

GAO's Mission

GAO is an independent, nonpartisan professional services agency in the legislative branch of the federal government. Commonly known as the audit and investigative arm of the Congress or the “congressional watchdog,” we examine how taxpayer dollars are spent and advise lawmakers and agency heads on ways to make government work better.

Our mission is to support the Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and ensure the accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people. For example, in fiscal year 2009 our work yielded \$43 billion in financial benefits across the government—a return of \$80 for every dollar invested in GAO—and over 1,300 nonfinancial improvements to government operations. These benefits helped to improve services to the public, change laws, and improve government operations. The strategies and means that we use to accomplish this

mission are described in the following pages. In short, we accomplish our mission by providing objective and reliable information and informed analysis to the Congress, to federal agencies, and to the public, and we recommend improvements, when appropriate, on a wide variety of issues. Three core values—accountability, integrity, and reliability—form the basis for all of our work, regardless of its origin.

As a legislative branch agency, we are exempt from many laws that apply to the executive branch agencies. However, we generally hold ourselves to the spirit of many of the laws, including the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA). Among other things GPRA requires “each agency to prepare an annual performance plan covering each program activity set forth in the budget of such agency”. This section of our budget submission constitutes our performance plan for fiscal year 2011.

Summary of GAO’s Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request

GAO is requesting an appropriation of \$579.5 million in fiscal year 2011 to maintain our fiscal year 2010 staffing level—equivalent to 3,270 full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff, cover fiscal year 2011 mandatory pay and uncontrollable cost increases, and reinvest savings from non-recurring costs and efficiencies to further enhance our productivity and effectiveness. This request represents an increase of about \$22.6 million, or 4.1 percent, over our fiscal year 2010 appropriation. Our request has been offset by increased collections from rental income and reimbursements from financial audits which help reduce our need for appropriated funds. This request represents a prudent increase that will

allow us to maintain our capacity to meet our increased responsibilities and continue to provide timely support to the Congress in confronting the difficult array of challenges facing the nation.

In addition, we are requesting \$21.6 million to support 144 FTEs to help offset some of the cost of mandated oversight of The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act¹ (Recovery Act) activities in fiscal year 2011, for a total increase of 7.9 percent. GAO will continue to temporarily redirect an additional 53 FTEs to Recovery Act oversight from its base appropriation.

¹More information can be found on the Recovery Act Web site, <http://www.gao.gov/>

Table 1: Fiscal Year 2009 - 2011 Source of Funds
(Dollars in thousands)

Funding source	Fiscal Year 2009 actual		Fiscal Year 2010 enacted		Fiscal Year 2011 budget request	
	FTEs	Amount	FTEs	Amount	FTEs	Amount
Appropriation ^a		\$529,526		\$556,849		\$601,117
Offsetting collections		6,100		14,213		19,438
Total budgetary resources	3,141	\$535,626	3,221	\$571,062	3,414	\$620,555

Source: GAO.

^aFY 2011 includes \$21.6 million to support oversight of Recovery Act activities.

In fiscal year 2011, we are requesting authority to use \$19.4 million in offsetting collections, including

- \$8.4 million in rental income, primarily from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ rental of space in the GAO headquarters building, in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 782;
- \$2.3 million from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) as reimbursement for an audit of the FDIC’s financial statements in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 9105;
- \$1 million from the Securities and Exchange

Commission (SEC) as reimbursement for an audit of the SEC’s financial statements in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3521; and

- \$7.7 million from the U.S. Treasury as reimbursement for an audit of the financial statements of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Schedule of Federal Debt as part of our annual audit of the consolidated financial statements of the U.S. Government in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3521

Congressional Demand for GAO's Work

GAO's mission is to evaluate federal spending across an ever broadening array of federal programs. Most recently, the scope of our oversight responsibilities increased significantly to include the government's efforts to address the current financial and economic challenges.

In fiscal year 2009, Congress provided GAO responsibility to conduct oversight over two new major programs—The Recovery Act and the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP). The Recovery Act contains 12 mandates for GAO, including requirements to conduct bimonthly reviews of how states and localities are using Recovery Act funds and to issue subsequent reports based on these reviews. We have made many recommendations directed to such issues as the Act's accountability and transparency requirements, the use of funds to support state efforts to ensure accountability and oversight, and notification to interested parties of the availability of funds.

GAO's work on the \$700 billion TARP program has involved examining the program's performance, financial condition and internal controls, asset management, operational efficiency, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and contracting procedures. We are responsible for submitting reports to the Congress at least every 60 days regarding findings in these areas, and by the end of fiscal year 2009 we had issued over 15 products related to TARP covering areas such as financial assistance and restructuring of the automobile industry, the status of efforts to address home mortgage defaults and foreclosures, and efforts to address the transparency and accountability of TARP which include 35 recommendations for improvements.

In addition to these two areas, our reports continue to cover the depth and breadth of federal programs and frequently involve highly complex issues. Ongoing and planned work for fiscal years 2010 and 2011 covers domestic issues ranging from modernizing the regulatory structure for financial institutions and markets to meet 21st Century demands to controlling escalating health care costs while reforming the system to improve the quality of care and coverage. We also address challenging international issues such as improving the U.S. image abroad, and are assessing ways in which science and technology can enhance productivity and address climate change. Our products also focus on federal programs and areas that we consider at high risk or are in need of

transformation, such as the Department of Defense's weapon systems acquisition processes and contract management, the federal government's oversight of food and safety, and the restructuring of the U.S. Postal Service to ensure financial stability.

Our fiscal year 2011 budget request includes funds to maintain our capacity to provide the Congress with timely analyses and recommendations to address these and other national and global challenges, including:

- assessing the government's responses to the **current economic situation**, including the effectiveness of **financial and regulatory reform** efforts and plans to **ensure the stability of the overall banking, housing, and financial markets**; conducting oversight of proposed programs to boost the economy, including **job expansion** and investments in **infrastructure**; continuing the range of responsibilities in the **Recovery Act**, including bimonthly reviews of how selected states and localities use the funds provided and quarterly reviews of recipient reports on job creation;
- reviewing U.S. efforts related to **Afghanistan, Iraq and other regions in conflict**, including reviewing the effect of drawing down resources in Iraq, providing more resources to Afghanistan, and retooling operations in Pakistan;
- reviewing the government's efforts to **identify and act on credible threats to homeland and border security**, including to commercial aviation and seaports as well as those involving biological, chemical, and nuclear dimensions;
- supporting **health care financing and reform efforts** through analyses of Medicare, Medicaid, and other health programs;
- identifying elements to help address the **nation's financial challenges** including **social security, health care, tax reform, retirement, and disability programs**; opportunities to reduce spending, and reducing the gap between taxes owed and taxes collected;
- performing specialized studies and **technology assessments** of a wide range of science and technology issues, such as climate change, the challenges of developing sophisticated space and defense systems, and green energy; and

- focusing on major areas that are at **high-risk** including the **postal service financial condition, food and drug safety, and cybersecurity** efforts.

Performance Information

To accomplish our mission, we use a strategic planning and management process that is based on a hierarchy of four elements—strategic goals, strategic objectives, performance goals, and key efforts—beginning at the highest level with the following four strategic goals:

- **Strategic Goal 1:** Provide Timely, Quality Service to the Congress and the Federal Government to Address Current and Emerging Challenges to the Well-Being and Financial Security of the American People.
- **Strategic Goal 2:** Provide Timely, Quality Service to the Congress and the Federal Government to Respond to Changing Security Threats and the Challenges of Global Interdependence.
- **Strategic Goal 3:** Help Transform the Federal Government’s Role and How It Does Business to Meet 21st Century Challenges.
- **Strategic Goal 4:** Maximize the Value of GAO by Being a Model Federal Agency and a World-Class Professional Services Organization.²

Our audit, evaluation, and investigative work primarily aligns with the first three strategic goals, which span issues that are both domestic and international, affect the lives of all Americans, and influence the extent to which the federal government serves the nation’s current and future interests. The fourth goal is our only internal one and is aimed at maximizing our productivity through such efforts as investing steadily in information technology to support our work; ensuring the safety and security of our people, information, and assets; pursuing human capital transformation; and leveraging our knowledge and experience.

To help us determine how well we are meeting the needs of the Congress and maximizing our value as a world-class organization, we assess our performance annually using a balanced set of quantitative performance measures that focus on four key areas—results, client, people, and internal operations. These categories of measures are briefly described below.

- **Results.** Focusing on results and the effectiveness of the processes needed to achieve them is fundamental to accomplishing our mission. To assess our results, we measure financial benefits, nonfinancial benefits, recommendations implemented, and percentage of new products with recommendations. Financial benefits and nonfinancial benefits provide quantitative and qualitative information, respectively, on the outcomes or results that have been achieved from our work. They often represent outcomes that occurred or are expected to occur over a period of several years. The remaining measures are intermediate outcomes in that they often lead to achieving outcomes that are ultimately captured in our financial and nonfinancial benefits.
- **Client.** To judge how well we are serving our client, we measure the number of congressional hearings where we are asked to present expert testimony as well as our timeliness in delivering products to the Congress. Our strategy in this area draws upon a variety of data sources (e.g., our electronic client-feedback form) to obtain information on the services we are providing to our congressional clients. In addition we supplement data from these sources with in-person discussions with congressional staff.
- **People.** As our most important asset, our people define our character and capacity to perform. A variety of data sources, including an internal survey, provide information to help us measure how well we are attracting and retaining high-quality staff and how well we are developing, supporting, using, and leading staff.
- **Internal operations.** Our mission and people are supported by our internal administrative services, including information management, building management, knowledge services, human capital, and financial management services. Through an internal customer-satisfaction survey, we gather information on how well our internal operations help employees get their jobs done and improve employees’ quality of work life.

The results and client measures primarily relate to strategic goals 1 through 3, and the people and internal operations measures primarily related to goal 4. For all measures, we set targets at the agencywide level. For the financial benefits, nonfinancial benefits, and testimonies

² In the spring of 2010, we plan to issue an updated Strategic Plan though the overall focus of these four strategic goals will remain essentially unchanged.

measures we also set targets at the goal level. The goal-level targets are provided later in this document. Table 2 presents our actual performance for fiscal years 2006

through 2009 and targeted performance for fiscal years 2010 and 2011 for each measure at the agencywide level.

Table 2: Agencywide Annual Measures and Targets by Fiscal Year
(Dollars in billions)

Performance measure	Fiscal Year 2006 actual	Fiscal Year 2007 actual	Fiscal Year 2008 actual	Fiscal Year 2009 actual	Fiscal Year 2010 target	Fiscal Year 2011 target
Results						
Financial benefits	\$51.0	\$45.9	\$58.1	\$43.0	\$42.0	\$42.0
Nonfinancial benefits	1,342	1,354	1,398	1,315	1,200	1,200
Past recommendations implemented	82%	82%	83%	80%	80%	80%
New products with recommendations	65%	66%	66%	68%	60%	60%
Client						
Testimonies	240	276	298 ^a	203	220	220
Timeliness ^b	93%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
People						
New hire rate	94%	96%	96%	99%	95%	95%
Retention rate						
With retirements	90%	90%	90%	94%	90%	90%
Without retirements	94%	94%	93%	96%	94%	94%
Staff development ^c	76%	76%	77%	79%	76%	76%
Staff utilization ^{c,d}	75%	73%	75%	78%	75%	75%
Effective leadership by supervisors ^{c,e}	79%	79%	81%	83%	80%	80%
Organizational climate ^c	73%	74%	77%	79%	75%	75%
Internal Operations						
Help get job done	4.10	4.05	4.00	4.03	4.00	4.00
Quality of work life	4.00	3.98	4.01	4.01	4.00	4.00

Source: GAO.

Note: Information explaining all of the measures included in this table appears in the Data Quality and Program Evaluations section in appendix 1 of this report.

^aIn fiscal year 2008, we inadvertently reported six additional hearings. This entry reflects the correct total.

^bThe timeliness measure is based on one question on a form sent out to selected clients. The response rate for the form in fiscal year 2009 is 28 percent, and 96 percent of the clients who responded answered this question. The percentage shown in the table represents the percentage of respondents who answered favorably to this question on the form.

^cThis measure is derived from our annual agencywide employee feedback survey. From the staff who expressed an opinion, we calculated the percentage of those who selected favorable responses to the related survey questions. Responses of “no basis to judge/not applicable” or “no answer” were excluded from the calculation. While including these responses in the calculation would result in a different percentage, our method of calculation is an acceptable survey practice, and we believe it produces a better and more valid measure because it represents only those employees who have an opinion on the questions.

^dOur employee feedback survey asked staff how often the following occurred in the last 12 months: (1) my job made good use of my skills, (2) GAO provided me with opportunities to do challenging work, and (3) in general, I was utilized effectively.

^eIn fiscal year 2009 we changed the name of this measure from “Leadership” to its current nomenclature to clarify that the measure reflects employee satisfaction with their immediate supervisor’s leadership.

Budgetary Resources by Goal

Table 3: Budgetary Resources by Strategic Goal, Fiscal Years 2009 through 2011
(Dollars in billions)

Strategic goal	Fiscal Year 2009 actual		Fiscal Year 2010 enacted		Fiscal Year 2011 requested	
	FTEs	Amount	FTEs	Amount	FTEs	Amount
Goal 1 Provide timely, quality service to the Congress and the federal government to address current and emerging challenges to the well-being and financial security of the American people.	1,077	179	1,103	189	1,145	\$207
Goal 2 Provide timely, quality service to the Congress and the federal government to respond to changing threats and the challenges of global interdependence.	989	162	1,015	173	1,052	187
Goal 3 Help transform the federal government's role and how it does business to meet 21 st century challenges.	963	169	998	181	1,097	197
Goal 4 Maximize the value of GAO by being a model federal agency and a world-class professional services organization.	112	25	115	28	120	29
Total	3,141	\$536	3,221	\$571	3,414	\$621

Source: GAO.

Organizational Structure

GAO Field Locations

Atlanta, GA
 Boston, MA
 Chicago, IL
 Dallas, TX
 Dayton, OH
 Denver, CO
 Huntsville, AL
 Los Angeles, CA
 Norfolk, VA
 San Francisco, CA
 Seattle, WA

Our strategy for meeting our performance goals is largely based on our staff who carry out the work that supports our mission. GAO has a workforce of highly trained professionals with degrees in many academic

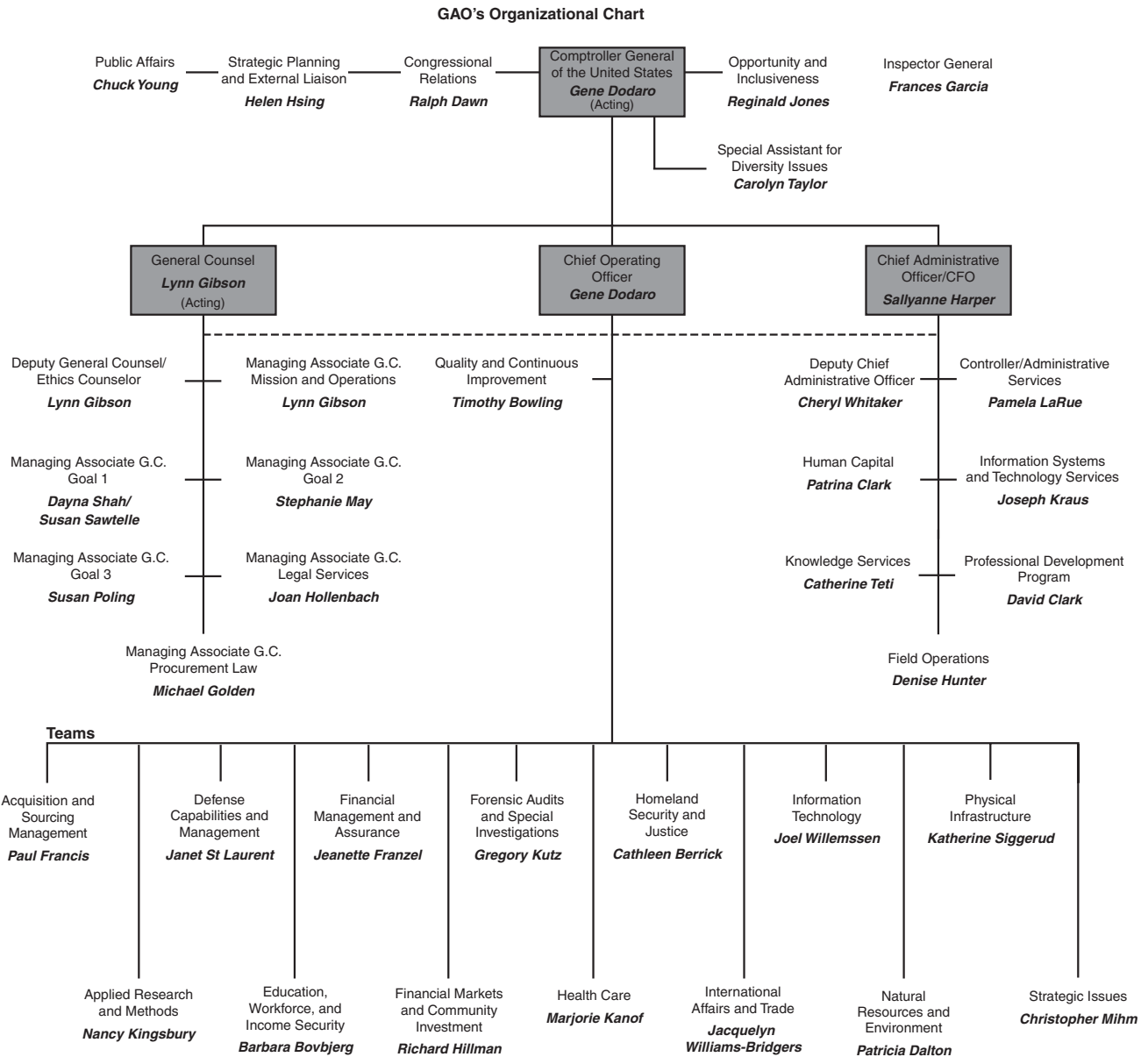
disciplines, including engineering, public and business administration, accounting, law, economics, and the social and physical sciences. To achieve our strategic goals, the staff is organized as shown in the following chart. For the most part, the 13 evaluation, audit, investigative, and research teams perform the work that supports strategic goals 1, 2, and 3—the three external strategic goals—with several of the teams working in support of more than one strategic goal. About three-quarters of our approximately

3,100 employees are based at our headquarters in Washington, D.C.; the rest are deployed in 11 field offices across the country. The field office staff are aligned with our research, audit, investigative, and evaluation teams and perform work in tandem with our headquarters staff. The teams are supported by mission offices, such as General Counsel and Congressional Relations, and staff offices, such as the Chief Administrative Office.

Senior executives in charge of the teams manage a mix of engagements to ensure that we meet the Congress's need for information on quickly emerging issues as we also continue longer-term work efforts that flow from our strategic plan. To serve the Congress effectively with a finite set of resources, senior managers consult with our congressional clients and determine the timing and priority of engagements for which they are responsible.

The following figure displays each team and office, including the name of the Senior Executive Service (SES) unit manager.

Figure 1: GAO's Organizational Chart



Legend:

CFO - Chief Financial Officer

- The Executive Committee

--- Indicates a support or advisory relationship with the teams/units rather than a direct reporting relationship

Note: Everyone listed on this table, other than the Comptroller General of the United States, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Administrative Officer, the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, the Special Assistant for Diversity Issues, the Inspector General, and the General Counsel, all managers are titled "Managing Director."

January 2010

Source: GAO.

Strategies

Our strategies emphasize providing the Congress and the public with information from our work in a variety of forms while continuing to strengthen our internal operations. Specifically, our strategies underscore the importance of working with other organizations on crosscutting issues and recognizing the internal and external factor that could impair our performance on effectively addressing the challenges of achieving our agency's goals.

Conducting Engagements

Attaining our three external strategic goals (goals 1, 2, and 3) and their related objectives rests, for the most part, on providing professional, objective, fact-based, nonpartisan, nonideological, fair and balanced information to support the Congress in carrying out its constitutional responsibilities. To implement the performance goals and key efforts related to these three goals, we develop and present information in a number of ways, including:

- evaluations of federal policies, programs, and the performance of agencies;
- oversight of government operations through financial and other management audits to determine whether public funds are spent efficiently, effectively, and in accordance with applicable laws; investigations to assess whether illegal or improper activities are occurring;
- investigations to assess whether illegal or improper activities are occurring;
- analyses of the financing for government activities;
- constructive engagements in which we work proactively with agencies, when appropriate, to provide advice that may assist their efforts toward positive results;
- legal opinions that determine whether agencies are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- policy analyses to assess needed actions and the implications of proposed actions; and
- additional assistance to the Congress in support of its oversight and decision-making responsibilities.

We will continue to conduct specific engagements as a result of mandates written into legislation, resolutions and committee reports and requests from congressional

committees. We will augment this work with a limited number of engagements under the Comptroller General's authority to self-initiate engagements to address areas of broad interest to the Congress.

Our staff is responsible for following high professional standards in gathering, documenting, and supporting the information we collect and analyze. Typically, this information is documented in a product that is made available to the public. In some cases, we develop products that contain classified or sensitive information that cannot be made available publicly. We generally issue over 1,000 products annually, primarily in an electronic format. In addition, annually we publish 250 to 350 legal decisions and opinions. In fiscal year 2011, we plan to issue:

- reports and written correspondence;
- testimonies and statements for the record, where the former are delivered orally by one or more of our senior executives at a hearing and the latter are provided for inclusion in the congressional record;
- briefings, which are usually given directly to congressional staff members; and
- legal decisions and opinions resolving bid protests and addressing issues of appropriations law, as well as opinions on the scope and exercise of authority of federal officers.

We anticipate that our products will contain information, conclusions, and recommendations that are consistent with achieving our external strategic goals in accordance with our professional standards and core values.

Examining Past Work and Service

During fiscal year 2011, we also will continue to examine the impact of our past work and use that information to shape our future work. Specifically, we will evaluate actions taken by federal agencies and the Congress in response to our past recommendations and, if appropriate, document those actions as financial benefits and nonfinancial benefits. We will actively monitor the status of our open recommendations--those that remain valid but have not yet been implemented--and report our findings annually to the Congress and the public <http://www.gao.gov>. Similarly, we will use our biennial high-risk list report, that we will update again in January 2011, to provide a status report

on major government operations that we consider high risk because they are vulnerable to fraud, waste, abuse, mismanaged or in need of broad-based transformation.

To attain our fourth strategic goal, we will conduct surveys of our congressional clients and internal customers to obtain feedback on our products, processes, and services, and perform studies and evaluations to identify ways to improve them.

Soliciting Input from Experts

We will gather information and perspectives for our strategic and annual planning efforts through a series of forums, advisory boards, and panels; periodic scans of international and national issues that affect the political and social environment in which we work; and our speakers' series.

GAO's advisory boards and panels will support our strategic and annual work planning by alerting us to issues, trends, and lessons learned across the national and international audit community that we should factor into our work. During fiscal years 2010 and 2011, these groups will continue to include

- The **Comptroller General's Advisory Board**, whose 40 members from the public and private sectors have broad expertise in areas related to our strategic objectives;
- The **National Intergovernmental Audit Forum** and 10 regional intergovernmental audit forums through which we will consult regularly with federal inspectors general and state and local auditors;
- The **Domestic Working Group**, which is composed of the Acting Comptroller General and the heads of 19 federal, state, and local audit organizations that exchange information and seek opportunities to collaborate; and
- The **Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency** (i.e., a new council that combines the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency and the Executive Council on Integrity and Efficiency).

We also will continue to work with a number of issue-specific and technical panels to improve our strategic and annual work planning, such as the following:

- The **Advisory Council on Government Auditing Standards** which provides us guidance on

promulgating auditing standards that articulate auditors' responsibilities when examining government organizations, programs, activities, and functions, and government assistance received by contractors, nonprofits, and other nongovernmental organizations. The council's work will help ensure that the revised standards would be generally accepted and feasible.

- The **Accountability Advisory Council**, made up of experts in the financial management community, which advises us on audits of the U.S. government's consolidated financial statements and emerging issues involving financial management and accountability reporting in the public and private sectors.
- The **Executive Council on Information Management and Technology**, whose 19 members are experts from the public and private sectors and representatives of related professional organizations, and which helps us to identify high-risk and emerging issues in the IT arena.
- The **Comptroller General's Educators' Advisory Panel**, composed of deans, professors, and other academics from prominent universities across the United States, which advises us on recruiting, retaining, and developing staff and on strategic planning matters.

Internationally, we will continue to participate in the **International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI)**--the professional organization of the national audit offices of 188 countries. During the fall of 2004, the INTOSAI Congress unanimously adopted a 5-year strategic plan--the first in INTOSAI's 50-year history--that was developed by a 10-nation task force chaired by the Comptroller General. This plan provided the foundation for the Governing Board to engage member institutions in advancing professional audit standards and promoting knowledge sharing. The Acting Comptroller General currently chairs the task force that is in the process of updating INTOSAI's strategic plan. This update is expected to be finalized in November 2010 at the INTOSAI Congress to be held in South Africa.

In addition, the Comptroller General chairs the INTOSAI Task Force on the Global Financial Crisis. This task force is comprised of the United States and 25 other member nations and enriches GAO's understanding of the issue with its members' varied perspectives and experiences.

Collaborating With Other Organizations

By collaborating with others, we plan to continue strengthening professional standards, providing technical assistance, leveraging resources, and developing best practices. For example, in fiscal years 2010 and 2011, we will continue collaborative efforts with

- INTOSAI and donor organizations under the Memorandum of Understanding between INTOSAI and the Donor Community, signed in October 2009, to strengthen the capacity of Supreme Audit Institutions in developing countries; and
- **national audit offices around the world** to build capacity through our international audit fellows program for mid - to senior-level staff from other countries.

Using Internal Experts

We will continue to coordinate extensively internally on our strategic and annual performance planning efforts, as well as on the preparation of our performance budget and performance and accountability report. Our efforts are completed under the overall direction of the Acting Comptroller General. We relied on our Chief Administrative Officer/Chief Financial Officer (CAO/CFO) and her staff to provide key financial information. The CAO/CFO staff will coordinate with others throughout the agency to provide the information on goal 4's results and provide input on other efforts dealing with issues that include financial management, budgetary resources, training, and security. We obtain input on all aspects of our strategic and annual performance planning and reporting efforts from each of our engagement teams and organizational units. In short, we involved virtually every part of our agency and used our internal expertise in our planning and reporting efforts and will continue to do so in fiscal year 2011.

Performance Plans by Strategic Goal

The following sections address performance results, strategic objectives, and plans for each of our four strategic goals. These objectives, along with the performance goals and key efforts that support them, are discussed fully in our strategic plan, which is available on our Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>. Specifically, for goals 1, 2, and

3—our external goals—we present performance results for the three annual measures that we assess at the goal level. Most teams' and units' performance results also contribute to meeting the targets for the agencywide measures previously discussed in this submission.

Strategic Objectives and Targets – Goal 1

Our first strategic goal upholds our mission to support the Congress in carrying out its constitutional responsibilities by focusing on work that helps address the current and emerging challenges affecting the well-being and financial security of the American people and communities. Our multiyear strategic objectives under this goal are to provide information that will help address

- the health needs of an aging and diverse population;
- lifelong learning to enhance U.S. competitiveness;
- benefits and protections for workers, families, and children;
- financial security for an aging population;
- a responsive, fair, and effective system of justice;
- the promotion of viable communities;
- responsible stewardship of natural resources and the environment; and
- a safe, secure, and effective national physical infrastructure.

Contributing GAO Teams

Education, Workforce, and Income Security
 Financial Markets and Community
 Investment
 Health Care
 Homeland Security and Justice
 Natural Resources and Environment
 Physical Infrastructure

Table 4: Selected Work Under Goal 1 in Fiscal Year 2009

Financial benefits	<p>Prompted the elimination of seller-funded down payments assistance for Federal Housing Administration (FHA) mortgages. (\$2.89 billion)</p> <p>Focused federal oversight on Medicaid payment practices vulnerable to fraud. (\$1.2 billion)</p>
Nonfinancial benefits	<p>Enhanced federal efforts to combat drug trafficking.</p> <p>Improved the safety and security of federal facilities.</p> <p>Improved oversight of care in nursing homes, including improved survey methodology, guidance on care quality standards, quality controls on survey information, and management information systems.</p> <p>Identified ways the Department of Housing and Urban Development could promote energy efficiency and green buildings in public housing programs.</p> <p>Improved food nutrition and safety in schools.</p> <p>Improved oversight of clinical laboratories.</p> <p>Investigated the death and abuse of children at public and private schools.</p> <p>Helped to improve access to benefits for workers who lose their jobs. The Congress incorporated our recommendations in the Recovery Act amending the Trade Adjustment Assistance program to require that states spend for case management no less than one-third of the funds set aside for administration, employment, and case management services, and use a single time period for the training enrollment deadline.</p>
Testimonies	<p>Reverse mortgages and nonprime home loans and rising foreclosures.</p> <p>Mental health services for Hurricane Katrina's youngest victims.</p> <p>Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care for wounded soldiers and women veterans.</p>

Source: GAO.

Table 5: Strategic Goal 1's Annual Performance Results and Targets by Fiscal Years
(Dollars in billions)

	Fiscal Year 2006 actual	Fiscal Year 2007 actual	Fiscal Year 2008 actual	Fiscal Year 2009 actual	Fiscal Year 2010 ^a target	Fiscal Year 2011 target
Performance measures						
Financial benefits	\$22.0	\$12.9	\$19.3	\$12.1	\$13.4	\$13.4
Nonfinancial benefits	268	238	226	224	225	225
Testimonies	97	125	123 ^b	85	80	78

Source: GAO.

^a Our fiscal year 2010 target for nonfinancial benefits differs from the target we reported in our fiscal year 2010 performance budget in January 2009. Specifically, we decreased the number of nonfinancial benefits from 235 to 225.

^b In our testimonies calculation for fiscal year 2008, we inadvertently counted one hearing twice. We therefore recalculated the data for this measure. The number shown reflects the correct calculation.

Table 6: Examples of Planned Work Under Goal 1 in Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011

During fiscal year 2010 and 2011, we anticipate conducting work related to:

Financial Security

- implementation of the **Troubled Asset Relief Program**
- proposed reforms to the **financial regulatory structure**
- the condition of **home mortgage markets**
- **Unemployment Insurance** program solvency
- **Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation** management and exposure

Social Programs/ Humanitarian Assistance

- **Medicare and Medicaid** payment methods and program management
- federal efforts to improve **patient safety and care**
- **health care for veterans** and service members

Effective Systems

- Federal efforts to sever links between **major U.S. gangs and international criminal organizations**
- Federal efforts to stop the **illicit use of prescription and legal drugs**
- Federal efforts to stand up the Information Sharing Environment to **ensure federal, state, and local agencies are sharing terrorism information**
- federal oversight of **food safety**
- the oversight of **energy policy**, including the collection of oil royalties produced from federal lands
- **climate change** policies and programs
- a safe, viable, secure, accessible, and efficient **national physical infrastructure**
- **transportation financing and safety programs**
- **U.S. Postal Service** financial viability and efficiency
- affordable, universal **telecommunications services**

Source: GAO.

Strategic Objectives and Targets – Goal 2

Our second strategic goal focuses on helping the Congress and the federal government respond to various types of threats to our nation and the challenges of global interdependency. The federal government is working to promote foreign policy goals, sound trade policies, and other strategies to advance the interests of the United States and its allies. The federal government is also working to balance national security demands overseas and at home with demands related to an evolving national security environment. Our strategic objectives under this goal are to support congressional and agency efforts to:

- protect and secure the homeland from threats and disasters;
- ensure military capabilities and readiness;
- advance and protect U.S. international interests; and
- respond to the impact of global market forces on U.S. economic and security interests.

<u>Contributing GAO Teams</u>
Acquisition and Sourcing Management
Defense Capabilities and Management
Financial Markets and Community Investment
Homeland Security and Justice
International Affairs and Trade
Information Technology

Table 7: Selected Work Under Goal 2 in Fiscal Year 2009

Financial benefits	Reviewed U.S. Coast Guard vessel tracking efforts and identified efficiency and effectiveness issues (\$6 million) Contributing to properly funding the military’s needs .
Nonfinancial benefits and other contributions	Enhanced federal efforts to combat drug trafficking. Helped to terminate DOD’s future combat system program . Enhanced oversight of major weapon systems development and cost estimates. Based in part on our long standing and recent work in this area, the Congress included provisions in the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act of 2009 that require periodic review and assessment as well as annual reporting on the technological maturity and integration risk of critical technologies of the major defense acquisition programs. Helped to improve DOD’s accounting of weapons provided to Afghan security forces .
Testimonies	Reforming U. S. defense acquisitions . Small Business Administration Disaster Loan Program reforms. Security and Exchange Commission enforcement resources . Screening air cargo on passenger aircraft.

Source: GAO.

Table 8: Strategic Goal 2’s Annual Performance Results and Targets by Fiscal Years
(Dollars in billions)

Performance measures	Fiscal Year 2006 actual	Fiscal Year 2007 actual	Fiscal Year 2008 actual	Fiscal Year 2009 actual	Fiscal Year 2010 ^a target	Fiscal Year 2011 target
Financial benefits	\$12.0	\$10.3	\$15.4	\$12.4	\$13.8	\$13.9
Nonfinancial benefits	449	468	468	457	345	345
Testimonies	68	73	93 ^b	67	73	71

Source: GAO.

^a Our fiscal year 2010 targets for nonfinancial benefits and testimonies differ from the targets we reported in our fiscal year 2010 performance budget in January 2009. Specifically, we increased the number of nonfinancial benefits by five and the number of hearings at which we testify by two.

^b In our testimonies calculation for fiscal year 2008, we inadvertently counted three additional hearings for this strategic goal. We therefore recalculated the data for this measure. The number show reflects the correct calculation.

Table 9: Examples of Planned Work Under Goal 2 in Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011

<p>During fiscal year 2010 and 2011, we anticipate conducting work related to:</p> <p><i>Defense Technology</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • systems issues that affect DOD’s acquisition of weapon systems, including cost growth and schedule delays, as well as progress in implementing acquisition reforms • the protection of technologies critical to U.S. national security interests and DOD’s management of its commercial and foreign supplier base • federal agencies’ information-security policies and procedures/critical cyber infrastructures • security risks of new computing technologies across the government <p><i>Crisis Management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • status of DOD’s business-transformation efforts including establishing a Chief Management Officer and addressing defense activities and programs at high risk of waste, fraud, and abuse • managing logistics and contractor support for ongoing operations in Afghanistan and the drawdown from Iraq <p><i>Defense Readiness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementation of the Base Realignment and Closure Efforts • national biosurveillance system • emerging maritime issues, including piracy and increased maritime navigation in the Arctic • Transportation Security Administration’s progress in meeting the 100 percent screening requirements for air cargo • efforts to combat terrorism abroad, including terrorist sanctuaries along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and in Africa <p><i>Global Interdependency</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. programs to ensure free and fair trade, including customs border enforcement • improving the U.S. image abroad through public diplomacy • federal agency privacy-protection provisions for personally identifiable information

Source: GAO.

Strategic Objectives and Target – Goal 3

Our third strategic goal focuses on the collaborative and integrated elements needed to achieve results across the federal government. The work under this goal highlights the intergovernmental relationships that are necessary to achieve national goals, including efforts to

- reexamine the federal government’s role in achieving evolving national objectives;
- support the transformation to results-oriented, high-performing government;
- support congressional oversight of key management challenges and program risks to improve federal operations and ensure accountability; and
- analyze the government’s fiscal position and strengthen approaches for addressing the current and projected fiscal gap.

Contributing GAO Teams

- Applied Research and Methods
- Acquisition and Sourcing Management
- Financial Management and Assurance
- Information Technology
- Natural Resources and Environment
- Strategic Issues
- General Counsel

Table 10: Selected Work Under Goal 3 in Fiscal Year 2009

Financial benefits	Increased collection of delinquent taxes (\$5.7 billion) and federal debt (\$1.4 billion). Avoided costs associated with federal government contracting . (\$3.97 billion). Improved collections of federal nontax and criminal debts (\$1.4 billion). Improved disaster cost estimates by identifying unneeded FEMA appropriations (\$621.6 million).
Nonfinancial benefits and other contributions	Advanced the implementation of health IT. Improved oversight of critical environmental satellite programs , including the Global Positioning System (GPS) .
Testimonies	Recovery Act. Influenza pandemic. Management of DOD contractors . Key National Aeronautics and Space Administration challenges.

Source: GAO.

Table 11: Strategic Goal 3’s Annual Performance Results and Targets by Fiscal Years
(Dollars in billions)

Performance measures	Fiscal Year 2006 actual	Fiscal Year 2007 actual	Fiscal Year 2008 actual	Fiscal Year 2009 actual	Fiscal Year 2010 ^a target	Fiscal Year 2011 target
Financial benefits	\$17.0	\$22.8	\$23.4	\$18.5	\$14.8	\$14.7
Nonfinancial benefits	625	648	704	634	630	630
Testimonies	73	74	76 ^b	49	59	59

Source: GAO.

^a Our fiscal year 2010 target for nonfinancial benefits differs from the target we reported in our fiscal year 2010 performance budget in January 2009. Specifically, we increased our target for nonfinancial benefits from 625.

^b In our testimonies calculation for fiscal year 2008, we inadvertently counted one additional hearing for this strategic goal. We therefore recalculated the data for this measure. The number shown reflects the correct calculation.

Table 12: Examples of Planned Work Under Goal 3 in Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011

During fiscal year 2010 and 2011, we anticipate conducting work related to:

Management Challenges/ Risks

- federal agencies' contractor management and use of appropriate **sourcing strategies**
- reviewing federal agencies' **acquisition business processes** and the adequacy of their workforce
- **NASA program management** and its acquisition of space systems

Accountability

- **annual financial audits** of the Internal Revenue Service, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, TARP, and the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA)
- the annual **consolidated financial audit of the federal government**
- audits of **federal internal controls** needed to ensure accountability over resources and payments, including improper payment controls
- fraud, waste, and abuse in **health care, disability, and other federal entitlement programs**
- **consumer fraud**, such as health-related and financial scams
- claims of fraud, waste, and abuse related to the **Recovery Act**

Financial Effectiveness

- **effectiveness of acquisition, development, and integration efforts**—including complex, multiyear modernizations
- application/use of **IT investment-management best practices** across the government
- oversight of implementation of the Recovery Act and analysis of options to assist state and local governments in coping with recession-induced fiscal pressures
- **border-security and immigration-control IT** programs

Fiscal Condition of the Government

- **reducing the gap between taxes owed and taxes collected**
- issues related to **financing the federal government's growing debt**

Source: GAO.

Strategic objectives and Targets – Goal 4

Becoming a model agency is the focus of our fourth strategic goal. This means that to conduct our work which is driven by our external clients and internal customers, our managers exhibit the characteristics of leadership and management excellence, our employees are devoted to ensuring quality in our work process and products through continuous improvement, and our agency is regarded by current and potential employees as an excellent place to work. Our strategic objectives under this goal are to

- improve client and customer satisfaction and stakeholder relationships, and lead strategically to achieve enhanced results;
- leverage our institutional knowledge and experience;
- enhance our business and management processes; and
- become a professional services employer of choice.

Contributing GAO Teams and Offices

Applied Research and Methods
 Chief Administrative Officer (CAO/CFO)
 Congressional Relations
 Public Affairs
 Opportunity and Inclusiveness
 Quality and Continuous Improvement
 Strategic Planning and External Liaison

Table 13: Selected Work Under Goal 4 in Fiscal Year 2009

<p>Enhancing our Integrated Workforce Planning and Budgeting Process</p>	<p>Demonstrated agility and flexibility in addressing unprecedented new legislative responsibilities and a delayed budget in fiscal year 2009.</p> <p>Routinely employed sophisticated modeling of workforce data to ensure that staff were utilized most effectively.</p> <p>Used creative, alternative hiring measures to obtain needed expertise and subject area knowledge to respond to new legislative responsibilities under TARP and the Recovery Act.</p>
<p>Strengthening Communication with Our Congressional Clients and Our Stakeholders</p>	<p>Enhanced our communications to our clients and the public by using Web technology to more effectively provide timely information on critical issues facing the nation.</p> <p>Produced video summaries on the major issues facing the new Congress and the new administration.</p> <p>Produced a Website with content and documentation supporting GAO’s oversight of the Recovery Act.</p>
<p>Streamlining the Engagement Process and Improving Engagement Services</p>	<p>Revised 36 guidance documents on applied research tools and methods to help engagement teams better plan and implement assignments.</p> <p>Enhanced the design and implementation of Web-based surveys to facilitate (1) efficient data capture and analysis, which was essential to support the many staff conducting Recovery Act audit work across 16 states and the District of Columbia and (2) reuse for subsequent efforts given our recurrent reporting responsibilities under the Recovery Act.</p>

Source: GAO.

Table 14: Examples of Planned Work Under Goal 4 in Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011

During fiscal year 2010 and 2011, we anticipate conducting work related to:

Enhanced Communication

- further increasing the **accessibility of our products** to the press, the public, and other stakeholders
- expanding the use of **enhanced technology and alternative media** to communicate our results more effectively and timely

Continuous Improvement

- identifying ways to **streamline engagement services** and eliminate rework by leveraging information technology and business-process reengineering
- **implementing recommendations from our Performance Appraisal Study** and continuing to analyze the results to identify additional improvements that should be made
- implementing action items identified in the **workforce diversity plan**

Strategic Planning

- Conducting **customer and employee satisfaction survey**
- reexamining our **recruitment and hiring strategy** and process and implementing improvements as identified

Model Agency

- enhancing key information systems support by upgrading to a new **E-Gov travel system** and continuing implementation of a new **human-resource management system**
- enhancing **leadership, supervisory, coaching, and development skills** of staff
- continuing to improve our **physical security profile**
- continuing to enhance our ability to ensure that our **information systems and assets** are effectively protected and free from compromise.

Source: GAO.

Management Challenges

The Acting Comptroller General, the Executive Committee, and our senior executives identify management challenges through our strategic planning, management, and budgeting processes. We monitor our progress in addressing the challenges through our annual performance and accountability process. Under strategic goal 4, we establish performance goals focused on each of our management challenges, track our progress in completing the key efforts for those performance goals quarterly, and report each year on our progress toward meeting the performance goals.

For fiscal year 2011, we plan to continue to address three management challenges—physical security, information security, and human capital. We revisit the challenges each year and refine them, when appropriate. When we believe we have sufficiently addressed these challenges, we will remove them from our list. However, we anticipate that we may need to continue to address all three of these

management challenges in future years because they are constantly evolving and require us to continually identify ways to adapt and improve. We will report any changes as we monitor and report on our progress in addressing the challenges through our annual performance and accountability process. The management challenges are discussed more fully in our Performance and Accountability Report for 2009 and are summarized below.

Physical Security Challenge

We continue to take essential actions to protect our people and our assets to ensure continuity of agency operations. The domestic and international climate demands that we constantly assess our physical security profile and seek ways to improve and strengthen it. In fiscal years 2010 and 2011, we plan to continue to improve our physical-security profile, strengthen our efforts to become a model security agency, and address

the continuing and future issues that will challenge us in going forward. We will continue upgrading the electronic security systems in field offices and begin their integration with the headquarters system. We will develop and finalize a facility security plan that outlines all of our facilitate security functions and identifies specific responses to the different homeland-security threat levels. We will also continue with our incremental implementation of HSPD-12 by completing contractor and employee personnel-security investigations.

Information Security Challenge

Information-systems security continues to be a critical activity in ensuring our information systems and assets are effectively protected and free from compromise. Given the constantly evolving nature of threats to information systems and assets, information security will continue to be a management challenge for us and all government and private-sector entities at least through fiscal year 2011. Our overall goal is to ensure that information-protection requirements extend across the life cycle of documentation: from data transmission and storage to the eventual archiving and disposal of data. In fiscal years 2010 and 2011, we will continue to make progress on these efforts.

Human Capital Challenge

Our studies, which are covering more complex issues across a broad range of federal programs, require greater analysis to complete than ever before. GAO's continued effectiveness in assisting the Congress therefore depends on a talented, diverse, high-performing, and knowledge-based workforce to carry out our mission. We strive to ensure that the design and implementation of our programs are consistent with four key elements we have identified as critical to human capital management—leadership; strategic human-capital planning; acquiring, developing, and retaining talent; and a results-oriented organizational culture—and that we follow our own advice and guidance. While we continue to be highly successful in attracting talent and our attrition rates have recently declined, we are beginning to see the effect of changing demographics and workplace expectations. Younger staff appear to be less likely to make a long-term workplace commitment, while at the same time mid- and senior-level staff with significant institutional knowledge are becoming retirement-eligible in greater numbers.

To address these challenges, we will reexamine our recruitment and retention strategies and flexibilities to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. We will be continuing implementation of initiatives identified in our framework for management improvement in the areas of recognizing and valuing diversity and addressing workload demands and staffing practices. We will also finalize a 5-year Human Capital Strategic Plan to ensure program consistency with the new strategic plan that is currently being developed for the agency. Finally, we will be implementing short-term recommendations and finalizing decisions for longer-term changes to improve our performance-appraisal system.

External Factors Requiring Mitigation

Several external factors could affect the achievement of our performance goals, including the amount of resources we receive, shifts in the content and volume of our work, and national and international developments. Limitations imposed on our work by other organizations or limitations on the ability of other federal agencies to make the improvements we recommend are additional factors that could affect the achievement of our goals.

As the Congress focuses on known challenges facing the nation and responds to unforeseen events, the mix of work we are asked to undertake may change, diverting our resources from some strategic objectives and performance goals. We can and do mitigate the impact of these events on the achievement of our goals in various ways. For example we will:

- continue to track current events (such as the financial- and housing-market crises, the automobile-industry bailout, vulnerabilities in the nation's food-supply system, and the quality of health facilities and services for soldiers returning from military conflicts abroad) and communicate frequently with our congressional clients in order to be alert to possibilities that could shift the Congress's priorities or trigger new priorities;
- quickly redirect our resources when appropriate such as our response to mandates related to TARP and the Recovery Act so that we can deal with major changes as they occur;
- maintain broad-based staff expertise (i.e., in our financial-

markets, accounting, economics, Social Security, health-care financing, and homeland-security areas) so that we can readily address emerging needs; and

- initiate evaluations under the Comptroller General's authority on a limited number of selected topics, including the status of Iraq's reconstruction efforts and our high-risk list update work.

Another external factor that affects our ability to serve the Congress is the extent to which we can obtain access to agency information. This access to information plays an essential role in our ability to report on issues of importance to the Congress and the American people. Executive departments and agencies are generally very cooperative in providing us access to the information we need. It is fairly rare for an agency to deny GAO access to information, and rarer still for an agency to refuse to work toward an accommodation that will allow GAO to do its work.

Program Evaluation

To assess our progress toward our first three strategic goals and their objectives and to update them for our strategic plan, we evaluate actions taken by federal agencies and the Congress in response to our recommendations. The results of these evaluations are conveyed in our performance and accountability reports as financial benefits and nonfinancial benefits that reflect the value of our work.

In addition, we actively monitor the status of our open recommendations—those that remain valid but have not yet been implemented—and report our findings annually to the Congress and the public (see <http://www.gao.gov/openrecs.html>). We use the results of that analysis to determine the need for further work in particular areas. For example, if an agency has not implemented a recommended action that we consider to be worthwhile, we may decide to pursue further action with agency officials or congressional committees, or we may decide to undertake additional work on the matter.

We also use our biennial high-risk update report to provide a status report on those major government operations considered high risk because of their vulnerabilities to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement or the need for broad-based transformation. The report is a valuable evaluation and planning tool because it helps us to identify those areas where our continued efforts are needed to maintain the focus on important policy and

management issues that the nation faces.

(See www.gao.gov/docsearch/featured/highrisk.html.)

In fiscal year 2009, various task teams worked under the umbrella of a large, multifocused effort called GAO's Management Improvement Initiative. A coordinating committee reporting directly to the Executive Committee was chartered to oversee the coordination and implementation of each project within the following five priority areas: Recognizing and Valuing Diversity; Reassessing the Performance Appraisal System; Managing Workload, Quality, and Streamlining Processes; Enhancing Staffing Practices and Developing the Workforce; and Strengthening Recruitment and Retention Initiatives. The task teams examined a number of internal issues, operations, and processes spanning all four of our strategic goals. The following studies helped to inform the work being done in several of these priority areas:

- Performance-appraisal system study. An internal task team performed a comprehensive evaluation of our performance-appraisal system. The evaluation included analyzing past feedback on the system; obtaining employee and manager perspectives through interviews and focus groups; implementing an agencywide survey, which had a 67 percent response rate and solicited over 5,000 comments; and assessing findings from the 2008 African-American Performance Assessment—a contractor-conducted study of the differences in average performance appraisals between GAO's African-American and Caucasian analysts. While we found through our survey that a majority of employees reported that their contributions to GAO are accurately appraised and the feedback they receive is useful and relevant, their satisfaction with the overall system and its transparency is low.
- Recruiting-practices study. An internal task team conducted a comprehensive study of our recruiting and hiring programs that established baseline data on the results of our recruiting efforts. We found that while we are extremely successful in attracting highly qualified candidates to our job announcements, our recruiting program was in need of additional structure and oversight to deliver the best return on investment.
- Staff-development assessment. An internal task team

implemented a survey for staff completing our entry-level development programs to assess the quality of the development and support they were provided. The results from the first iteration of this survey show that almost all developmental staff have developed a good understanding of GAO's performance standards and almost all staff were satisfied with the mission teams they were assigned to after the program, but that we need to provide greater clarity on program goals, improve the usefulness of professional development tools, and increase interaction between Professional Development Program management and program participants.

- Rotational-program assessment. An internal task team conducted an assessment of the rotational program for developmental analysts (i.e., where staff work in three to four mission teams on different engagements during their first 24 months on the job) to determine the effect, if any, of rotations on engagements. Managers identified a number of positive benefits of rotating development staff among mission teams and generally did not believe that rotations negatively affected engagements unless the developmental staff member was the only member on the engagement team in addition to the engagement leader.

We also completed two additional evaluations related to goal 4's strategic objectives.

- Financial-management practices and processes. We have a comprehensive management-control program to meet the objectives of the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act, even though, as part of the legislative branch of the federal government, we are not legally required to do so. The program includes an integration of management controls into our financial processes³ and financial management systems, review of management controls on a recurring basis, and development of corrective action plans for any control issues found and monitoring of those plans until the issues are resolved or corrected. Our Senior Assessment Team (SAT), chaired by the Chief Financial Officer, ensures our commitment to

an appropriate system of internal control, actively oversees the process of assessing internal controls, and provides input for the level and priority of resource needs to correct any control issue identified. In addition to the SAT, our Internal Control Working Group (ICWG), planned, conducted, and managed the assessment in accordance with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-123 and A127 guidelines. We monitor management controls through internal control reviews that included identification and documentation of key controls over financial reporting; performance of interviews, walk-throughs, and observations to determine whether those controls were in operation; testing and evaluation; and reporting the results to our ICWG and SAT.

- Knowledge-sharing survey. The Office of Public Affairs implemented its first reader survey of both internal and external readers of the *GAO Management News* to identify suggestions for enhancing the content and format.

The studies above resulted in internal products or briefings in fiscal year 2009 that are not available publicly.

Verifying and Validating Performance Data

Each year we evaluate our annual performance using measures that assess the outcomes and outputs related to our work results, client service, management of our people, and internal operations. To assess our performance, we used performance data that was complete and actual (rather than projected) for almost all of our performance measures. We believe the data to be reliable because we followed verification and validation procedures to ensure the data's quality. These verification and validation procedures are discussed in appendix I.

³ In fiscal year 2009, GAO operations were segmented into 10 business cycles: Entity-Wide Controls, IT Controls, Facilities and Property Management, Travel, Procurement, Disbursements, Budget, Fund Balance with Treasury, Financial Reporting, and Payroll.

APPENDIX I

Verifying and Validating Performance Data

Results Measures

Financial Benefits

Definition and Background

Our work—including our findings and recommendations—may produce benefits to the federal government that can be estimated in dollar terms. These benefits can result in better services to the public, changes to statutes or regulations, or improved government business operations. A financial benefit is an estimate of the federal monetary effect of agency or congressional actions. These financial benefits generally result from work that we completed over the past several years. The funds made available as a result of the actions taken in response to our work may be used to reduce government expenditures, increase revenues, or reallocate funds to other areas. Financial benefits included in our performance measures are net benefits—that is, estimates of financial benefits that have been reduced by the costs associated with taking the action that we recommended. We convert all estimates involving past and future years to their net present value and use actual dollars to represent estimates involving only the current year. Financial benefit amounts vary depending on the nature of the benefit, and we can claim financial benefits over multiple years based on a single agency or congressional action.

Financial benefits are linked to specific recommendations or other work. To claim that financial benefits have been achieved, our staff must file an accomplishment report documenting that (1) the actions taken as a result of our work have been completed or substantially completed, (2) the actions generally were taken within 2 fiscal years prior to the filing of the accomplishment report, (3) a cause-and-effect relationship exists between the benefits reported and our recommendation or work performed, and (4) estimates of financial benefits were based on information obtained from non-GAO sources. To help ensure conservative estimates of net financial benefits, reductions in operating cost are typically limited to 2 years of accrued reductions, but up to 5 fiscal years of financial benefits can be claimed if the reductions are sustained over a period longer than 2 years. Multiyear reductions in long-term projects, changes in tax laws, program terminations, or sales of government assets are limited to 5 years. Financial benefits can be claimed for past or future years. For financial benefits involving events that occur on a regular but infrequent basis—such as the decennial

census—we may extend the measurement period until the event occurs in order to compute the associated financial benefits using our present-value calculator.

Managing directors decide when their staff can claim financial benefits. A managing director may choose to claim a financial benefit all in 1 year or decide to claim it over several years, if the benefit spans future years and the managing director wants greater precision as to the amount of the benefit.

Data Sources

Our Accomplishment Reporting System provides the data for this measure. Teams use this Web-based data system to prepare, review, and approve accomplishments and forward them to our Quality and Continuous Improvement office (QCI) for its review. Once accomplishment reports are approved, they are compiled by QCI, which annually tabulates total financial benefits agencywide and by goal.

Verification and Validation

Our policies and procedures require us to use the Accomplishment Reporting System to record the financial benefits that result from our work. They also provide guidance on estimating those financial benefits. The team identifies when a financial benefit has occurred as a result of our work. The team develops estimates based on non-GAO sources, such as the agency that acted on our work, a congressional committee, or the Congressional Budget Office, and files accomplishment reports based on those estimates. When non-GAO estimates are not readily available, teams may use GAO estimates—developed in consultation with our experts, such as the Chief Economist, Chief Actuary, or Chief Statistician, and corroborated with a knowledgeable program official from the executive agency involved. The estimates are reduced by significant identifiable offsetting costs. The team develops workpapers to support accomplishments with evidence that meets our evidence standard, supervisors review the workpapers, and an independent person within GAO reviews the accomplishment report. For all financial accomplishment reports the managing director prepares a memorandum addressed to the Chief Quality Officer attesting that the accomplishment report meets GAO standards for accomplishment reporting. The memorandum specifically (1) addresses how linkage to GAO is established and (2) attests that the financial

benefits being claimed are in accordance with GAO procedures.

The team's managing director is authorized to approve financial accomplishment reports with benefits of less than \$100 million. The team forwards the report to QCI, which reviews all accomplishment reports and approves accomplishment reports claiming benefits of \$100 million or more. In fiscal year 2009, QCI approved accomplishment reports covering 95 percent of the dollar value of financial benefits we reported.

In fiscal year 2009, accomplishments from \$500 million to \$1 billion were also reviewed by independent second and third reviewers (reemployed GAO annuitants), who have significant experience and knowledge of GAO policies and procedures for accomplishment reporting. In addition, our Inspector General (IG) audited accomplishment reports of \$1 billion or more (totaling \$25 billion in all). GAO's total fiscal year 2009 reported financial benefits reflect the views of the IG and the independent reviewers.

Data Limitations

Not every financial benefit from our work can be readily estimated or documented as attributable to our work. As a result, the amount of financial benefits is a conservative estimate. Estimates are based on information from non-GAO sources and are based on both objective and subjective data, and as a result, professional judgment is required in reviewing accomplishment reports. We feel that the verification and validation steps that we take minimize any adverse effect from this limitation.

Nonfinancial Benefits

Definition and Background

Our work—including our findings and recommendations—may produce benefits to the federal government that cannot be estimated in dollar terms. These nonfinancial benefits can result in better services to the public, changes to statutes or regulations, or improved government business operations. Nonfinancial benefits generally result from past work that we completed.

Nonfinancial benefits are linked to specific recommendations or other work that we completed over several years. To claim that nonfinancial benefits have been achieved, staff must file an accomplishment report that documents that (1) the actions taken as a result of

our work have been completed or substantially completed, (2) the actions generally were taken within the past 2 fiscal years of filing the accomplishment report, and (3) a cause-and-effect relationship exists between the benefits reported and our recommendation or work performed.

Data Sources

Our Accomplishment Reporting System provides the data for this measure. Teams use this automated system to prepare, review, and approve accomplishments and forward them to QCI for its review. Once accomplishment reports are approved, they are compiled by QCI, which annually tabulates total nonfinancial benefits agencywide and by goal.

Verification and Validation

Our policies and procedures require us to use the Accomplishment Reporting System to record the nonfinancial benefits that result from our findings and recommendations. Staff in the team file accomplishment reports to claim that benefits have resulted from our work. The team develops workpapers to support accomplishments with evidence that meets our evidence standard. Supervisors review the workpapers; an independent person within GAO reviews the accomplishment report; and the team's managing director or director approves the accomplishment report to ensure the appropriateness of the claimed accomplishment, including attribution to our work.

The team forwards the report to QCI, where it is reviewed for appropriateness. QCI provides summary data on nonfinancial benefits to team managers, who check the data on a regular basis to make sure that approved accomplishments from their staff have been accurately recorded. Additionally, on a periodic basis, the IG independently tests compliance with our process for claiming nonfinancial benefits. For example, the IG tested this process in fiscal year 2005 and found it to be reasonable. In response to the IG's recommendations, we strengthened the documentation of our nonfinancial benefits.

Data Limitations

The data may be underreported because we cannot always document a direct cause-and-effect relationship between our work and benefits it produced. However, we feel that this is not a significant limitation on the data because the data represent a conservative measure of our overall contribution toward improving government.

Percentage of Products with Recommendations

Definition and Background

We measure the percentage of our written products (chapter and letter reports and numbered correspondence) issued in the fiscal year that included at least one recommendation. We make recommendations that specify actions that can be taken to improve federal operations or programs. We strive for recommendations that are directed at resolving the cause of identified problems; that are addressed to parties who have the authority to act; and that are specific, feasible, and cost-effective. Some products we issue contain no recommendations and are strictly informational in nature.

We track the percentage of our written products that are issued during the fiscal year and contain recommendations. This indicator recognizes that our products do not always include recommendations and that the Congress and agencies often find such informational reports just as useful as those that contain recommendations. For example, informational reports, which do not contain recommendations, can help to bring about significant financial and nonfinancial benefits.

Data Sources

Our Documents Database records recommendations as they are issued. The database is updated daily.

Verification and Validation

Through a formal process, each team identifies the number of recommendations included in each product and an external contractor enters them into a database. We provide our managers with reports on the recommendations being tracked to help ensure that all recommendations have been captured and that each recommendation has been completely and accurately stated. Additionally, on a periodic basis, the IG independently tests the teams' compliance with our policies and procedures related to this performance measure. For example, during fiscal year 2006, the IG tested and determined that our process for determining the percentage of written products with recommendations was reasonable. The IG also recommended actions to improve the process for developing, compiling, and reporting these statistics. We have implemented the IG's recommendations for fiscal year 2007. Since then, we have used the same procedures to compute and report this measure.

Data Limitations

This measure is a conservative estimate of the extent to which we assist the Congress and federal agencies because not all products and services we provide lead to recommendations. For example, the Congress may request information on federal programs that is purely descriptive or analytical and does not lend itself to recommendations.

Past Recommendations Implemented

Definition and Background

We make recommendations designed to improve the operations of the federal government. For our work to produce financial or nonfinancial benefits, the Congress or federal agencies must implement these recommendations. As part of our audit responsibilities under generally accepted government auditing standards, we follow up on recommendations we have made and report to the Congress on their status. Experience has shown that it takes time for some recommendations to be implemented. For this reason, this measure is the percentage rate of implementation of recommendations made 4 years prior to a given fiscal year (e.g., the fiscal year 2009 implementation rate is the percentage of recommendations made in fiscal year 2005 products that were implemented by the end of fiscal year 2009). Experience has shown that if a recommendation has not been implemented within 4 years, it is not likely to be implemented.

This measure assesses action on recommendations made 4 years previously, rather than the results of our activities during the fiscal year in which the data are reported. For example, the cumulative percentage of recommendations made in fiscal year 2005 that were implemented in the ensuing years is as follows: 13 percent by the end of the first year (fiscal year 2006), 31 percent by the end of the second year (fiscal year 2007), 45 percent by the end of the third year (fiscal year 2008), and 80 percent by the end of the fourth year (fiscal year 2009).

Data Sources

Our Documents Database records recommendations as they are issued. The database is updated daily. As our staff monitor implementation of recommendations, they submit updated information to the database.

Verification and Validation

Through a formal process, each team identifies the number of recommendations included in each product,

and an external contractor enters them into a database.

Policies and procedures specify that our staff must verify, with sufficient supporting documentation, that an agency's reported actions are adequately being implemented. Staff update the status of the recommendations on a periodic basis. To accomplish this, our staff may interview agency officials, obtain agency documents, access agency databases, or obtain information from an agency's inspector general. Recommendations that are reported as implemented are reviewed by a senior executive in the unit and by QCI. Summary data are provided to the units that issued the recommendations. The units check the data regularly to make sure that the recommendations they have reported as implemented have been accurately recorded. We also provide to the Congress a database with the status of recommendations that have not been implemented, and we maintain a publicly available database of open recommendations that is updated daily.

Additionally, on a periodic basis, the IG independently tests our process for calculating the percentage of recommendations implemented for a given fiscal year. For example, based on the IG's last review of this measure, the IG determined that our process was reasonable for calculating the percentage of recommendations that had been made in our fiscal year 2002 products and implemented by the end of fiscal year 2006. The IG also recommended actions to improve the process for developing, compiling, and reporting this statistic. In fiscal year 2007, we implemented the IG's recommendation for calculating the percentage of recommendations that had been made and implemented. Since then we have continued to use this approved process to compute and report this measure.

Data Limitations

The data may be underreported because sometimes a recommendation may require more than 4 years to implement. We also may not count cases in which a recommendation is partially implemented. However, we feel that this is not a significant limitation to the data because the data represent a conservative measure of our overall contribution toward improving government.

Client Measures

Testimonies

Definition and Background

The Congress may ask us to testify at hearings on various issues, and these hearings are the basis for this measure. Participation in hearings is one of our most important forms of communication with the Congress, and the number of hearings at which we testify reflects the importance and value of our institutional knowledge in assisting congressional decision making. When multiple GAO witnesses with separate testimonies appear at a single hearing, we count this as a single testimony. We do not count statements submitted for the record when a GAO witness does not appear.

Data Sources

The data on hearings at which we testified are compiled in our Congressional Hearing System managed by staff in Congressional Relations.

Verification and Validation

The units responding to requests for testimony are responsible for entering data in the Congressional Hearing System. After a GAO witness has testified at a hearing, Congressional Relations verifies that the data in the system are correct and records the hearing as one at which we testified. Congressional Relations provides weekly status reports to unit managers, who check to make sure that the data are complete and accurate. Additionally, on a periodic basis, the IG independently verifies the total number of hearings at which we testified. As a result of the IG's most recent review, we adjusted the figure for the number of hearings we testified at in fiscal year 2008 from 304 to 298. We also are improving the guidance and documentation for recording hearings at which we testify.

Data Limitations

This measure does not include statements for the record that we prepare for congressional hearings. Also, this measure may be influenced by factors other than the quality of our performance in any specific year. The number of hearings held each year depends on the Congress's agenda, and the number of times we are asked to testify may reflect congressional interest in work in progress as well as work completed that year or the previous year. To mitigate this limitation, we try to adjust our target to reflect cyclical changes in the congressional schedule. We also outreach to our clients on a continuing basis to increase their awareness of our readiness to participate in hearings.

Timeliness

Definition and Background

The likelihood that our products will be used is enhanced if they are delivered when needed to support congressional and agency decision making. To determine whether our products are timely, we compute the proportion of favorable responses to a question related to timeliness that appears on our electronic client outreach form. Because our products often have multiple congressional clients, we often outreach to more than one congressional staff person per product. We send a form to key staff working for requesters of our testimony statements and to clients of our more significant written products—specifically, engagements assigned an interest level of “high” by our senior management and those requiring an expected investment of 500 GAO staff days or more. One question asks the respondent whether the product was delivered on time. When a product that meets our criteria is released to the public, we electronically send relevant congressional staff an e-mail message containing a link to the form. When this link is accessed, the form recipient is asked to respond to the timeliness question using a five-point scale—strongly agree, generally agree, neither agree nor disagree, generally disagree, strongly disagree—or choose “not applicable/no answer.” For this measure, favorable responses are “strongly agree” and “generally agree.”

Data Sources

To identify the products that meet our criteria (testimonies and other products that are high interest or expected to reach 500 staff days or more), we run a query against GAO’s Documents Database maintained by a contractor. To identify appropriate recipients of the form for products meeting our criteria, we ask the engagement teams to provide, in GAO’s Product Numbering Database, e-mail addresses for congressional staff serving as contacts on a product. Relevant information from both of these databases is fed into another database that is managed by QCI. This database then combines product, form recipient, and data from our Congressional Relations staff and creates an e-mail message with a Web link to the form. (Congressional Relations staff serve as the GAO contacts for form recipients.) The e-mail message also contains an embedded client password and unique client identifier to ensure that a recipient is linked with the appropriate form. Our Congressional Feedback Database creates a record with the product title and number and captures the responses to every form sent back to us electronically.

Verification and Validation

QCI staff review a hard copy of a released GAO product or access its electronic version to check the accuracy of the addressee information in the QCI database. QCI staff also check the congressional staff directory to ensure that form recipients listed in the QCI database appear there. In addition, our Congressional Relations staff review the list of form recipients entered by the engagement teams and identify the most appropriate congressional staff person to receive a form for each client. E-mail messages that are inadvertently sent with incorrect e-mail addresses automatically reappear in the form approval system. When this happens, QCI staff correct any obvious typing errors and resend the e-mail message or contact the congressional staff person directly for the correct e-mail address and then resend the message. The IG reviewed the timeliness performance measure in fiscal year 2009, and as a result of this work, we have clarified the description of this measure and are documenting our procedures.

Data Limitations

We do not measure the timeliness of all of our external products because we do not wish to place too much burden on busy congressional staff. Testimonies and written products that met our criteria for this measure represented about 65 percent of the congressionally requested written products we issued during fiscal year 2009. We exclude from our timeliness measure low, and medium-interest reports expected to take fewer than 500 staff days when completed, reports addressed to agency heads or commissions, some reports mandated by the Congress, classified reports, and reports completed under the Comptroller General’s authority. Also, if a requester indicates that he or she does not want to complete a form, we will not send one to this person again, even though a product subsequently requested meets our criteria. The response rate for the form is 28 percent, and 96 percent of those who responded answered the timeliness question. We received responses from one or more people for about 53 percent of the products for which we sent a form in fiscal year 2009. In our timeliness calculations for fiscal years 2004 through 2007, we inadvertently included nonresponses to the timeliness question and therefore recalculated the results for these fiscal years. While the percent of favorable responses did not change significantly, the recalculation did result in us meeting our target (from 94 to 95 percent).

People Measures

New Hire Rate

Definition and Background

This performance measure is the ratio of the number of people hired to the number we planned to hire. Annually, we develop a workforce plan that takes into account our strategic goals; projected workload changes; and other changes such as retirements, other attrition, promotions, and skill gaps. The workforce plan for the upcoming year specifies the number of planned hires. The Acting Comptroller General, the Chief Administrative Officer, the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, the Chief Human Capital Officer, and the Controller meet monthly to monitor progress toward achieving the workforce plan. Adjustments to the workforce plan are made throughout the year, if necessary, to reflect changing needs and conditions.

Data Sources

The Executive Committee approves the workforce plan. The workforce plan is coordinated and maintained by the Chief Administrative Office (CAO). Data on accessions—that is, new hires coming on board—is taken from a database that contains employee data from the Department of Agriculture’s National Finance Center (NFC) database, which handles payroll and personnel data for GAO and other agencies.

Verification and Validation

The CAO maintains a database that monitors and tracks all our hiring offers, declinations, and accessions. In coordination with our Human Capital Office, our CAO staff input workforce information supporting this measure into the CAO database. While the database is updated on a daily basis, CAO staff provide monthly reports to the Acting Comptroller General and the CAO to monitor progress by GAO units in achieving workforce plan hiring targets. The CAO continually monitors and reviews accessions maintained in the NFC database against its database to ensure consistency and to resolve discrepancies. In addition, on a periodic basis, the IG examines our process for calculating the new-hire rate. During fiscal year 2008, the IG independently reviewed this process and recommended actions to improve the documentation of the process used to calculate this measure. In fiscal year 2009, we developed standard operating procedures to document how we calculate and ensure quality control over data relevant to this measure.

Data Limitations

There is a lag of one to two pay periods (up to 4 weeks) before the NFC database reflects actual data. We generally allow sufficient time before requesting data for this measure to ensure that we get accurate results.

Retention Rate

Definition and Background

We continuously strive to make GAO a place where people want to work. Once we have made an investment in hiring and training people, we would like to retain them. This measure is one indicator that we are attaining that objective and is the complement of attrition. We calculate this measure by taking 100 percent minus the attrition rate, where attrition rate is defined as the number of separations divided by the average onboard strength. We calculate this measure with and without retirements.

Data Sources

Data on retention—that is, people who are on board at the beginning of the fiscal year and people on board at the end of the fiscal year—are taken from a Chief Administrative Office database that contains some data from the NFC database (The NFC handles payroll and personnel data for GAO and other agencies).

Verification and Validation

CAO staff continually monitor and review accessions and attritions against the contents of their database that has NFC data and they follow up on any discrepancies. In addition, on a periodic basis, the IG examines our process for calculating the retention rate. During fiscal year 2008, the IG reviewed this process and recommended actions to improve the documentation of the process used to calculate this measure. In fiscal year 2009, we developed standard operating procedures to document how we calculate and ensure quality control over data relevant to this measure.

Data Limitations

See New-hire Rate, Data Limitations section.

Staff Development

Definition and Background

One way that we measure how well we are doing and identify areas for improvement is through our annual employee feedback survey. This Web-based survey, which is conducted by an outside contractor to ensure the confidentiality of every respondent, is administered to all of our employees once a year. Through the survey, we encourage our staff to indicate what they think about

GAO's overall operations, work environment, and organizational culture and how they rate our managers—from the immediate supervisor to the Executive Committee—on key aspects of their leadership styles. The survey consists of over 100 questions. To further ensure confidentiality, in fiscal year 2009 the contractor also analyzed the data.

This measure is based on staff's favorable responses to three of the six questions related to staff development on our annual employee survey. This subset of questions was selected on the basis of senior management's judgment about the questions' relevance to the measure and specialists' knowledge about the development of indexes. Staff were asked to respond to three questions on a five-point scale or choose "no basis to judge/not applicable" or "no answer."

Data Sources

These data come from our staff's responses to an annual Web-based survey. The survey questions we used for this measure ask staff how much positive or negative impact (1) external training and conferences and (2) on-the-job training had on their ability to do their jobs during the last 12 months. From the staff who expressed an opinion, we calculated the percentage of staff selecting the two categories that indicate satisfaction with or a favorable response to the question. For this measure, the favorable responses were either "very positive impact" or "generally positive impact." In addition, the survey question asked how useful and relevant to your work did you find internal (Learning Center) training courses. From staff who expressed an opinion, we calculated the percentage of staff selecting the three categories that indicate satisfaction with or a favorable response to the question. For this measure, the favorable responses were "very greatly useful and relevant," "greatly useful and relevant," and "moderately useful and relevant." Responses of "no basis to judge/not applicable" or "no answer" were excluded from the calculation. While including "no basis to judge/not applicable" or "no answer" in the calculation would result in a different percentage, our method of calculation is an acceptable survey practice and we believe it produces a better and more valid measure because it represents only those employees who have an opinion on the questions.

Beginning in fiscal year 2006 we changed the way that the staff development people measure was calculated. Specifically, we dropped one question regarding computer-based training because we felt such training

was a significant part of (and therefore included in) the other questions the survey asked regarding training. We also modified a question on internal training and changed the scale of possible responses to that question. We show the fiscal year 2004 and 2005 data on a separate line to indicate that those data are not comparable to the data beginning in fiscal year 2006.

Verification and Validation

The employee feedback survey gathers staff opinions on a variety of topics. The survey is password protected, and only the outside contractor has access to passwords. In addition, when the survey instrument was developed, extensive focus groups and pretests were undertaken to refine the questions and provide definitions as needed. In fiscal year 2009, our response rate to this survey was about 74 percent, which indicates that its results are largely representative of the GAO population. In addition, many teams and work units conduct follow-on work to gain a better understanding of the information from the survey.

In addition, on a periodic basis, the IG independently reviews the reliability and validity of the staff development measure. The IG's most recent evaluation showed that for fiscal year 2007 we accurately calculated the measure.

Data Limitations

The information contained in the survey is the self-reported opinions of staff expressed under conditions of confidentiality. Accordingly, there is no way to further validate those expressions of opinion.

The practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce errors, commonly referred to as nonsampling errors. These errors could result from, for example, respondents misinterpreting a question or data entry staff incorrectly entering data into a database used to analyze the survey responses. Such errors can introduce unwanted variability into the survey results. We took steps in the development of the survey to minimize nonsampling errors. Specifically, when we developed the survey instrument we held extensive focus groups and pretests to refine the questions and define terms used to decrease the chances that respondents would misunderstand the questions. We also limited the chances of introducing nonsampling errors by creating a Web-based survey for which respondents entered their answers directly into an electronic questionnaire. This approach eliminated the need to have the data keyed into a database by someone other than the respondent, thus removing an additional source of error.

Staff Utilization

Definition and Background

This measure is based on staff's favorable responses to three of the six questions related to staff utilization on our annual employee survey. This subset of questions was selected on the basis of senior management's judgment about the questions' relevance to the measure and specialists' knowledge about the development of indexes. Staff were asked to respond to these three questions on a five-point scale or choose "no basis to judge/not applicable" or "no answer." (For background information about our entire employee feedback survey, see Staff development.)

Data Sources

These data come from our staff's responses to an annual Web-based survey. The survey questions we used for this measure ask staff how often the following occurred in the last 12 months: (1) my job made good use of my skills; (2) GAO provided me with opportunities to do challenging work; and (3) in general, I was utilized effectively. From the staff who expressed an opinion, we calculated the percentage of staff selecting the two categories that indicate satisfaction with or a favorable response to the question. For this measure, the favorable responses were either "very positive impact" or "generally positive impact." Responses of "no basis to judge" or "no answer" were excluded from the calculation. Including "no basis to judge/not applicable" or "no answer" in the calculation (in those few instances where it occurred) would not result in a different percentage. Our method of calculation is an acceptable survey practice, and we believe it produces a better and more valid measure because it represents only those employees who have an opinion on the questions.

Verification and Validation

See Staff development, Verification and validation. The IG's most recent evaluation showed that for fiscal year 2007 we accurately calculated the measure.

Data Limitations

See the Staff Development, Data Limitations section.

Effective Leadership by Supervisors

Definition and Background

This measure is based on staff's favorable responses to 10 of 20 questions related to six areas of supervisory leadership on our annual employee survey. This subset of questions was selected on the basis of senior

management's judgment about the questions' relevance to the measure and specialists' knowledge about the development of indexes. Specifically, our calculation included responses to 1 of 4 questions related to empowerment, 2 of 4 questions related to trust, all 3 questions related to recognition, 1 of 3 questions related to decisiveness, 2 of 3 questions related to leading by example, and 1 of 3 questions related to work life. Staff were asked to respond to these 10 questions on a five-point scale or choose "no basis to judge/not applicable" or "no answer." In fiscal year 2009 we changed the name of this measure from "Leadership" to its current nomenclature to clarify that the measure reflects employee satisfaction with the immediate supervisor's leadership. (For background information about our entire employee feedback survey, see Staff development, Definition and background.)

Data Sources

These data come from our staff's responses to an annual Web-based survey. The survey questions we used for this measure ask staff about empowerment, trust, recognition, decisiveness, leading by example, and work life as they pertain to the respondent's immediate supervisor. Specifically, the survey asked staff the following questions about their immediate supervisor during the last 12 months: (1) gave me the opportunity to do what I do best; (2) treated me fairly; (3) acted with honesty and integrity toward me; (4) ensured that there was a clear link between my performance and recognition of it; (5) gave me the sense that my work is valued; (6) provided me meaningful incentives for high performance; (7) made decisions in a timely manner; (8) demonstrated GAO's core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability; (9) implemented change effectively; and (10) dealt effectively with equal employment opportunity and discrimination issues. (Beginning with the 2010 survey, question 10 will be not be used for this measure and we will substitute a question on respecting and valuing differences among individuals. We are making this change because there is a large number of respondents who answer "no basis/not applicable" to the Equal Employment Opportunity/discrimination question. We believe this is due to GAO having so few discrimination cases and the safeguarding of private information, thus many employees do not have direct knowledge about how supervisors deal with such issues.) From the staff who expressed an opinion, we calculated the percentage of staff selecting the two categories that indicate satisfaction with or a favorable

response to the question. For this measure, the favorable responses were either “always or almost always” or “most of the time.” Responses of “no basis to judge/not applicable” or “no answer” were excluded from the calculation. While including “no basis to judge/not applicable” or “no answer” in the calculation would result in a different percentage, our method of calculation is an acceptable survey practice and we believe it produces a better and more valid measure because it represents only those employees who have an opinion on the questions.

Verification and Validation

See Staff development, Verification and validation. The IG’s most recent evaluation showed that for fiscal year 2007 we accurately calculated the measure.

Data Limitations

See Staff Development, Data Limitations section.

Organizational Climate

Definition and Background

This measure is based on staff’s favorable responses to 5 of the 13 questions related to organizational climate on our annual employee survey. This subset of questions was selected on the basis of senior management’s judgment about the questions’ relevance to the measure and specialists’ knowledge about the development of indexes. Staff were asked to respond to these 5 questions on a five-point scale or choose “no basis to judge” or “no answer.” (For background information about our entire employee feedback survey, see Staff development.)

Data Sources

These data come from our staff’s responses to an annual Web-based survey. The survey questions we used for this measure ask staff to think back over the last 12 months and indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with each of the following statements: (1) a spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my work unit; (2) I am treated fairly and with respect in my work unit; (3) my morale is good; (4) sufficient effort is made in my work unit to get the opinions and thinking of people who work here; and (5) overall, I am satisfied with my job at GAO. From the staff who expressed an opinion, we calculated the percentage of staff selecting the two categories that indicate satisfaction with or a favorable response to the question. For this measure, the favorable responses were either “strongly agree” or “generally agree.” Responses of “no basis to judge” or “no answer” were excluded from the calculation. Including the “no basis to judge/not

applicable” or “no answer” in the calculation (in those few instances where it occurred) would not result in a different percentage. Our method of calculation is an acceptable survey practice, and we believe it produces a better and more valid measure because it represents only those employees who have an opinion on the questions.

Verification and Validation

See Staff development, Verification and validation. The IG’s most recent evaluation showed that for fiscal year 2007 we accurately calculated the measure.

Data Limitations

See Staff Development, Data Limitations section.

Internal Operations Measures

Help Get Job Done and Quality of Work Life

Definition and Background

To measure how well we are doing at delivering internal administrative services to our employees and identify areas for improvement, we conduct an annual Web-based survey in November. The customer satisfaction survey on administrative services, conducted by an outside contractor to ensure the confidentiality of every respondent, is administered to all of our employees once a year. Through the survey we encourage our staff to indicate how satisfied they are with 19 services that help them get their jobs done and another 12 services that affect their quality of work life.

As part of the survey, employees are asked to rate, on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), those services that are important to them and that they have experience with or used recently. Then, for each selected service, employees are asked to indicate their level of satisfaction from 1 (low) to 5 (high), and provide a written reason for their rating and recommendations for improvement if desired. Based on employees’ responses to these questions, we calculate a composite score.

Data Sources

These data come from our staff’s responses to an annual Web-based survey. To determine how satisfied GAO employees are with internal administrative services, we calculate composite scores for two measures. One measure reflects the satisfaction with the 18 services that help employees get their jobs done. These services include Internet and intranet services, information-

technology customer support, mail services, and voice communication services. The second measure reflects satisfaction with another 11 services that affect quality of work life. These services include assistance related to pay and benefits, building maintenance and security, and workplace safety and health. The composite score represents how employees rated their satisfaction with services in each of these areas relative to how they rated the importance of those services to them. The importance scores and satisfaction levels are both rated on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).

Verification and Validation

The satisfaction survey on administrative services is housed on a Web site maintained by an outside contractor, and only the contractor has the ability to link the survey results with individual staff. Our survey response rate was 56 percent in 2008. To ensure that the results are largely representative of the GAO population, we analyze the results by demographic representation (unit, tenure, location, band level, and job type). Each GAO unit responsible for administrative services conducts follow-on work, including analyzing written comments to gain a better understanding of the information from the survey. In addition, on a periodic basis, the IG independently assesses the internal operations performance measures.

The IG examined the measures during fiscal year 2007 and found the measures reasonable. The IG also recommended actions to improve the measures' reliability and objectivity. We are in the process of implementing the IG's recommendations.

Data Limitations

The information contained in the survey is the self-reported opinion of staff expressed under conditions of confidentiality. Accordingly, there is no way to further validate those expressions of opinion. We do not plan any actions to remedy this limitation because we feel it would violate the pledge of confidentiality that we make to our staff regarding the survey responses.

The practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce errors, commonly referred to as nonsampling errors. These errors could result, for example, from respondents misinterpreting a question or entering their data incorrectly. Such errors can introduce unwanted variability into the survey results. We limit the chances of introducing nonsampling errors by using a Web-based survey for which respondents enter their answers directly into an electronic questionnaire. This eliminates the need to have the data keyed into a database by someone other than the respondent.