GAO Highlights

Why GAO Did This Study

GAO is a force multiplier to help Congress meet its constitutional responsibilities. Through its oversight, GAO improves the performance and accountability of the federal government for the American people. GAO's work spans the full reach of the federal government, including both domestic and international activities and mandatory and discretionary spending.

GAO has continuously evolved to meet the needs of Congress. From its initial focus on financial management matters, GAO has evolved into a multi-disciplinary professional services organization. Located in the legislative branch, GAO is an independent agency that provides Congress with objective, nonpartisan, and evidence-based information, analysis, and recommendations. As Congress's oversight responsibilities have evolved, GAO has actively modernized its work products and services to benefit its congressional clients and the American people.

This testimony describes how GAO's impactful products, wide-ranging services, and multi-disciplinary workforce help the government save money and be more efficient and effective.

GAO

Evolving and Innovating to Meet Congressional Needs

What GAO Found

For the last 5 years, GAO's work yielded an average of $145 in financial benefits for every $1 invested in it. Over the past decade, GAO has delivered an annual average of about $81 billion in financial benefits. In addition, GAO regularly delivers over 1,200 other benefits annually that improve services to the American people, strengthen public safety, and make government work better. GAO's work is in high demand: each year approximately 90 percent of standing committees submit hundreds of requests for studies, and legislation and committee reports require hundreds more.

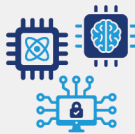GAO accomplishes these results by:

Understanding congressional priorities and needs and evolving national issues. GAO regularly reaches out to Congress to both understand their priorities and highlight emerging issues and challenges, and discuss the array of services that GAO can provide. GAO is working with the Committee on House Administration to have physical space in a House building next year to further these efforts.

Recruiting and retaining a talented, motivated multi-disciplinary workforce. GAO's diverse and dedicated workforce has policy, program, and technical expertise in virtually all major federal domains. GAO has deep institutional knowledge of federal agencies, programs, and operations from decades of work. GAO is recognized by the Partnership for Public Service as one of the best places to work in the federal government. For the past three years, GAO has ranked first among mid-size agencies.

Continuing to modernize its products and services. Efforts include introducing quick-read products that synthesize information on current or emerging issues. GAO is also innovating to produce more accessible and user-friendly digital content. In addition, GAO also increased technical assistance services to Members and committees.

Growing its science, technology, and cybersecurity expertise to meet evolving needs. Since 2019, GAO has more than tripled the size of its Science, Technology Assessment, and Analytics team, with staff who hold over 100 STEM-related advanced degrees. In this time, GAO issued 22 in-depth Technology Assessments and 44 Science and Tech Spotlights, distilling technical issues into two-page summaries. Topics covered in these products include artificial intelligence use in health care, quantum computing, regenerative medicine, generative artificial intelligence, and fusion energy. GAO has also increased the size and capacity of its cybersecurity workforce and its Center for Enhanced Cybersecurity. These efforts resulted in hundreds of recommendations to improve federal agencies' cybersecurity vulnerabilities.

Source: GAO (analysis) and Icons-Studio and Sabavector/stock.adobe.com (icons). | GAO-900536

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