



Highlights of [GAO-08-759](#), a report to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The General Services Administration (GSA) is responsible for ensuring that federal agencies have access to the telecommunications needed to meet mission requirements. GSA's current telecommunications program, called FTS2001, has contracts in place that will expire by June 2010. Thus, agencies face the difficult task of transitioning their services to a successor program, known as Networx.

GAO was asked to determine (1) the extent to which agencies are following sound transition planning practices and (2) the actions GSA is taking to identify and resolve common transition challenges affecting agencies. In performing this work, GAO selected six agencies based on, among other things, their FTS2001 charges; reviewed transition planning at these agencies and GSA; and analyzed GSA documentation of actions to address transition challenges.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that Commerce, Homeland Security, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission address gaps in transition planning. Commenting on a draft, Commerce agreed with the report, Homeland Security disagreed with five of seven recommendations, while the Nuclear Regulatory Commission agreed with one of two. However, failure to follow sound planning practices could put agency transitions at risk.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-759](#). For more information, contact Linda Koontz at (202) 512-6240 or KoontzL@gao.gov.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Agencies Are Generally Following Sound Transition Planning Practices, and GSA Is Taking Action to Resolve Challenges

What GAO Found

Selected agencies—the Departments of Homeland Security, Commerce, and Agriculture and the Small Business Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission—are generally following sound transition planning practices previously identified by GAO (see table below). For example, all have established telecommunications inventories, and most have established transition plans that include transition preparation tasks and time lines. However, other key practices are not being fully implemented at three agencies. For example, Commerce does not plan to clearly define all key transition roles and responsibilities, Homeland Security does not plan to identify local and regional points of contact, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission does not plan to establish measures of success based on its transition objectives. With limited time available to finalize planning and begin transitions, agencies that do not address gaps in their planning or follow through on plans risk delaying their transitions and increase the likelihood of incurring unnecessary costs.

As facilitator for all transition management activities, GSA has identified numerous common challenges that agencies face in making the transition to Networx, and it is taking action to resolve them. GSA uses various forums to identify these challenges, which include ensuring cooperation from incumbent contractors, defining agencies' responsibilities for information security during the transition, and the use of a transition inventory application developed by GSA. To resolve these challenges, GSA has, among other things, modified FTS2001 contracts to help ensure contractor cooperation, developed guidance to clarify information security responsibilities, and established support teams to assist agencies in using the inventory application developed by GSA. GSA's actions should reduce the likelihood that these challenges will hinder transition efforts.

Sound Transition Planning Practices

1. Establish an accurate telecommunications inventory and an inventory maintenance process.
2. Identify strategic telecommunications requirements and use this to shape the agency's management approach and guide efforts when identifying resources and developing a transition plan.
3. Establish a structured management approach that includes a dedicated transition management team, key management processes (project management, configuration management, and change management), and clear lines of communication.
4. Identify the funding and human capital resources that the transition effort will require.
5. Develop a transition plan that includes transition objectives, measures of success, a risk assessment, and a detailed time line.

Source: GAO.