



*SERVING THE CONGRESS
AND THE NATION*

EXECUTIVE
Summary
STRATEGIC PLAN 2000-2005



GAO'S MISSION

GAO exists to support the Congress in meeting its Constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people.

CORE VALUES

ACCOUNTABILITY

describes the nature of GAO's work. GAO helps the Congress oversee federal programs and operations to ensure accountability to the American people. GAO's evaluators, auditors, lawyers, economists, public policy analysts, information technology specialists, and other multidisciplinary professionals seek to enhance the economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and credibility of the federal government both in fact and in the eyes of the American people. GAO accomplishes its mission through a variety of activities, including financial audits, program reviews, investigations, legal support, and program analyses.

INTEGRITY

describes the high standards that GAO sets for itself in the conduct of its work. GAO takes a professional, objective, fact-based, nonpartisan, nonideological, fair, and balanced approach to all of its activities. Integrity is the foundation of reputation, and GAO's approach to its work ensures both.

RELIABILITY

describes GAO's goal for how its work is viewed by the Congress and the American public. GAO produces high-quality reports, testimony, briefings, legal opinions, and other products and services that are timely, accurate, useful, clear, and candid.



COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

I am pleased to present the Executive Summary of the U.S. General Accounting Office's (GAO) Strategic Plan, 2000-2005, for serving Congress. As our first strategic plan for the 21st century, this document is a blueprint for how we will support Congress and the American people in the future. It also represents a vision for strengthening the performance and accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people.

Yet the plan does more: It describes how important dynamic themes are likely to influence Americans, the government, the country, and even the world in the coming years. Building on global changes that are impacting society on a variety of levels, our strategic plan develops a comprehensive and focused structure of long-term goals and objectives to support Congress in its legislative, oversight, and investigative roles. We worked closely with the legislature's leadership, committee leadership, individual Members, and staff in the development of this strategic plan. Thus, this plan not only incorporates Congress's views about what it believes to be important and emerging issues, it also establishes a framework for seeing fundamental constitutional responsibilities in the context of current challenges and emerging changes in the coming years.

GAO, as the nation's premier accountability institution, also derives benefits from this strategic plan. We are realigning our organization and reallocating our resources to better address the issues detailed in our strategic plan. In addition, we will hold ourselves accountable for the effectiveness of our performance on each major element of this strategic plan. Finally, by taking actions to implement the strategic plan, we can ensure our ability to help Congress achieve its Constitutional responsibilities and related goals—both for today and tomorrow.

I wish to thank Members of Congress and staff, and everyone at GAO, who contributed to our strategic plan. While we will never completely know what the future brings, and an overwhelming majority of GAO's resources will be dedicated to responding to congressional mandates and committee requests, GAO's *Strategic Plan, 2000-2005*, should help Congress to better anticipate important issues and make more effective use of GAO. Effective implementation of this plan should help to enhance the performance and ensure the accountability of the federal government. It may also serve to help improve the public's respect for and confidence in government.

The full set of GAO's strategic planning, performance, and accountability documents includes the: (1) *Strategic Plan Executive Summary*; (2) *Strategic Plan, 2000-2005*; (3) individual strategic objective plans; (4) strategic plan framework document; (5) *Accountability Report* for fiscal year 1999; and (6) *Performance Plan Fiscal Year 2001*. All of these documents, as well as other GAO reports and documents, may be obtained electronically on our website, www.gao.gov. If you have any questions or comments regarding this plan, please contact me at (202) 512-5500 or walkerd@gao.gov or Gene L. Dodaro, Chief Operating Officer, at (202) 512-5600 or dodarog@gao.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D.M. Walker", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

DAVID M. WALKER
COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES



INTRODUCTION

GAO is a legislative branch agency that supports Congress. The agency was created in 1921 as a result of the Budget and Accounting Act, a law designed to improve government financial controls and management. GAO also investigates and evaluates the effectiveness and efficiency of virtually the full range of federal policies and programs.

GAO supports congressional oversight by reviewing the performance of federal agencies, assisting in the oversight of agencies' operations, assessing federal policies and programs, analyzing financing for government activities, and anticipating emerging issues. GAO determines whether agencies can effectively plan and execute responsibilities, examines the adequacy of financial reporting systems and controls over funds, and assesses the effectiveness of service delivery. In addition, GAO reviews funding requests and opportunities to reduce or better target spending and looks at national and international trends and challenges in order to anticipate their implications for public policies.

GAO has developed a mission statement to focus its various statutory responsibilities, which is as follows: GAO exists to support the Congress in meeting its Constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people.

GAO's service to Congress requires that the agency maintain its reputation for professionalism, objectivity, independence, accuracy, and responsiveness. No organizational reputation can long be maintained without adherence to a set of core values and, as appropriate, professional standards. GAO's core values are:

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RELIABILITY describes GAO's goal for how its work is viewed by Congress and the American people. GAO seeks to ensure that its work is timely, accurate, useful, clear, and candid.

Through its work for Congress, supported by the Strategic Plan, GAO hopes to meet Congress' short-term needs for information and its long-term requirements for anticipating and responding to emerging and crosscutting issues. Therefore, GAO's Strategic Plan provides a comprehensive discussion of thematic changes in society, a series of objectives organized around four major goals, and performance goals to hold the agency accountable for its accomplishments.

GAO expects to update this Strategic Plan every 2 years. The strategic planning documents include this Executive Summary, a strategic plan framework, the Strategic Plan itself, and a series of strategic objective plans. The Strategic Plan and the strategic planning process through which it was developed are consistent with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), which strives to improve the performance and accountability of government agencies. GAO also publishes an annual Accountability Report and Performance Plan to provide additional information on its performance and accountability in serving Congress and the American people. As the nation's principal accountability institution, GAO will lead by example to help ensure that GPRA's goals will create a more effective and credible government for all Americans.

SERVING THE CONGRESS

GAO'S STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK



MISSION

GAO exists to support the Congress in meeting its Constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people.

GOALS

PROVIDE TIMELY, QUALITY SERVICE TO THE CONGRESS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	SUPPORT THE TRANSITION	MAXIMIZE THE VALUE OF GAO
TO ADDRESS CURRENT AND EMERGING CHALLENGES TO THE WELL-BEING AND FINANCIAL SECURITY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE	TO RESPOND TO CHANGING SECURITY THREATS AND THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCE	TO A MORE RESULTS-ORIENTED AND ACCOUNTABLE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
		BY BEING A MODEL ORGANIZATION FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

THEMES

Demographics	Globalization	Quality of Life	Security	Technology
Government Performance and Accountability				

OBJECTIVES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health care needs and financing Retirement income security Social safety net Education/workforce issues Effective system of justice Community investment Natural resources use and environmental protection Physical infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diffuse security threats Military capabilities and readiness Advancement of U.S. interests Global market forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fiscal position of the government Government financing and accountability Governmentwide management reforms Economy, efficiency, and effectiveness improvements in federal agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client relations Strategic and annual planning Human capital Core business and supporting processes Information technology services
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CORE VALUES

Accountability	Integrity	Reliability
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THEMES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

The foundation of GAO's Strategic Plan is a group of rapidly evolving central themes that have the capacity to fundamentally alter the federal government, American society—even the world at large. The impacts of these themes, and the dangers and opportunities they represent, can already be felt in many parts of the country, affecting our quality of life and our economy. They are likely to increasingly guide the actions of people, corporations, and countries in the coming years.

These themes are:

- ***Globalization*** - the increasing interdependence of enterprises, economies, and national governments and its consequences;
- ***Security*** - a growing awareness of vulnerability, with a specific emphasis on new and diffuse threats to the security of the nation, the economy, and individuals;
- ***Demographics*** - a continuing fundamental shift in the age and composition of the population and the impact of that shift on retirement, health care, and the economy;
- ***Quality of Life*** - the expectations and realities of living conditions affecting the world, countries, communities, families, and individuals;
- ***Technological Innovation*** - the opportunities and threats posed by rapid changes in technology's capability; and
- ***Government Performance and Accountability*** - the growing emphasis on responsible stewardship and accountability in the delivery of public services.

In developing a strategic plan of goals and objectives that spans 6 years, GAO recognizes the significance of these themes for congressional decisionmaking. As each theme reverberates in America's collective progress over the next few years, congressional and executive branch action will likely be necessary to confront some or all of these important issues.

The dynamic and often unpredictable nature of these themes requires GAO to monitor their development in order to help Congress anticipate and respond to changes—the intensity and breadth of which are likely to affect public and private sector decisionmaking. To ensure that GAO's goals and objectives remain relevant to the changes in societal influences, the agency is strengthening its strategic planning process to better capture the dynamism presented by 21st century changes.

Goals and Objectives

GAO, with the assistance of Congress, has developed a set of strategic goals and objectives that will help to support Congress in its decisionmaking and improve the performance and accountability of the executive branch. GAO's plan presents four strategic goals that will help Congress perform its Constitutional responsibilities and ensure GAO's ability to continue effective, quality support to its clients.



Provide Timely, Quality Service to the Congress and the Federal Government to Address Current and Emerging Challenges to the Well-Being and Financial Security of the American People

GAO's first strategic goal focuses on several of the aspirations of the American people defined by the Founders: "to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility...promote the general welfare, and secure the blessing of liberty to ourselves and our posterity...." The country's aging and increasingly diverse population, rapid technological change, and Americans' desire to improve the quality of life all have major policy and budgetary implications for the federal government. In particular, growing commitments to the elderly will make it difficult for a smaller generation of workers to finance competing claims on the nation's future.

To support Congress in its decisionmaking in this area, GAO will focus significant resources on the following important strategic objectives:

- Researching possible options to meet the health care needs of an aging and diverse population;
- Examining ways to ensure a secure retirement for older Americans;
- Reviewing the social safety net for Americans in need;
- Supporting efforts to provide for an educated citizenry and a productive workforce;
- Helping Congress strengthen a system of justice that is effective in controlling crime, illegal drug use, and illegal immigration;
- Providing analysis and other support concerning the effectiveness of investments in communities and economic development;
- Researching ways to increase responsible stewardship of natural resources and the environment; and
- Helping Congress maintain a safe and efficient national physical infrastructure.



Provide Timely, Quality Service to the Congress and the Federal Government to Respond to Changing Security Threats and the Challenges of Global Interdependence

As the world grows more interconnected through open markets and technology, the United States faces threats to its national security and economy from new sources. Simultaneously, the federal government is trying to promote foreign policy goals, sound trade policies, and other strategies to help nations in every corner of the world upon which the United States now depends as military allies and trading partners. GAO expects to continue its role in supporting efforts by Congress and the executive branch to assess and respond to changing security threats and the challenges of global interdependence.

To support Congress in its decisionmaking in this area, GAO will focus significant resources on the following important strategic objectives:

- Helping Congress respond to diffuse threats to national and global security;
- Providing analysis and other support to ensure military capabilities and readiness;
- Supporting efforts to advance and protect U.S. international interests; and
- Reviewing ways to recognize and respond to the impact of global market forces on U.S. economic and security interests.



Support the Transition to a More Results-Oriented and Accountable Federal Government

American citizens are increasingly demanding improved government services and better stewardship of public resources. The federal government is adopting the principles of performance-based management in an effort to address these demands. This approach to managing government systematically integrates thinking about organizational structure; program and service delivery strategies; and the use of technology, reliable financial information, and effective human capital practices into government decisions. Many of the initiatives now under way across government to improve operations and strengthen accountability are being driven by management reforms statutorily established by Congress.

The reforms that have been adopted so far have profound implications for what government does, how it is organized, and how it performs its services for the country and its citizens. Consequently, government decisionmakers and managers are adopting new ways of thinking, considering different ways of achieving goals, and using new information to guide decisions. At the same time, with budget surpluses now projected for the coming years, the U.S. government faces a new set of challenges, in both the near and long terms, in making budget decisions.

To support Congress in its decisionmaking in this area, GAO will focus significant resources on the following important strategic objectives:

- Analyzing the federal government’s long-term and near-term fiscal position, outlook, and options;
- Examining ways to strengthen approaches for financing the government and determining accountability for the use of taxpayer dollars;
- Facilitating governmentwide management and institutional reforms needed to build and sustain high-performing organizations and more effective government; and
- Recommending economy, efficiency, and effectiveness improvements in federal agency programs.



Maximize the Value of GAO by Being a Model Organization for the Federal Government

Besides supporting Congress directly through improving government performance and accountability, GAO also supports Congress by improving its own products and processes. To successfully carry out its responsibilities to Congress and the American people, GAO first and foremost must be perceived as credible and must lead by example. In conjunction with the agency’s mission and core values, GAO must, among other things, be professional, objective, fact-based, nonpartisan, nonideological, fair, and balanced in all of its audit, investigation, and evaluation work. The internal focus of Goal 4 provides a framework for enhancing GAO’s effectiveness and helping to improve performance and accountability throughout the agency.

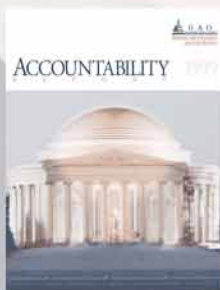
To ensure its ability to support Congress in its decisionmaking, GAO will focus significant resources on the following important strategic objectives:

- Cultivating and fostering effective congressional and agency relations;
- Implementing a model strategic and annual planning and reporting process;
- Aligning human capital policies and practices to support the agency’s mission;
- Developing efficient and responsive business processes; and
- Building an integrated and reliable information technology infrastructure.

Conclusion

GAO looks forward to working with Congress and its other clients in the coming years. In supporting the Constitutional responsibilities of the legislature, GAO fulfills its mission of seeking to improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people. GAO is committed to implementing *Strategic Plan, 2000-2005*, to support Congress's goals, to improve government's stewardship and credibility, and to ensure the agency's ability to effectively serve Congress in the 21st century.

The full set of GAO's strategic planning, performance, and accountability documents are listed below. All of these documents, as well as other GAO reports and documents, may be obtained electronically on our website, www.gao.gov.



Accountability Report for fiscal year 1999

Strategic Plan, 2000-2005

Strategic Plan Executive Summary

Strategic Plan Framework

Strategic Objective Plans

Health Care Needs and Financing

Retirement Income Security

Social Safety Net

Education/Workforce Issues

Effective System of Justice

Community Investment

Natural Resources Use and Environmental Protection

Physical Infrastructure

Diffuse Security Threats

Military Capabilities and Readiness

Advancement of U.S. Interests

Global Market Forces

Fiscal Position of the Government

Government Financing and Accountability

Governmentwide Management Reforms

Economy, Efficiency, and Effectiveness

Improvements in Federal Agencies

Maximize the Value of GAO

Performance Plan Fiscal Year 2001



EXECUTIVE
Summary

STRATEGIC PLAN 2000-2005