this approach and believe that developing a clear mission statement for the recycling program and using that statement as a basis for establishing reasonable performance goals, developing a set of performance measures, and aligning the organization to hold managers accountable for results, would help AOC further improve its recycling program results.

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## Recommendations for Agency Action

In order to adopt a strategic approach to recycling, we recommend that the Architect of the Capitol take the following actions:

- Develop a clear mission and goals for AOC's recycling program with input from key congressional stakeholders as part of its proposed environmental master plan. AOC may want to establish reasonable goals based on the total waste stream—information it plans to obtain as part of its long-term environmental management plan—that could potentially be recycled.
- Develop a performance measurement, monitoring, and evaluation system that supports accomplishing AOC's recycling mission and goals.
- Examine the roles and responsibilities of AOC's recycling program staff to ensure that they are performing the right jobs with the necessary

authority, and holding the staff accountable for achieving program and agency results through AOC's performance management system.

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## Agency Comments

In his comments on this chapter, the Architect generally agreed with our recommendations and discussed the relevant efforts AOC has under way in the areas of worker safety, project management, and recycling. In the area worker safety, in addition to initial efforts to target areas that have the potential for danger to life and health, the Architect stated that AOC is in the process of developing program policies for incident reporting and investigation, inspection, and hazard abatement and control. AOC disagreed with our statement that its 5-year Safety Management Plan was drafted independent of the broader strategic planning effort. Although we believe this statement was true at the time of our review, AOC has subsequently made efforts to improve the alignment between its draft strategic and worker safety plans. Therefore, we deleted this statement. The Architect stated that AOC's implementation plan will focus on strategic, long-term planning, training, and continuous improvement in worker safety.

The Architect stated that AOC plans to address our recommendations in the area of project management as another focus of its implementation plan. Current initiatives include developing and scheduling training for project managers; conducting condition assessments of the Senate, House, and Capitol buildings this fiscal year, and of other Capitol Hill complex buildings in subsequent fiscal years; and developing a 5-year capitol improvement plan and the scope of work for a 20-year master plan of the Capitol Hill complex.

In the area of recycling, the Architect stated that AOC is committed to defining clear goals for its recycling program and will establish a dedicated environmental function. AOC's implementation plan will discuss its approach to establishing program goals, integrating environmental concerns into AOC's overall strategy, and ensuring that measures reflect goals and are linked to performance of key activities.

The Architect's comments are reprinted in appendix II.

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# Employee and Supervisor Focus Groups— Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

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To obtain additional perspectives on the areas examined as part of our review and as an initial effort to support the subsequent collection of routine employee feedback, we used focus groups to gather employee and supervisor perceptions, opinions, and attitudes about working at the Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC). Focus group interviews are a form of qualitative research in which a specially trained leader, a moderator, meets with a small group of people (usually 8 to 10) who are knowledgeable about the topics to be discussed. This appendix describes our objectives, scope, and methodology for the focus groups and lists the specific questions used to conduct the focus groups.

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## Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

For our focus groups at AOC, we were interested in obtaining (1) employees' views of what aspects of working at AOC were going well or needed improvement, (2) whether employees had the resources needed to perform their jobs, and (3) employees' perspectives on AOC's worker safety program. We developed the overall approach to conducting the focus groups, including the development and pretesting of the focus group guide and questions and the selection of participants. We contracted with Booz/Allen/Hamilton to facilitate 15 focus groups sessions and provide a moderator, note taker, and analyses of the sessions.

We conducted 13 of these focus groups with employees from the House and Senate Office Building jurisdictions, Capitol Power Plant, Senate Restaurants, and the Construction Management Division. We selected employees from these parts of AOC in accordance with our specific review areas of worker safety and project management and also because they contained some of the largest employee populations.

We attempted to assure that each group consisted of employees from the same jurisdiction and shift and worked in trades versus nontrades occupational categories, for example, a group comprising plumbers and electricians versus a group comprising custodians and laborers. In composing groups of employees from trade shops, we allocated our sample roughly proportional to the number of employees in each shop with the restriction that at least one employee from each shop within each jurisdiction be selected for participation. There was one session that was not composed in this manner due to scheduling difficulties and the disparate number of employees within certain jurisdictions on certain shifts. This session comprised employees from the evening shift from both the House and the Senate jurisdictions.

Once the composition of each focus group was defined, we randomly selected 12 to 14 employees from a list of those employees who worked in the jurisdiction, shift, and occupational categories that defined the group. We invited a few more employees than would usually constitute a focus group to adjust for the possibility that there would be some employees who would not be interested in participating or would be unable to attend.

The other two focus groups comprised randomly selected employee supervisors from the House and Senate jurisdictions. We held one focus group with supervisors of employees in trade shops and the other focus group with supervisors of nontrade employees. In all, we invited 200 employees to attend 15 focus groups and 127 employees participated.

A Booz|Allen|Hamilton facilitator and a note taker were present during each of these 15 focus group sessions along with a GAO observer. AOC management was not present during any session. During each session, the facilitator let participants know that we were conducting a general management review of AOC, and that they were randomly selected by GAO to participate. The GAO representative assured participants that all comments would be kept confidential and consolidated into one larger report without identification, so no one individual or jurisdiction could be identified.

We also administered an anonymous paper exit survey at the end of each session to gauge whether employees felt comfortable speaking during the session and make additional comments. The exit survey asked participants whether they felt free to speak openly during the session. Only 7 participants of the 115 participants returning the exit surveys marked the “no” response.

To obtain a better understanding of project management at AOC, we also conducted one additional focus group with full-time, day-to-day AOC project managers. For this focus group, we asked about what is working well at AOC in project management and where there might be areas for improvement. We also discussed (1) the project management process at AOC, (2) the project management environment, and (3) resources and tools utilized in performing project management duties at AOC.

We randomly selected 10 project managers from the Office of Design and Construction and 4 project managers from the AOC jurisdictions. Eight project managers participated in the focus group—5 from the Office of Design and Construction and 3 from AOC jurisdictions. We facilitated the

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session. The project manager's focus group followed the same set of general guidelines as described above. All project manager participants responding to the survey said they felt comfortable speaking freely in the session.

The focus group results discussed in this report are summary descriptions reflecting the range of views and perceptions held by employees, supervisors, or project managers. A rough gauge of the significance of these views can be discerned in the extent to which certain opinions or perceptions are repeatedly expressed or endorsed by many participants from multiple groups. Although the randomly selected participants are, in part, representative of employees in those AOC components where they work,<sup>1</sup> the descriptive nature of the responses and the relatively small sample sizes do not permit the development of reliable, quantitative estimates that are generalizable to these AOC components.

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<sup>1</sup>We do not know and cannot assess differences that might exist between the views of those invited participants who chose not to attend the session and those who did.

**Questions Used in Employee Focus Groups**

Employee Introductions: Please give your first name and how long you've worked at AOC.

GAO is interested in finding out what is working well at AOC and where there might be areas for improvement. We're going to cover three basic areas today:

- 1) what it is like to work at AOC
  - 2) whether you have the resources you need on the job, and
  - 3) your perspectives on worker safety issues at AOC.
- 1) GAO is interested in getting employee's perspectives of what it is like to work at AOC.
    - a. Working well: In your experience, what is working well at AOC? Why do you think these things are working well?
    - b. Needs fixing: What do you think needs to be fixed at AOC? What would you suggest be done to fix these things?
    - c. Communication: Do you get the information you need from your supervisor to do your job? Do employees and supervisors share job-related information freely? Do you feel comfortable giving input or ideas to management?
    - d. Fairness and treatment of others: Do you believe the distribution of workload among employees is fair? If disputes and conflicts occur in the workplace, are they resolved fairly?
  - 2) We would now like to talk about the resources people need to perform their jobs well.
    - a. Equipment, etc.: Do you have the equipment, materials, and supplies you need to do your job? If you do not have these resources, do you know why? If you could tell AOC management about resources that you need to do your job better, what would they be?
    - b. Job-related training: Does AOC provide you with the training that you need to perform your job well? Are there training needs that aren't being met at AOC? For example, do you think your co-workers or supervisors need additional training? What areas would you recommend?
    - c. Supervision: Do employees receive the help they need to do their jobs from supervisors? If there are conflicts on the job, do supervisors step in and resolve them?



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- d. Teamwork: Do employees work well together within a work team? Do different work teams (e.g., paint shop and furniture shop) work well together? Do you have any suggestions on how to improve teamwork at AOC?
- 3) We would now like to talk about worker safety. In the past few years, there has been a lot of attention focused on worker safety.
- a. Have you received safety training in the last 12 months? Has the safety training you received been helpful in preventing injuries?
  - b. Do you feel protected from health and safety hazards on the job?
  - c. If you or a coworker were to experience an illness or injury on the job, what would you do? Are you comfortable in reporting illnesses and injuries?
  - d. If you were to see an unsafe condition or hazard on the job, what would you do? Are you comfortable in reporting unsafe conditions or hazards?
  - e. When a safety-related incident occurs on the job, do you think AOC takes the incident seriously (i.e., does its best to deal with the situation)? [Ask for participants for examples.]

**CLOSING:**

Are there other issues not covered today that you would like AOC management to know about?

**Questions Used in Supervisor Focus Groups**

Employee Introductions: Please give your first name and how long you've worked at AOC.

GAO is interested in finding out what is working well at the AOC and where there might be areas for improvement. We're going to cover three basic areas today:

- 1) what it is like to work at AOC,
- 2) whether you have the resources you need on the job, and
- 3) your perspectives on worker safety issues at AOC.

1) GAO is interested in getting your perspectives of what it is like to work at AOC.

- a. Working well: In your experience, what is working well at AOC? Why do you think these things are working well?
- b. Needs fixing: What do you think needs to be fixed at AOC? What would you suggest be done to fix these things?
- c. Communication: Do you get the information you need from your supervisor to do your job? Do employees and supervisors share job-related information freely? Do you feel comfortable giving input or ideas to management?
- d. Teamwork: Do employees work well together within a work team? Do different work teams (e.g., paint shop and furniture shop) work well together?
- e. Coordination: Do you have any suggestions on how to improve project coordination at AOC? Do you have the authority to make decisions or changes needed to get the job done? For example, if a project has conflicting schedules, are you able to rearrange shop resources?
- f. Fairness and treatment of others: How easy or difficult is it to ensure work is distributed fairly among employees? Are you successful in resolving conflicts in the workplace with employees? What resources do you use to resolve conflicts (e.g., do you refer employees to other offices if a conflict cannot be resolved)? Do you feel you have the support you need to resolve conflicts?

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- 2) We would now like to talk about the resources people need to perform their jobs well.
- a. Equipment, etc.: Do you have the equipment, materials, and supplies your shop and your team needs to do your job? If you do not have these resources, do you know why? If you could tell AOC management about resources that you need to do your job better, what would they be?
  - b. Job-related training: Does AOC provide you with the training that you need to perform your job well? Are there training needs that aren't being met at AOC? What areas of training would you recommend for employees or yourself? For example, as a supervisor, how many of you have received training on how to supervise and manage employees?
- 3) We would now like to talk about worker safety. In the past few years, there has been a lot of attention focused on worker safety.
- a. Has your shop or team received safety training in the last 12 months? Is the training appropriate for your shop or team?
  - b. Who provides the safety training? Do the trainers have the knowledge to provide adequate training to your team? Has the safety training you've received been helpful in preventing injuries?
  - c. As a supervisor, do you believe you are fully informed about the important safety issues for your team?
  - d. Is the emphasis on safety too much, too little, or just right?  
  
Instead: Do you feel that your workload allows you to balance safety concerns?
  - e. Are you comfortable in reporting illnesses and injuries?
  - f. Do you think your team takes reporting safety issues seriously?
  - g. When a safety-related incident occurs on the job, do you think AOC takes the incident seriously (i.e., does their best to deal with the situation)? [Ask for participants for examples.]

**CLOSING:**

Are there other issues not covered today that you would like AOC management to know about?

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**Questions Used in Project Manager Focus Group**

Employee Introductions: Please give your first name and how long you've worked at AOC.

GAO is interested in finding out what is working well at AOC in project management and where there might be areas for improvement. We're going to cover three basic areas today:

- 1) the project management process at AOC,
- 2) the project management environment, and
- 3) resources and tools you utilize in performing your duties at AOC.

1) The Project Management Process at AOC

GAO is interested in getting your perspectives on project management at AOC. First, we want to hear what is on your mind about what is working well and what is not. And then we want to ask you specifically about some recent changes and current plans that are relevant to project management at AOC.

- a. Working well: In your view, what project management processes are working well at AOC? Why do you think these things are working well?
- b. Needs improvement: Where do you think project management processes need to be changed or fixed? What would you suggest be done to improve these processes?

Now we would like to get your perspectives on some specific project management improvement initiatives at AOC.

- c. Planning: By a show of hands, are you aware of the forthcoming planning initiatives, including the building condition assessments and the master plan for the Capitol Hill complex?

How do you think the planning will affect your future workload, if at all? How will it affect your priorities, if at all?

- d. Best practices: By a show of hands, are you aware of what are being termed the "Best Practices" initiatives to improve project management at AOC?

More specifically, are you aware of the following:

1. "Cradle-to-grave" management?
2. PIC reporting requirements?
3. The "1391" process?
4. Any other aspects of best practices?

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- i. Do these “practices” affect your workload? If so, how (i.e., easier, more busy work)?
- ii. What works well about these components? What doesn’t work so well? Why?
- iii. How, if at all, would you improve these processes?

2) Project Management Environment

We are also interested in learning more about various organizational processes as they pertain to project management at AOC.

- a. *Priorities: (AOC-wide)* As an agency, how well does AOC prioritize projects overall? And do you understand how those priorities are set?

Are priorities clearly communicated to project managers?

*(Individual Project Manager)* How do you set priorities for your own workload?

With respect to your current workload, are you being asked to do too much? Too little? Please describe.

- b. *Communication and team work:*

Here is a list of major stakeholders who contribute to or are interested in a projects completion. With respect to your relationship with each of the groups, (a) What is working well and (b) What needs fixing?

- Clients (both internal and external)
- Superintendents
- Office of the CFO/Budget Office
- Procurement Office
- Safety Office
- Assistant Architect’s Office (in general)
- Architecture Division
- Engineering Division
- Construction Management Division
- Cost Estimators
- Contractors
- Consultants

In your view, which groups are able to communicate/coordinate most effectively with you and each other in order to get a job completed? Least effectively? Why?

Do you get the information you need, when you need it? If not, what information do you need and why is it not getting through?

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Do you have any suggestions on how to improve overall communication/coordination on project management?

- c. Decision making authority: As a project manager, it is implied that you have a certain degree of authority to keep a project moving. Do you feel that you have the right level of authority to ensure a project is completed on time, within scope, and under budget? If not, why?

What would you like to see changed?

- d. Accountability: How are you held accountable for managing a project? Do you know how others who play key roles are held accountable?
- e. Supervision: Do you receive the help you need to do your job from supervisors? If there are conflicts on the job, do supervisors step in and resolve them?

Do supervisors routinely review your work products and offer meaningful feedback on your performance?

3) Resources and Tools

We would now like to talk about the resources and support you need to successfully manage projects.

- a. Resources: Do you have the equipment, materials, and tools you need to do your job? If not, what is needed? Do you know why a needed resource is not provided?

Prompts:

- Do you need a project management system to help manage the progress of a project?
- Project Information Center system
- Project Managers Manual
- Design documents
- Estimates
- Budget information
- Project Meetings including, team meetings, quarterly project meetings, and midyear budget review meetings

Are the right people asked to attend the meetings? Are there meetings you'd like to have but don't?

- b. Job-related training: Are there any areas of project management where being provided some training would help you do your job better?

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Has there been any project-management-related training that you wanted to take but were unable to do so? If so, please describe.

- c. Needs: If you could tell management about resources that you need to do your job better, what would they be?

4) Summary of Issues

- a. Biggest issues: Considering our discussions today, what are the biggest issues project managers face?
- b. Consensus: From that list, is there one single issue that seems to be the most pressing facing all project managers?

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**Focus Group Exit Survey Questions**

We have prepared a simple two-question exit survey for you to complete here before you leave. This survey is confidential. When completed, please place the survey in the box before you leave.

PAPER EXIT SURVEY:

1) Did you feel free to speak openly about the issues discussed here today?

Yes

No (If no, please explain why.)

2) Are there other issues that you would like to GAO to know about? Please fill in here.



# Comments from the Office of the Architect of the Capitol



Washington, DC 20515

December 20, 2002

Mr. J. Christopher Mihm, Director  
Strategic Issues  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
441 G St NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Mihm:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the U. S. General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report "Architect of the Capitol: Management and Accountability Framework Needed for Organizational Transformation." As Architect of the Capitol, I am dedicated to preserving and enhancing the national treasures entrusted to my agency's care, and to providing high quality service to the Congress and our other clients. I welcome any recommendations that provide an opportunity to improve focus on that mission and performance in key operational areas such as worker safety. The GAO testimony provided in April 2002 and our discussions with GAO regarding the report resulted in our advancing improvement efforts at the Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC), as well as identified opportunities to improve our current management approach. We are developing an Implementation Plan to adopt recommended management changes. This letter outlines key aspects of our Implementation Plan to improve AOC performance and specific comments on each of the three primary chapters of the report. Also attached is a short appendix that lists clarifications we suggest GAO make in the final report.

*AOC's Approach to Organizational Management Transformation*

GAO acknowledges in the report that AOC's challenge is to operate efficiently and professionally in a political environment of multiple stakeholders with differing and sometimes conflicting expectations. A more explicit strategy will help AOC in its stewardship responsibilities and better serve our clients and increase our accountability to stakeholders. Our strategy is to target the root causes of our organizational challenges by addressing the seven key organizational and management components noted in your report: three primary management initiatives (strategic planning, communications, and performance management) and four management infrastructure themes (human capital, financial accountability, information technology, and client management). We will develop an Implementation Plan, as part of our current Strategic Planning initiative, to create this strategic management framework that includes input from our ongoing stakeholder meetings. We will provide a copy of the Implementation Plan to GAO and our congressional oversight committees within 90 days of this letter.

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GAO notes that organizational transformation requires sustained management commitment, organizational capacity to change, and can take as long as five to seven years until it is fully implemented and institutionalized. To be successful, we are committed to this transformation.

Our approach is to align and, where practical, integrate our Implementation Plan development while enhancing our ongoing strategic planning efforts. This process will set our direction by validating our vision and mission, and provide structure around our priorities. This direction, supported by interaction with our stakeholders, will then be cascaded and 'operationalized' through performance measures and milestones, and a disciplined adherence to a performance management framework. I also intend to move out quickly on a comprehensive communication strategy to understand the expectations of our clients, involve our workforce, and further enhance our relationship with our stakeholders. These three themes – strategic planning, communications, and performance management – structured in our Implementation Plan, will be the primary focus of our immediate efforts.

We will also focus on enhancing the management infrastructure that supports achieving our goals and aligning our resources to those goals. The elements of the management infrastructure identified by GAO will provide the foundation for creating sustainable organizational performance. These initiatives, as noted in the GAO report, are appropriately structured around our key resources: our people, our finances, our technology, and our clients.

Concurrent to our work on our primary management initiatives, we will address the specific programmatic areas identified in the report: worker safety, project management, and recycling. We want to be sure that worker safety continues to be an integral part of how we do our work, that project management tools and technology enhance our ability to meet the needs of our clients, and that the recycling program meets the expectations of our stakeholders as well as supports AOC's broader environmental goals.

From its inception, the Implementation Plan will be developed with key stakeholder involvement. This involvement will help ensure that the plan reflects their needs and expectations; that the people to whom we are responsible in service and oversight understand our challenges; and that our measures and milestones are responsive to stakeholder needs. I want to note that the plan must also reflect the realities of the AOC environment, requiring a phased approach that recognizes organizational change capacity, intensive resource requirements, and multiple stakeholders with different priorities. Implementing our plan will take time, resources, and sustained management focus, but we believe that the long-term benefit to AOC and our clients will be worth the effort.

The following comments broadly outline our current and planned approach for the specific areas identified in each chapter of the GAO report. All of the activities identified in this letter will be incorporated into the overall Implementation Plan.

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*Strategic Management Framework Needed to Achieve Transformation: Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement*

As acknowledged in the GAO report, my management team is currently leading an agency-wide strategic planning effort. This effort focuses on developing goals and action plans for mission critical programs such as facilities management, project management, and human capital. We recognize the need for aligning the strategic process with the recommendations in your report and the importance of obtaining feedback on our strategic plan from Congress and other key stakeholders; my staff and I have already begun conducting interviews as part of this effort. We also understand the importance of developing a communications strategy and a performance management framework as described in the GAO report. We agree with GAO's recommendation to improve internal and external communications, and we have assembled a team to develop a comprehensive communications strategy. One of our top communications priorities is to finalize the drafted Congressional protocols.

As suggested by GAO, AOC will produce annual reports similar to those outlined in the Government Performance and Results Act in order to strengthen accountability and transparency. At the beginning of each fiscal year, AOC will develop an Annual Performance Plan that outlines the specific actions, milestones, and performance measures planned to achieve our goals for that year. At the end of the fiscal year, we will publish an Annual Accountability Report so that both AOC and our stakeholders can assess progress and focus on next steps.

The Implementation Plan will include steps to refine our strategic planning process and create the infrastructure needed to support a repeatable process. The communications element of the Implementation Plan will establish two-way mechanisms to communicate and receive feedback on AOC's strategy, measures, and results to employees, clients, and stakeholders.

*Strategic Management Framework Needed to Achieve Transformation: Human Capital*

GAO recommends that AOC gather and analyze workforce data and then use that data to drive workforce planning. AOC fully agrees with both recommendations and, as acknowledged in the report, we requested resources in our fiscal year 2003 appropriations to hire staff and to purchase technology that will enable us to conduct workforce analysis and planning. Our Implementation Plan will integrate this workforce planning with our overall strategic planning effort.

GAO also recommends that AOC create a "line of sight" between senior executive and employee performance management and establish an agency-wide competency-based performance management program. AOC agrees with both recommendations, however we will implement them in a phased approach. AOC must firmly establish its overall strategy before we can align our individual performance management programs to that strategy. Additionally, our employee

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performance management program is relatively new and we need to balance improvement ideas with the need to provide continuity.

The report acknowledges our progress in establishing competency models in the Human Resources Management Division. In addition, we are also using a competency-based approach for employees in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer. AOC plans to explore the benefits of expanding the use of core and technical competencies agency-wide, but wants to ensure the use of competencies is appropriate for all occupations and jurisdictions before establishing an agency-wide policy. Further, inclusion of all AOC employees in an agency-wide performance system will require acceptance by AOC's bargaining units.

*Management Infrastructure & Controls Needed to Support Organizational Transformation Initiatives: Human Capital Policies*

AOC is moving forward on both of the GAO recommendations in the area of human capital policies. GAO recommended that AOC continue to develop and implement agency-wide human capital policies and assess ways to better gather and analyze employee issues. As acknowledged in the report, AOC has been reviewing human capital policies and effectively communicating those policies to employees. Additionally, managers are currently held accountable for consistent application of human capital policies and procedures under the "Supervision" element in our individual performance management program, the Performance Communication Evaluation System (PCHS).

AOC has created a team that includes representatives from all key offices and employee groups and that team is exploring the development of a process to track employee relations issues agency-wide. However, as GAO acknowledges in the report, maintaining employee confidentiality will be extremely important. Employees will be less likely to raise issues, especially with the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and Conciliation Programs and the Ombudsperson, if they are concerned about confidentiality.

*Management Infrastructure & Controls Needed to Support Organizational Transformation Initiatives: Financial Management*

AOC appreciates GAO's recognition of our financial management work to date. We will continue to aggressively adopt financial management best practices. We are working hard to ensure that the appropriate information and necessary processes result in auditable financial statements for fiscal year 2003. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) has piloted financial management training for twenty-five operational managers and staff through a three-day course. We have also improved the incorporation of financial information in the project management decision process by requiring managers to determine and document the full scope of costs for a project. One of our

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primary goals is to institutionalize the financial management reforms in all AOC jurisdictions in order to better support budgeting, financial management, and program management. Our Implementation Plan will provide a strategy for developing mechanisms and procedures to incorporate financial management best practices throughout AOC.

*Management Infrastructure and Controls Needed to Support Organizational Transformation Initiatives: Information Technology*

AOC recognizes that information technology is a key enabler of our strategy for organizational improvement. To that end, I support GAO's recommendations for developing an agency-wide approach to information technology management. AOC's Office of Information and Resource Management (OIRM) is currently working closely with the Senior Policy Committee to establish such an approach.

In the report, GAO recommends that AOC establish a chief information officer, or comparable senior executive, to manage information technology across the agency. AOC recognizes that appropriate senior management leadership is needed to implement an agency-wide approach to information technology management. With input from my senior management team, I will determine whether a chief information officer or another senior level person will perform this role.

AOC also supports GAO's recommendation that AOC develop, implement, and maintain an enterprise architecture framework. OIRM has drafted guidelines for AOC's approach to enterprise architecture. In addition, OIRM is developing a statement of work for a portfolio management system, establishing an investment review board framework and policy, and procuring a software solution to facilitate investment selection and prioritization.

Similarly, AOC agrees that an effective information security program is critical to our ability to ensure the reliability, availability, and confidentiality of our information assets. We are currently conducting interviews to backfill our recently vacated information technology security officer position. The information technology security officer will continue ongoing work including completing AOC's risk assessment, finalizing the information systems security program, and developing and implementing policies and guidance for performing periodic risk assessments, appropriate controls, and security training and awareness.

Fully implementing the information technology management framework laid out by GAO will take considerable time. Our Implementation Plan will include a more specific approach to developing and implementing this framework.

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*Strategic Management Framework Important for Addressing Long Standing Issues: Worker Safety*

In addition to recommendations for broad management improvement, the GAO report highlights three specific program areas – worker safety, project management and recycling. The first of these is worker safety, which is a top priority for AOC. First and foremost, attention to enhanced worker safety will reduce the danger of harm to our employees. But in addition this can reduce costs, improve productivity, help us maintain satisfied and highly motivated personnel, and reduce business interruptions and delays.

I concur with GAO's recommendations that AOC adopt an explicit strategy, proactive safety management processes, and an infrastructure that supports those processes in order to ensure continuous and lasting improvements in our work environment. Worker safety has become more central to our culture, in part due to the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 requirement that AOC comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards. Initially, AOC targeted its worker safety efforts at areas that have the potential for an imminent danger to life and health. This includes policies for chemical use and exposure, confined spaces, fall protection, electrical safety, and respiratory and other personnel protection. We are in the process of developing program policies for incident reporting and investigation, inspection, and hazard abatement and control, as well as a number of other policies addressing the remaining OSHA requirements.

Recent efforts in worker safety have shown positive results and work-related injuries and illnesses are decreasing. While OSHA has not yet published the official fiscal year 2002 injury and illness rate, AOC estimates the injury and illness rate will be approximately 9 per 100 employees, an improvement from the fiscal year 2000 rate of 17.9 per 100 and fiscal year 2001 rate of 11 per 100. This data demonstrates that AOC has made great strides in reducing workplace injuries and illnesses and is progressing toward our ultimate goal of reducing the injury and illness rate to zero.

The GAO report states that the Safety, Fire, and Environmental Programs Office has drafted a 5-year Safety Master Plan independent of the broader strategic planning effort. We disagree. The Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) program plan (formerly known as the Safety Master Plan) is being drafted in close coordination with the agency-wide strategic plan. Worker safety is threaded through all four agency-wide strategic plan goals. Agency-wide strategic planning teams have cross-functional membership of worker safety personnel, team champions have reviewed the draft OSH program plan, and the Director of Safety, Fire, and Environmental Programs has met with champions to discuss worker safety. We believe it would be appropriate for GAO to recognize this integration in the final report.

Our Implementation Plan will focus on strategic long-term planning, training, and continuous improvement in worker safety. Our OSH program plan will include goals, activities, and milestones and we will closely monitor our progress. Utilizing infrastructure already in place – the Facility Manager Assistant – we will track hazards, investigations and follow-up. Additionally, to ensure

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continuous improvement in reducing costs and injuries, beginning in February 2003 worker's compensation cost and case analysis will be a standing agenda item for the Safety, Health, and Environmental Council quarterly meeting.

*Strategic Management Framework Important for Addressing Long Standing Issues: Project Management*

I strongly support GAO's recommendations to continue and expand on our efforts to adopt industry best practices for project management. We are working hard to establish the framework needed to implement these recommendations. Currently, each project is assigned one project manager throughout its lifecycle. Along with other project management improvements and staffing increases, this approach will enable us to complete projects on schedule, on budget, within scope, and of the highest quality. To further these improvements, training for new project managers has been scheduled and ongoing training for existing project managers is under development. We also understand the need to effectively communicate the status of projects, develop a process to assign project priorities, and measure performance. To address these and other project management issues, we will include project management as one of the focuses of our Implementation Plan.

One key aspect of our facilities management focus is to understand the current condition of buildings under AOC jurisdiction, so that we can plan appropriately. Beginning this fiscal year we will conduct condition assessments of the Senate, House, and Capitol buildings. In fiscal year 2004, we will assess the Library of Congress buildings and in fiscal year 2005, the Botanic Garden and other buildings. Additionally, AOC is working with the National Academy of Sciences to determine the scope of work for a 20-year master plan to be implemented in fiscal year 2004. We will also be developing a 5-year capital improvement plan.

It will take time for AOC to fully develop a robust project management capability. We are in the process of hiring a Director of Project Management who will lead our project management reforms and will work to align project management staff with AOC's mission-critical goals. Our Implementation Plan will further spell out these reforms and create the process for developing, implementing, and gaining buy-in for the new approach to project management.

*Strategic Management Framework Important for Addressing Long Standing Issues: Recycling*

GAO recommends that AOC clarify the purpose of the recycling program and ensure that the roles and responsibilities of recycling program staff support this purpose. My management team is committed to defining clear goals for the program. We plan to take a strategic approach to recycling through establishing a dedicated environmental function. Our Implementation Plan will include our approach to establishing program goals, integrating environmental concerns into AOC's overall strategy, and ensuring that measures reflect goals and are linked to performance of key activities.

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**Appendix II**  
**Comments from the Office of the Architect of**  
**the Capitol**

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Mr. J. Christopher Mihm  
December 20, 2002  
Page Eight

The GAO quotes AOC officials as saying that they do not believe they can establish performance goals for the recycling program. Our position is that we can and will establish performance goals as part of an Environmental Program Plan. We are dedicated to reconciling different priorities among stakeholders who have differing goals for the program and developing an acceptable solution that can be applied across the organization while allowing flexibility, if needed, in jurisdictional programs.

AOC has requested resources in our fiscal year 2003 appropriations to hire an environmental engineering supervisor and a safety/environmental technician. These positions are key to our program and will support agency-wide planning and evaluation.

*AOC's Next Steps*

My goal as Architect of the Capitol is to establish a high-performing organization with motivated employees providing outstanding service to clients in a safe working environment. In this letter, I have outlined my approach for reaching this goal. We will face challenges of increased responsibility, limited resources, and heightened expectations. We will address these challenges through focused management commitment, purposeful prioritization, and appropriate phasing of our actions. Our Implementation Plan will outline many specific initial steps that we will take to meet this goal. We will provide a copy of this plan to GAO and our congressional oversight committees within 90 days of this letter.

AOC appreciates the assistance and recommendations GAO has provided to improve service delivery and operations. If you have any questions about our comments, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Alan M. Hantman, FAIA  
Architect of the Capitol

Attachment



# GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgements

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For further information about this statement, please contact J. Christopher Mihm at (202) 512-6806. Individuals making key contributions to this statement included Thomas Beall, Justin Booth, Carole Cimitile, Kevin J. Conway, Elizabeth Curda, Deborah Davis, Terrell Dorn, Elena Epps, V. Bruce Goddard, David Merrill, Christina Quattrociocchi, Benjamin Smith Jr., Lori Rectanus, John Reilly, William Roach, Regina Santucci, Gary Stofko, Kris Trueblood, Sarah Veale, Michael Volpe, and Daniel Wexler.

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