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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-06-511](#), a report to the Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Under the public benefit conveyance (PBC) program, state or local governments and certain nonprofits can obtain surplus real property for public uses. The General Services Administration (GSA) has responsibility for the program but has delegated authority to the Department of Defense (DOD) for properties disposed of as part of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. Several “sponsoring agencies” ensure that properties are used as agreed to by grantees. GAO (1) determined the number, types, and locations of PBC properties disposed of in fiscal years 2000 through 2004, (2) assessed efforts to ensure that the properties are used as agreed to, and (3) identified any challenges facing agencies and grantees.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that GSA coordinate with DOD and sponsoring agencies to (1) ensure that data on PBC properties are reliable and consistent, (2) consider developing uniform standards and guidance, and (3) address various challenges facing agencies and grantees. GAO also recommends that sponsoring agencies ensure that their compliance monitoring policies are followed. GSA, HHS, HUD, and Education generally concurred with the recommendations directed to them. HHS and HUD questioned the practicality of uniform standards and guidance for diverse properties.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-511.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Mark L. Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or GoldsteinM@gao.gov.

FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY

Most Public Benefit Conveyances Used as Intended, but Opportunities Exist to Enhance Federal Oversight

What GAO Found

GAO could not determine from GSA, DOD, and sponsoring agency data the exact number, types, and locations of properties conveyed in fiscal years 2000 through 2004 as part of the PBC program. Although GSA and DOD data on properties conveyed should have matched sponsoring agency data on properties being monitored, there were numerous inconsistencies. GSA data showed that 285 properties were conveyed, but 128 (45 percent) of these properties were not identified in data provided by sponsoring agencies. Similarly, DOD data showed that 179 properties were conveyed, yet 41 (23 percent) of these properties were not identified in sponsoring agency data. As a result, GSA, as well as the Office of Management and Budget and Congress, are not well equipped to effectively oversee the program. Better data would facilitate oversight and assessment of results and possible problems. GAO tried to resolve the inconsistencies and identified 298 properties that were conveyed for a variety of public uses, such as airports and parks. They were located throughout many states and U.S. territories. GAO noted that data on reverted property were not regularly collected.

GAO found that agencies generally did not follow policies and procedures they established, or those outlined in the property deeds, for ensuring that conveyed properties are used as intended. GAO could evaluate compliance monitoring for 41 of 58 properties selected for review. Of these, 36 did not receive the compliance monitoring specified in agency policies and procedures or the deed. Despite this, 51 of the 58 properties we analyzed were being used as agreed to by the grantee under the conveyance terms; while 4 had reverted back to the federal government, 2 had not been fully developed, and 1 was not used as agreed to by the grantee. GAO also found wide variation in agency policies and practices, depending on type of use, which seems to make the program unnecessarily complex. GAO identified several challenges faced by agencies and grantees. Agency officials cited the need to allocate sufficient resources to manage the program and to adhere to complex federal real property-related laws as challenges. Some agencies were concerned that GSA avoids reversions; however GSA said that in avoiding reversions, its intentions are to reduce the government’s overall financial burden. Grantees were generally pleased with the program, although a common challenge they cited was not having adequate information on both the program in general and individual properties.

Former Surplus Real Property Used by Communities



Source: GAO.