United States General Accounting Office

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Report to the Secretary of Energy

July 1996

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Energy Lacks Data to Support Its Information System Streamlining Effort

GAO 75 years 1921 - 1996

GAO/AIMD-96-70

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

Accounting and Information
Management Division

B-261820

July 23, 1996

The Honorable Hazel R. O'Leary
The Secretary of Energy

Dear Madam Secretary:

We recently conducted a review of software systems acquired to support the Department of Energy's Environmental Management (EM) Program.[1] We initiated this work to follow up on earlier GAO and Energy reviews which found that the Department had spent significant resources on developing and operating duplicate information systems to support its environmental management and other missions.[2] This letter discusses problems we found which, if not addressed, could significantly impair the Department's ability to eliminate duplicate information systems as it seeks to streamline its information systems environment and achieve savings.

Background

Historically, the Department has invested about 10 percent of its approximately $20 billion annual budget in information technology resources. The majority of all information technology resource expenditures—over 90 percent—are made by management and operating contractors, who identify and acquire resources needed to support the Department's programs at the site (field) level. A past GAO review found that the Department's contractors had wide latitude in controlling their information technology resources and spent substantial resources on developing and operating duplicate systems at the site level.[3]

Key to the Department's success in eliminating its duplicate information systems is ensuring that information technology is acquired, used, and managed effectively. This includes knowing what information resources exist or are planned and how they improve performance of agency missions. The Congress and the Office of Management and Budget have supported the need for effective management of agencywide information resources through (1) the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, which

[1]The Environmental Management Program was created in 1989 to accomplish a number of distinct missions, including compliance and program coordination, waste management, environmental restoration, technology development, and facility transition and management.

[2]Management Information Systems for Environmental Compliance Activities (DOE/I-0284, April 23, 1990) and Department of Energy: Better Information Resources Management Needed To Accomplish Missions (GAO/IMTEC-92-53, September 29, 1992).

[3]Department of Energy: Better Information Resources Management Needed To Accomplish Missions (GAO/IMTEC-92-53, September 29, 1992).

requires agencies to follow a number of practices aimed at improving the productivity, efficiencies, and effectiveness of government operations, (2) the Information Technology Management Reform Act (ITMRA) of 1996, which supplements the Paperwork Reduction Act, and requires agencies to design and implement a strategic process for maximizing the value and managing the risks of their technology investments, and (3) the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Evaluating Information Technology Investments: A Practical Guide, published in November 1995, which guides agencies in planning for, acquiring, and implementing information systems. Developing and maintaining a complete inventory of the Department's information resources is a key requirement of the Paperwork Reduction Act and is essential to meeting the goals of ITMRA. Further, a critical element of OMB's investment guide is the need for agencies to create a portfolio of their information technology investments.

Results in Brief

The Department of Energy developed a baseline inventory of data on specific systems used by the Department and its management and operating contractors. It planned to use this inventory in streamlining its information systems. However, the inventory is substantially incomplete and lacks sufficient information describing systems' functional capabilities. As a result, the inventory will not be adequate to help eliminate duplicate information systems as part of the streamlining effort.

The data deficiencies exist largely because the Department has allowed its management and operating contractors wide latitude in developing and implementing software inventory procedures and standards and has not required them to follow the Department's software management guidance. Consequently, these contractors do not consistently develop and maintain information on their systems and use varying methods for classifying systems according to their functions and capabilities.

Critical Data Lacking to Assess DOE Information Systems

As part of its strategy for streamlining information systems, the Department plans to eliminate or consolidate systems which have the same or similar capabilities and analyze requirements for new systems to prevent additional purchases of duplicate systems. As a key step in this process, the Department's Office of Information Management (OIM) developed a baseline inventory to identify the functions and capabilities of software systems that are being developed, proposed, and operated by the Department and its management and operating contractors. OIM intended to use this inventory to analyze the Department's existing information

systems environment and help identify systems that could be eliminated or consolidated. This intent was expressed in the Department's strategic alignment initiative plan to integrate information management.[4] To most effectively carry out this effort, therefore, OIM needs an inventory that contains complete and accurate data, fully describes system capabilities, and is based on consistent reporting by the Department's management and operating contractors.

Currently, however, the baseline inventory is substantially incomplete and lacks information describing systems' functional capabilities. Specifically, in developing the baseline inventory, OIM relied primarily on data gathered from the Department and its management and operating contractors in early 1995 for inclusion in the System Review Inventory System (SRIS). SRIS is a headquarters database used by OIM to maintain information on the Department's software systems, including the name, primary function, specific capabilities, data content, operating platforms, and cost of the systems. The Department requires that all systems being developed, proposed, and operated by the Department and its sites that have life-cycle costs exceeding $250,000 be reported to OIM for inclusion in the SRIS database.

We believe that OIM's baseline inventory of software systems will not be adequate to support the Department's streamlining efforts because the SRIS data is incomplete and inconsistently reported. OIM's analyses showed that only two-thirds of the Department's management and operating contractors responded to its request for updated SRIS information in 1995. Moreover, according to this analysis, the information which contractors did submit was incomplete in that it did not identify the functional capabilities of about two-thirds of the 2,053 systems reported in the SRIS database. Without this type of information, the Department cannot accurately assess its existing information systems environment or make informed decisions regarding the most appropriate candidates for elimination or consolidation.

The data deficiencies that we noted exist largely because the Department has allowed its contractors wide latitude in developing and implementing software inventory procedures and standards, and has not required them to follow the Department's software management guidance. Although the Department's existing software management order requires each site to

[4]Integrate Information Management Implementation Plan, June 30, 1995.

establish and operate its own software management program,[5] the order allows sites to determine how to accomplish this. In addition, although the Department's "Software Management Guide"[6] (which was put in place to assist the sites in developing software management programs) states that sites should maintain inventories of the software that they acquire, develop, or operate, the Department does not require contractors to follow it. As a result, contractors (1) have inconsistent practices in developing and maintaining information on their systems and (2) use inconsistent methods for classifying systems by function and capability. For example, although the official responsible for maintaining the software inventory at the Department's largest (in terms of funding) EM site told us that the site recently reviewed in detail the systems reported in its software inventory in order to ensure that all the requested data were identified, some other sites reported having starkly different practices, including the following:

- Contractor officials at another major EM site stated that they had not verified any of the inventory data reported by their site and that hundreds of additional systems were probably unaccounted for in their inventory.
- A field office official responsible for reviewing software management at two national laboratories stated that these laboratories have not inventoried the vast majority of the systems acquired by the sites to support their program and project requirements.
- Our analyses of two major EM sites' inventories, which together identified 1,348 systems, showed that these inventories lacked data on (1) the functions of 59 percent of the systems and (2) the development cost of 84 percent of the systems.

Management and operating contractors also use a variety of methods for classifying site software systems by the specific capabilities they provide. Because of this lack of consistency in classifying systems, some sites do not report the requested data to the Department or they report incomplete data. For example, EM's two largest sites use different classification methods, and neither of these methods is the same as that used for SRIS, which classifies the functional capabilities of systems according to 12 primary and 48 secondary categories.

One of the sites does not classify any of its systems according to functional capabilities, with the exception of engineering systems. The other site classifies its systems according to 16 primary categories of

[5]According to DOE Order 1330.1D, the goals of the Software Management Program are to establish and maintain control over software integrity, and manage software acquisitions, developments, changes, maintenance, and dispositions.

[6]DOE/AD-0028, "Software Management Guide," June 1992.

functional capabilities, including the 12 primary categories identified for SRIS but does not classify systems according to the secondary categories identified for SRIS. An official at this site stated that because its classification method differs from that used for SRIS, the site did not provide OIM any information on the functional capabilities of its systems in 1995. Contractor officials at both sites stated that before they can provide the required updates to SRIS, they must perform time-consuming word searches and other research, and modify their systems classifications to agree with SRIS's classifications.

The Department currently is developing a consolidated order for information resources management that will replace the existing software management order (DOE 1330.1D). The new order, which is still in draft, establishes Department policies, responsibilities, and authorities for the planning, funding, development, acquisition, security, and integration of information technology resources. The draft order states that a local software inventory management system shall be developed to maintain an awareness of the software available at each site. However, as written, the order does not specify (1) standards for classifying systems according to their functional capabilities or (2) procedures for ensuring the integrity of software systems data included in the inventories. As a result, contractors will continue to have wide latitude in how they choose to develop and maintain software system inventories, and thus, the Department will not likely progress toward having an inventory that it can effectively use to identify duplicate systems.

Conclusions

Streamlining information systems is essential to helping the Department realize savings. In addition, it is essential that the Department and its contractors be able to assess the capabilities of existing systems prior to acquiring new systems to avoid further duplication and waste. However, without mechanisms for ensuring more reliable reporting by the Department's management and operating contractors, these efforts will not succeed. Because approximately 90 percent of all information technology resource expenditures are made by management and operating contractors at the site level, the success of the Department's improvement efforts hinges on their effective participation.

Recommendations

We recommend that you direct the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Information Management to

- develop, and include in the draft consolidated information resources management order, (1) specific standards for classifying software systems according to their functional capabilities and (2) procedures for ensuring that the data included in software system inventories are complete and reliable; and
- require all management and operating contractors to immediately evaluate their software system inventories for completeness and accuracy, address any weaknesses identified, and create and provide OIM a database which is consistent with the Department's standards.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

Department of Energy officials, including the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Information Management, provided written comments on a draft of this report. We have incorporated their comments where appropriate and reprinted them in appendix I.

These officials disagreed with our recommendations. Specifically, the officials said that they had not meant to imply that a complete inventory of departmental and contractor systems would be available or needed to support the Department's streamlining effort. Moreover, they stated that they did not believe that it was appropriate for the Department to require its management and operating contractors to either maintain information system inventories or to adhere to specific systems classifications for identifying their information systems. They stated that such inventories are not required by either the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 or the Information Technology Management Reform Act of 1996. They further stated that "collective experience of the [Department's] Information Management staff is that detailed inventories are too expensive and time-consuming to develop and maintain and that they do not yield the necessary insight in either consolidating applications or precluding duplications." They stated that they will rely on performance-based contracts to consolidate and eliminate duplicate systems.

We disagree with the Department's position that such inventories lack value for consolidating and eliminating duplicate systems and that the cited legislation does not require systems inventories. Knowing what information resources an organization has is necessary to effectively manage them, and further, to make decisions regarding the investment in additional resources. As noted in our report, the Department has spent significant resources on developing and implementing duplicate information systems at its sites. In its Integrate Information Management Implementation Plan, the Department, itself, acknowledged the need for a

baseline inventory of its information resources to facilitate its streamlining effort and help maximize its investment in information systems. For example, the plan called for developing a comprehensive corporate information management program to maximize the Department's information system investments by avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort and reducing redundant systems. To help achieve this, the plan cited a critical need to obtain an accurate baseline inventory of current and planned system development/acquisition activities and costs, including baselining existing information management architectures, infrastructures, standards, information structures, and resources departmentwide. In addition, OIM officials involved in implementing the streamlining initiative told us during our review that a baseline inventory was being developed to help identify systems that could be consolidated or eliminated.

Moreover, developing and maintaining a complete inventory of the Department's information resources is essential to implementing a strategic information resources management process, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act and the recently enacted Information Technology Management Reform Act of 1996. These acts require agencies to design and implement a strategic process for maximizing the value and assessing and managing the risks of information technology acquisitions. This process is to be used by the agency head, Chief Information Officer, and program officials to select, control, and evaluate agencywide investments in information technology.

To ensure that investments are effectively managed, the Paperwork Reduction Act requires agencies to develop and maintain a current and complete inventory of their information resources.[7] Information resources include computers, software, and other automated data processing equipment owned and operated by the agency directly, owned by an agency and operated by a contractor, or owned and operated by a contractor under contract with the agency. The Act excludes "goverentment-owned contractor-operated facilities" from the definition of the term "agency" (44 U.S.C. Sec. 3502(1)). Thus, the broad management responsibilities imposed by Section 3506 fall on the Department and not the contractor. However, we do not read the Act as excluding government-owned contractor-operated information resources from the requirements imposed on agencies by Section 3506.

In addition, the Office of Management and Budget's Evaluating Information Technology Investments: A Practical Guide provides a

[7]Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, P.L. 104-13(1995), Sec. 3506(b)(4).

systematic approach to managing the risks and returns of information technology investments. According to this guide, one of the organizational attributes critical to the success of an agency's information technology investments is defining a portfolio that includes information technology projects in every phase (initial concept, new, ongoing, or fully operational) and for every type (mission critical, cross-functional, infrastructure, administrative, and R&D) of information technology systems.

Since approximately 90 percent of the Department's information technology investments are made by its management and operating contractors, it is incumbent upon the Department to collect and maintain accurate information on these information resources. Without this information, the Department cannot expect to develop a full and accurate accounting of its information technology expenditures or to adequately assess the extent to which its information resources contribute to program productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness. In addition, even with performance-based contracts, information on what resources exist agencywide will be essential to contractors in identifying the appropriate systems to consolidate or eliminate, and to the Department in assessing how well contractors meet performance goals aimed at eliminating systems duplication to achieve savings.

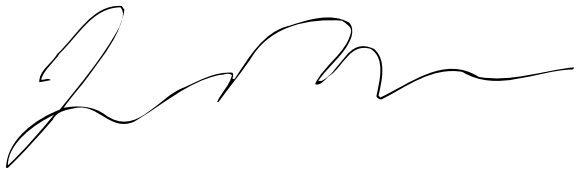
As you know, 31 U.S.C. 720 requires the head of a federal agency to submit a written statement of actions taken on our recommendations. You must send the statement to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on Governmental Reform and Oversight within 60 days after the date of this report. You must also submit a written statement to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations with the agency's first request for appropriations made over 60 days after the date of this letter.

We are sending copies of this report to the Chairmen and Ranking Minority Members of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, the House Committee on Governmental Reform and Oversight, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. We will also make copies available to others upon request.

We performed our review from July 1995 through March 1996, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Details on the scope and methodology of this work are in appendix II.

If you have questions about this report, please contact me on (202) 512-6240 or Valerie C. Melvin, Assistant Director, on (202) 512-6304. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.

Sincerely yours,



Jack L. Brock, Jr.
Director, Information Resources Management/
Resources, Community, and Economic Development

Contents

Abbreviations

DOE	Department of Energy
EM	Environmental Management
ITMRA	Information Technology Management Reform Act
OIM	Office of Information Management
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
SRIS	System Review Inventory System

Comments From the Department of Energy

Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

APR 29 1996

Mr. Jack Brock
Director, Information Management Issues
United States General Accounting Office
441 G St., NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Brock:

Subject: Energy Lacks Information to Support its Information System Streamlining Effort

Reference: United States General Accounting Office Draft Report, GAO/AIMD-96-70, dated March 1996

We appreciate the opportunity to review the "Draft" Report as well as Thursday's meeting to discuss our comments. It appears there may have been a miscommunication of our intent in developing an inventory of Department of Energy (DOE) information systems. We will explain our intentions and how we are using the results. The discussion on use of performance-based contracting as a means of achieving our streamlining objectives will also be expanded. Finally, in a follow-up telephone call, you referred to the B.1.A Corporate Immediate Systems and the ensuing discussion with our staff on the establishment of a Corporate Information System Implementation Task Force as indicators of our intention to have a complete (complexwide) inventory of information systems. We will address this as well.

First of all, it is important to put the application systems process in perspective. Business-related information systems development, enhancement, and maintenance constitutes about 15 percent of the $1.5 billion that will be spent on information technology (IT) in fiscal year 1996. Our commitment to streamlining therefore extends to other IT business processes (e.g., data centers, desktop support, telecommunications). Secretary Hazel O'Leary's Strategic Alignment Initiative (SAI) contains a specific section on Information Management (SAI #39), which commits both a substantial reduction in IT spending and an investment program that will support the Department's mission and reengineered business practices over the next five years. Streamlining information systems is one of those initiatives. The General Accounting Office (GAO) is currently reviewing our progress on this overall initiative under a separate assignment.

The Draft Report focuses on the importance of having a complete inventory of information systems as a requisite to achieving our streamlining goals. Historically, the System Review Inventory System (SRIS) database has served as the corporate repository for collecting information on the major Federal information systems that must be reported to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Last year, rather than develop a separate database, we expanded

SRIS to include reported contractor systems (above a certain threshold) to provide us with an information system profile in support of our DOE-wide architecture effort. We did not receive submissions from some of our Management and Operating (M&O) and non-M&O contractors, and Federal activities. Nonetheless, it provided us sufficient data with which to baseline this effort. The "analysis" volume of the Information Architecture Baseline reflects this. You posed the question concerning the baselining of information systems that either support the public or apply to the records management program in our data call. We were attempting to identify in this data-gathering activity the baseline of our existing information architecture and the potential impact on its future implementation. We intend to follow-up and refine this data on future requests.

Corporate systems opportunities (Federal community) have been identified and are being pursued using a highly structured requirements determination and customer buy-in process successfully used by the Coast Guard in overcoming GAO concerns. We are convinced these corporate efforts will minimize future duplication without an all-inclusive systems inventory database. As corporate systems materialize, we will refine the content and structure of the SRIS database so that our long-range goal of data warehousing can be implemented.

There is considerable discussion in the Draft Report about the wide latitude given contractors in conducting their respective IM programs. It is true that the current Software Management Order (1330.1D) does not require specific practices, such as maintaining inventories of application systems. It is also a fact that the forthcoming Umbrella Order will be even less prescriptive. We believe that improved business management practices motivated by performance-based contracts and economic incentives will assure judicious use of IT resources. Performance-based contracts are transforming the focus from process to outcomes with financial incentives afforded contractors for cost reduction. For example, the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site contract with Kaiser-Hill has yielded a 33 percent reduction ($14 million) in IT expenditures for fiscal year 1996. Twenty percent of the $14 million involves eliminating systems. In addition, a Business Management Oversight Pilot (BMOP) program, championed by the Department's Office of Field Management, is being conducted at the Department's laboratories. IM is a component of those reviews. Last November, the Office of Information Management was invited to participate in a BMOP review conducted at Los Alamos National Laboratory. The IM review was conducted using predefined performance criteria, and a scorecard was tabulated.

We want to bring GAO's attention to the Department's support of an Energy Facility Contractors Group (EFCOG), which in part "establishes a process for reuse of software and systems developed at sites and serves as an information sharing and best practices clearinghouse." Two major outcomes of this commitment are (1) a property accountability system, developed by Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) and in use at five other facilities, and (2) a facility access control system, again developed at LLNL, and deployed at six sites.

The B.1.A Corporate Information Systems Implementation Plan does cite the need "to obtain an accurate baseline inventory of current/planned activities"

(page 3) in order to quantify potential cost savings. Availability of a complete inventory of Federal and contractor information systems should not be implied from this statement. Instead, activities is the key component. We would attempt to identify these and "terminate/avoid" their occurrence as applicable. Once again, this is intended for Federal, not contractor, activities. The Consensus statement (page 4) specifies "Completion . . . of a baseline inventory of information resources . . . effort will require some added burden to contractors." In this context, resources applies to ongoing/planned acquisition/development of IT, and the burden to contractors would result from the fact that we use support services contractors to do this work. In no instance were we referring to IT resources consumed by M&Os in support of their programmatic obligations. The Task Force you referred to is being chartered to "establish a process for Corporate Information Systems selection and implementation; improve communication and coordination concerning Corporate Information Systems; and establish an incentive/assurance mechanism. This Task Force is focusing on systems for use by the Federal community.

In our most recent Departmental Internal Control and Audit Resolution Council (DICARC) submission (January 1996) we stated that a "standards-based information systems architecture framework has been established to facilitate development of shared and interoperable systems. Specific performance criteria evaluating progress in eliminating unnecessary duplication and overlap of systems are being incorporated in the contract negotiations with the Department's management and operating contractors. Departmental information system reviews have been refocussed to address overlapping and duplicative systems. Finally, the Department is undertaking the development of an information management self-assessment process which will incorporate performance measures which address duplicate and overlapping systems." We believe the complementary initiatives of the Federal and contractor communities discussed above, which encompass the entire IT program, will yield both the DICARC commitment and streamlining outcomes expected by SAI programs.

We recommend consideration of the following comments on the Draft Report recommendations:

Recommendation 1:

Develop and include in the draft consolidation information resources management order (1) specific standards for classifying software systems according to their functional capabilities and (2) procedures for ensuring that the data included in the software system inventories is complete and reliable; and

Department Response:

We do not believe it appropriate to require a specific information systems classification system for both the Federal and contractor community, nor is it appropriate or cost-effective to assure completeness of information systems inventories. We will, however, commit to developing and publishing functional criteria for classifying Federal systems as supplemental guidance to the Umbrella Order.

Recommendation 2:

Require all management and operating contractors to immediately evaluate their software system inventories for completeness and accuracy, take steps to address weaknesses identified, and create and provide to the Office of Information Management (OIM) a database that is consistent with the Department's standards.

Department Response:

Application systems inventories are not required by either the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 nor the Information Technology Management Reform Act of 1996. Comprehensive information systems inventories are not being pursued by other civilian agencies nor are they suggested in any of the 11 GAO Strategic Information Management (SIM) Practices. Given contractors dual obligation to the Department and their corporate entities, we believe it inappropriate to require strict adherence to a practice that has unproven results. The collective experience of the Information Management staff is that detailed inventories are too expensive and time consuming to develop and maintain and that they do not yield the necessary insight in either consolidating applications or precluding duplications. We will rely on performance-based contracts to achieve the desired outcomes.

If you have further questions or desire more information, please feel free to contact Mr. David W. Delaney at (202) 586-0163.

Sincerely,

S. W. Hall Jr.
Chief Information Officer

Scope and Methodology

To assess software systems acquired to support the Department of Energy's Environmental Management (EM) Program, we obtained and analyzed software systems inventory data describing the names, functional capabilities, costs, developmental stages, and operating platforms of software systems at 8 departmental offices and 19 sites supporting the EM program. We interviewed Department of Energy field office staff and management and operating contractor officials responsible for developing and maintaining site software system inventories.

We also analyzed documentation provided by officials in the Department's Office of Information Management regarding the collection, analysis, and use of departmental and site software systems inventory data, policies and procedures for developing and maintaining software system inventories, and strategies and plans for streamlining information systems. In addition, we analyzed legislative criteria on managing information technology investments contained in the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and the Information Technology Management Reform Act of 1996. Finally, we analyzed applicable sections of the Department's software management guidance, including DOE Order 1330.1D, Computer Software Management, and discussed with responsible information resources management officials, software management provisions contained in the Department's draft consolidated information resources management order.

We performed our work from July 1995 through March 1996, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Our work was conducted primarily at the Department's headquarters in Washington, D.C., and its field offices in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Richland, Washington; Golden, Colorado; and Aiken, South Carolina. The Department of Energy provided comments on a draft of this report. These comments are presented in appendix I and evaluated in the report.

Major Contributors to This Report

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