

July 1995

**Government Business
Operations Issue Area**

Active Assignments

Foreword

This report was prepared primarily to inform Congressional members and key staff of ongoing assignments in the General Accounting Office's Government Business Operations issue area. This report contains assignments that were ongoing as of July 6, 1995, and presents a brief background statement and a list of key questions to be answered on each assignment. The report will be issued quarterly.

This report was compiled from information available in GAO's internal management information systems. Because the information was downloaded from computerized data bases intended for internal use, some information may appear in abbreviated form.

If you have questions or would like additional information about assignments listed, please contact J. William Gadsby, Director, on (202) 512-8387; Gaston Gianni, Associate Director, on (202) 736-0479; or Michael Motley, Associate Director, on (202) 512-8387.

Contents

	Page
ASSET MAINTENANCE AND USE	
• REVIEW OF SMITHSONIAN AIRCRAFT RESTORATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES.	1
<i>New</i> • UPDATE OF PRIOR REPORT ON THE STATUS OF THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.	1
MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT	
• QUALITY OF POSTAL SERVICE CUSTOMER SERVICE.	1
• REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL MAIL MARKET.	2
• ASSESSMENT OF THE ADEQUACY OF THE POSTAL SERVICE'S SYSTEMS FOR ASSESSING, COLLECTING, AND OTHERWISE PROTECTING REVENUE AND/OR ACCOUNTABLE PAPER.	2
• EVALUATION OF POSTAL SERVICE EFFORTS TO OBTAIN AUTOMATION COMPATIBLE MAIL.	2
• HRA 1: REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE RTC DALLAS REVIEW TEAM AND ITS REPORT ON RTC'S PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY ACTIVITIES IN TEXAS.	3
<i>New</i> • ISSUES SURROUNDING RTC'S TERMINATION AND TRANSITION OF ITS REMAINING OPERATIONS TO FDIC.	3
ASSET & SUPPORT SERVICES ACQUISITION	
• DETERMINATION OF FEDERAL AGENCIES' SPACE REQUIREMENTS.	3
• REVIEW OF SELECTED MAJOR POSTAL SERVICE PROCUREMENTS.	4
• REVIEW OF FEDERAL COURTHOUSE CONSTRUCTION.	4
ASSET DISPOSITION	
• SURVEY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FEDERAL AGENCY EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY EXCESS REAL PROPERTY.	4
• SURVEY OF THE EXCESS AND SURPLUS PERSONAL PROPERTY PROGRAM.	5
• HRA 1: REVIEW OF RTC SALE OF PERFORMING ASSETS TO ACQUIRERS OF MINORITY THRIFTS.	5
• GOVERNMENTWIDE SURVEY OF REAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT AND DISPOSITION PRACTICES.	5
OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK	
• EVALUATION OF USPS OVERSIGHT OF NATIONAL CHANGE OF ADDRESS PROGRAM LICENSEES.	6
• FINANCIAL IMPACT ON THE POSTAL SERVICE OF NOT ENFORCING THE PRIVATE EXPRESS STATUTES.	6
• COMPARISON OF FEDERAL GRANTS RECEIVED VERSUS THOSE AVAILABLE TO THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.	6
• COSTS OF PRESIDENTIAL HEALTH CARE TASK FORCE.	7
• GOVERNMENT-WIDE CONCESSION CONTRACTS.	7
• FIRE SAFETY IN GSA LEASED BUILDINGS.	7
• COMPARISON OF CONTRACTOR AND POSTAL SERVICE OPERATED RBCS SITES.	8
• POSTAL RATE SETTING PROCESS.	8

Government Business Operations

ASSET MAINTENANCE AND USE

TITLE: REVIEW OF SMITHSONIAN AIRCRAFT RESTORATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES (240171)

BACKGROUND : GAO is evaluating whether the Smithsonian is restoring enough aircraft in its collection, and preventing historic aircraft from deteriorating.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the Smithsonian's program to restore historic aircraft? (2) Have historic aircraft deteriorated?

TITLE: UPDATE OF PRIOR REPORT ON THE STATUS OF THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (240180)

BACKGROUND : We were asked to update GAO's 1993 report on the Kennedy Center Capital Improvement Program in light of the 1994 congressionally directed changes in responsibility for management of the Kennedy Center.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the status of the capital funding transferred from the National Park Service to the Kennedy Center when the Center became responsible for its capital improvements? (2) What management actions have been taken by the Kennedy Center to ensure that capital projects are being undertaken in a systematic and efficient manner?

MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT

TITLE: QUALITY OF POSTAL SERVICE CUSTOMER SERVICE (222016)

BACKGROUND : GAO is researching progress USPS is making towards improving window, lobby, complaint handling, telephone assistance and other non-delivery services provided to residential customers. GAO is also examining how USPS uses customer survey data it collects to help improve these non-delivery services.

KEY QUESTIONS : Is the USPS taking actions to improve its non-delivery services? Specifically: (1) What are some ongoing initiatives and how are they tracked? (2) What are some of the major obstacles to improvement? (3) How are the results of successful initiatives disseminated?

Government Business Operations

MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT

TITLE: REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL MAIL MARKET (240137)

BACKGROUND : The Postal Service wants to expand its role in the international mail markets, but it may not have the authority or ability to effectively compete in these growing markets. It has less control over pricing than its competitors, and its delivery systems may not provide sufficiently reliable service for international competition.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the Service's statutory, current, and planned role in the delivery of international mail? (2) What relationships exist between the Service, foreign postal administrations and the Universal Postal Union? (3) Do current postal laws and international agreements limit the Service's ability to participate internationally?

TITLE: ASSESSMENT OF THE ADEQUACY OF THE POSTAL SERVICE'S SYSTEMS FOR ASSESSING, COLLECTING, AND OTHERWISE PROTECTING REVENUE AND/OR ACCOUNTABLE PAPER (240140)

BACKGROUND : Despite an elaborate system of checks, the Postal Inspection Service continues to find case after case where the Postal Service fell victim to schemes to avoid payment of postage. Concerned about the potential for widespread fraud, waste, and abuse, the requester asked that we take a broad look at the controls in place to prevent revenue losses.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) (a) How effective are the Postal Service's (PS) systems for assessing, collecting, & otherwise protecting revenue &/or accountable paper, i.e., money orders & stamps? (b) What are the quantifiable losses? (2) What are the obstacles PS mgmnt. faces in trying to balance revenue protection with efficient customer service?

TITLE: EVALUATION OF POSTAL SERVICE EFFORTS TO OBTAIN AUTOMATION COMPATIBLE MAIL (240174)

BACKGROUND : The Postal Service uses various pricing incentives and outreach methods to encourage businesses to prepare automation compatible mail. However, a recent study found that a substantial number of companies do not take advantage of postal discounts. The service is expanding its outreach efforts and will propose new mail classes and rates to encourage more mailers to participate.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Why do many business mailers not take advantage of mail preparation discounts? (2) Are Service reclassification and outreach efforts addressing obstacles preventing the preparation of automation compatible mail?

Government Business Operations

MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT

TITLE: HRA 1: REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE RTC DALLAS REVIEW TEAM AND ITS REPORT ON RTC'S PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY ACTIVITIES IN TEXAS (247122)

BACKGROUND : Some RTC employees allege that RTC failed to recover money from those who caused billions of dollars of losses to Texas S&Ls, and that they were prevented from properly investigating cases and seeking lawsuits. RTC reviewed the charges and reported that they lack merit. The requester asked GAO to review the RTC Review Team's work and assess the adequacy of its report.

KEY QUESTIONS : The requester asked GAO to conduct an independent review of the work of RTC's Dallas Review Team and assess whether the team's report fully and adequately reflects the work.

TITLE: ISSUES SURROUNDING RTC'S TERMINATION AND TRANSITION OF ITS REMAINING OPERATIONS TO FDIC (247126)

ASSET & SUPPORT SERVICES ACQUISITION

TITLE: DETERMINATION OF FEDERAL AGENCIES' SPACE REQUIREMENTS (240148)

BACKGROUND : The federal government uses over 750 million square feet of office space in thousands of buildings nationwide. Recent initiatives to downsize the federal workforce raises questions about the government's plans to identify unneeded office space and realize savings attributable to potential space reductions.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What are agencies doing to identify and eliminate office space that may be unneeded due to downsizing? (2) What role do GSA and OMB play in ensuring that agencies identify unneeded office space?

Government Business Operations

ASSET DISPOSITION

TITLE: SURVEY OF THE EXCESS AND SURPLUS PERSONAL PROPERTY PROGRAM (240152)

BACKGROUND : Each year, agencies generate billions of dollars of excess personal property. In 1976, Congress passed P.L. 94-519 with the intent of giving federal agencies priority access to excess personal property and ensuring fair and equitable distribution of remaining property among non-federal users.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) How have various laws changed access to excess property since the passage of P.L. 94-519? (2) Are non-federal users of excess property receiving items that federal agencies need?

TITLE: HRA 1: REVIEW OF RTC SALE OF PERFORMING ASSETS TO ACQUIRERS OF MINORITY THRIFTS (247123)

BACKGROUND : The RTC Completion Act (PL 103-204) requires GAO to submit an annual report to Congress on RTC's transfer of performing assets to acquirers of failed minority-owned thrifts.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What type and how many performing assets were transferred to acquirers of failed minority thrifts? (2) How did RTC determine the fair market value of the transferred assets?

TITLE: GOVERNMENTWIDE SURVEY OF REAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT AND DISPOSITION PRACTICES (247900)

BACKGROUND : The RTC Completion Act of 1994 requires GAO to study the desirability of having a single agency dispose of HUD, FmHA, FDIC, and RTC held real properties. This study is in line with programmed work, identified as critical, looking at property dispositions from an overall government perspective.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What are the key differences between the RTC, FDIC, HUD, and FmHA real property disposition activities? (2) What are the barriers/issues that would need to be addressed if Congress chooses to consolidate real property disposition activities of the four agencies into one agency? (3) What progress have agencies made to improve coordination of asset disposition?

Government Business Operations

OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK

TITLE: EVALUATION OF USPS OVERSIGHT OF NATIONAL CHANGE OF ADDRESS PROGRAM LICENSEES (240157)

BACKGROUND : The Postal Service National Change of Address (NCOA) Program mass disseminates postal customer address change data to licensees who use the data to update proprietary address lists they sell nationwide. To protect the privacy of its customers, the USPS imposes restrictions on licensees' use of NCOA information and monitors compliance with these restrictions.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What restrictions does the National Change of Address (NCOA) license agreement impose regarding the use and release of address information? (2) How does USPS monitor the licensees' compliance with NCOA license agreements and oversee corrective actions for any violations identified?

TITLE: FINANCIAL IMPACT ON THE POSTAL SERVICE OF NOT ENFORCING THE PRIVATE EXPRESS STATUTES (240158)

BACKGROUND : Delivery of letters by private carriers is restricted by Priv. Express Statutes. Priv. carriers have challenged the statutes & several bills were introduced in the 103rd Cong. to relax or repeal them. GAO was asked to assess the financial effects of restricting enforcement. The 104th Cong. has broadened debate to include privatization & related legislation has been introduced.

KEY QUESTIONS : 1. What are the arguments for and against the postal monopoly? 2. How are the Priv. Express Statutes (PES) administered & enforced? 3. How would USPS be affected if PES are relaxed or repealed? 4. Are reforms of the USPS needed & how do current proposals address those needs? 5. How have other advanced nations addressed postal monopoly & privatization issues?

TITLE: COMPARISON OF FEDERAL GRANTS RECEIVED VERSUS THOSE AVAILABLE TO THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA (240165)

BACKGROUND : GAO was asked to compare grants for which District agencies qualify against those they actually receive. This work was identified as a long term undertaking as part of the GAO analysis of the financial problems facing the District.

KEY QUESTIONS : Is the District of Columbia applying for and receiving available grant opportunities?

Government Business Operations

OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK

TITLE: COSTS OF PRESIDENTIAL HEALTH CARE TASK FORCE (240166)

BACKGROUND : Four members of Congress have asked us to determine the cost of the President's Task Force on National Health Care Reform.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What did the Task Force cost the government?

TITLE: GOVERNMENT-WIDE CONCESSION CONTRACTS (240170)

BACKGROUND : Over the past several years, GAO has done extensive work on concessions management at six federal land management agencies, primarily in the Interior Department. The requester would like additional information, on a government-wide basis, in this area, as well as information on how other governments manage concessions.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the extent of concessions contracting government-wide? (2) Do agencies maximize concessions revenues to the government? (3) Do personnel who award and administer concessions contracts have sufficient direction and skills? (4) How do other governments manage their concessions contracts?

TITLE: FIRE SAFETY IN GSA LEASED BUILDINGS (240172)

BACKGROUND : The Fire Administration Authorization Act of 1992 prohibits agencies from leasing buildings more than 5 stories high that do not have fire sprinkler systems or an equivalent level of safety, unless the agency head certifies that suitable buildings are not available at an affordable cost. The law requires GAO to audit a selection of those certifications.

KEY QUESTIONS : 1. Is GSA complying with the act?

Government Business Operations

OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK

TITLE: COMPARISON OF CONTRACTOR AND POSTAL SERVICE OPERATED RBCS SITES (240178)

BACKGROUND : Postal opened 25 contractor operated remote barcode keying sites in 1992 and 1993. Following a labor management dispute, an arbitrator decided that Postal's contract with labor required that Postal first offer the keying work to postal employees before contracting it out. In Nov. 1993, Postal and the Union agreed that the work would be done by postal employees.

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the difference in cost between contracting the Remote Bar Coding System (RBCS) and having the work done in-house, and (2) what are the advantages and disadvantages of using Postal employees rather than contractors to implement RBCS.

TITLE: POSTAL RATE SETTING PROCESS (240179)

KEY QUESTIONS : 1. Are GAO's recommendations on volume discounting and demand pricing still necessary for Congress to implement? 2. What are GAO's views of the strengths and weaknesses of the current rate setting process? 3. What are GAO's observations of the relative advantages and disadvantages of proposals for modifying the postal rate setting process?
