



Highlights of [GAO-04-49](#), a report to congressional requesters

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT

Governmentwide Strategic Planning, Performance Measurement, and Investment Management Can Be Further Improved

Why GAO Did This Study

Over the years, the Congress has promulgated laws and the Office of Management and Budget and GAO have issued policies and guidance, respectively, on (1) information technology (IT) strategic planning/performance measurement (which defines what an organization seeks to accomplish, identifies the strategies it will use to achieve desired results, and then determines how well it is succeeding in reaching results-oriented goals and achieving objectives) and (2) investment management (which involves selecting, controlling, and evaluating investments).

To obtain an understanding of the government's implementation of these key IT management policies, congressional requesters asked GAO to determine the extent to which 26 major agencies have in place practices associated with key legislative and other requirements for (1) IT strategic planning/performance measurement and (2) IT investment management.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making a number of recommendations, including that each agency take action to address IT strategic planning, performance measurement, and investment management practices that are not fully in place. In commenting on a draft of the report, most agencies generally agreed with our findings and recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-49.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact David Powner at (202) 512-9286 or pownerd@gao.gov.

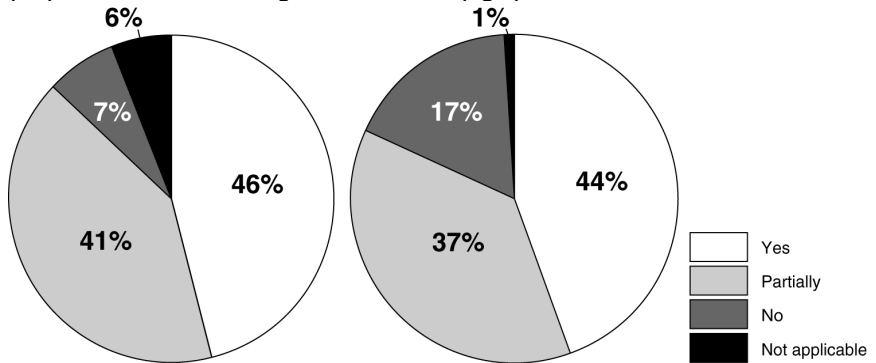
What GAO Found

Agencies' use of 12 IT strategic planning/performance measurement practices—identified based on legislation, policy, and guidance—is uneven (see figure, below left). For example, agencies generally have IT strategic plans and goals, but these goals are not always linked to specific performance measures that are tracked. Without enterprisewide performance measures that are tracked against actual results, agencies lack critical information about whether their overall IT activities are achieving expected goals.

Agencies' use of 18 IT investment management practices that GAO identified is also mixed (see figure, below right). For example, the agencies largely have IT investment management boards, but no agency had the practices associated with the control phase fully in place. Executive-level oversight of project-level management activities provides organizations with increased assurance that each investment will achieve the desired cost, benefit, and schedule results.

Agencies cited a variety of reasons for not having practices fully in place, such as that the chief information officer position had been vacant, that not including a requirement in guidance was an oversight, and that the process was being revised, although they could not always provide an explanation. Regardless of the reason, these practices are important ingredients for ensuring effective strategic planning, performance measurement, and investment management, which, in turn, make it more likely that the billions of dollars in government IT investments are wisely spent.

Percentage of Agencies' Use of IT Strategic Planning/Performance Measurement Practices (left) and Investment Management Practices (right)^a



Source: GAO.

^aPercentages do not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Note: Yes—the practice was in place. Partially—the agency has some, but not all, aspects of the practice in place. Examples of circumstances in which the agency would receive this designation include when (1) some, but not all, of the elements of the practice were in place; (2) the agency documented that it has the information or process in place but it was not in the prescribed form (e.g., in a specific document as required by law or the Office of Management and Budget); (3) the agency's documentation was in draft form; or (4) the agency had a policy related to the practice but evidence supported that it had not been completely or consistently implemented. No—the practice was not in place. Not applicable—the practice was not relevant to the agency's particular circumstances.