



Highlights of [GAO-05-361T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In October 2003, the General Services Administration (GSA) issued a request for information describing its plans for a new governmentwide telecommunications program known as Networx, which is to replace expiring contracts. The program consists of two simultaneous acquisitions: Networx Universal, which is to provide a full range of national and international network services across the United States, and Networx Enterprise, which is to provide agencies with mainly Internet-based services with less extensive geographic coverage.

In September 2004, GAO testified on GSA's actions to address challenges related to this program and made recommendations intended to improve transition planning, performance measures, and billing procedures.

GSA subsequently issued a draft request for proposals (RFP) in October 2004. In response, the telecommunications industry and federal agencies provided more than 2,500 comments, covering technical issues such as the inclusion of certain standards and more general topics, such as the level of small business set-asides.

GAO was requested to provide a progress report on GSA's planning for this program.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-361T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Linda D. Koontz (202) 512-6240 or koontzl@gao.gov.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

GSA Has Made Progress Planning for a New Governmentwide Program, But Critical Issues Remain

What GAO Found

Since GAO's testimony in September, GSA has made progress in addressing the program's challenges and our recommendations. GSA has articulated a strategy for addressing billing concerns and has plans to complete transition planning and guidance for agencies on the identification of service inventories by February 2006. It has also drafted performance measures for each of its program goals.

Critically important to the short-term progress of the Networx program are three issues that could, if unresolved, affect the ultimate success of the program:

- **Contract scope.** In commenting on the draft RFP, vendors indicated concerns about the potential size of the acquisitions as proposed by GSA. Subsequently, GSA doubled the minimum amounts to be bought under the Enterprise acquisition and is reexamining certain aspects of the acquisitions' requirements to ensure that they are all necessary.
- **Evaluation criteria.** GSA has yet to identify the evaluation criteria and share this information with prospective offerors.
- **Traffic volumes.** GSA has not yet determined the traffic volumes required by agencies at specific locations. Agency officials estimate that this information on the government's needs may not be ready until mid to late May 2005, after the final RFP is scheduled to be released.

These uncertainties represent risks to potential offerors which may, in turn, affect the quality of their proposals particularly their ability to offer the best prices to the government. In addition, delays in establishing evaluation criteria and traffic volumes could affect GSA's ability to award the contract by April 2006 as planned.