

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-64](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

OMB launched the Dashboard in June 2009 as a public Web site that reports performance for major IT investments—on which the federal government plans to invest over \$38 billion in fiscal year 2014. The Dashboard is to provide transparency for these investments and to facilitate public monitoring of them. After its launch, OMB began using it to identify at-risk investments.

This report (1) characterizes the CIO ratings for selected federal agencies' IT investments as reported on the Dashboard over time, (2) determines the extent to which selected agencies' CIO ratings are consistent with investment risk, and (3) determines the extent to which selected agencies are addressing at-risk investments. GAO selected the eight agencies with the most reported major IT spending in fiscal year 2012 (excluding those GAO recently reviewed) and selected 10 investments at each agency. GAO reviewed the investments' documentation, compared it to the CIO ratings, and reviewed processes used for the highest-risk investments. GAO also interviewed appropriate officials.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that OMB make Dashboard information available independent of the budget process, and that agencies appropriately categorize IT investments and address identified weaknesses. OMB neither agreed nor disagreed. Six agencies generally agreed with the report or had no comments and two others did not agree, believing their categorizations were appropriate. GAO continues to believe its recommendations remain valid, as discussed.

View [GAO-14-64](#). For more information, contact David A. Powner at (202) 512-9286 or [pownerd@gao.gov](mailto:pownerd@gao.gov).

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## IT DASHBOARD

### Agencies Are Managing Investment Risk, but Related Ratings Need to Be More Accurate and Available

## What GAO Found

As of August 2013, the Chief Information Officers (CIO) at the eight selected agencies rated 198 of their 244 major information technology (IT) investments listed on the Federal IT Dashboard (Dashboard) as low risk or moderately low risk, 41 as medium risk, and 5 as high risk or moderately high risk. However, the total number of investments reported by these agencies has varied over time, which impacts the number of investments receiving CIO ratings. For example, Energy reclassified several of its supercomputer investments from IT to facilities and Commerce decided to reclassify its satellite ground system investments. Both decisions resulted in the removal of the investments from the Dashboard, even though the investments were clearly IT. In addition, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) does not update the public version of the Dashboard as the President's budget request is being created. As a result, the public version of the Dashboard was not updated for 15 of the past 24 months, and so was not available as a tool for investment oversight and decision making.

Of the 80 investments reviewed, 53 of the CIO ratings were consistent with the investment risk, 20 were partially consistent, and 7 were inconsistent (see table).

**Table: Consistency of Selected Agencies' CIO Ratings with Supporting Documentation**

Agency	Rating consistency of each agency's 10 selected investments									
Department of Agriculture	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Department of Commerce	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Department of Energy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Department of Justice	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Department of Transportation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Department of the Treasury	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Department of Veterans Affairs	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Social Security Administration	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Key: ●: The investment's ratings were consistent with supporting documents. ○: The investment's ratings were partially consistent with supporting documents. ○: The investment's ratings were inconsistent with supporting documents.

Source: GAO analysis of OMB's Dashboard and agency data.

While two agencies' CIO ratings were entirely consistent, other agencies' ratings were inconsistent for a variety of reasons, including delays in updating the Dashboard and how investment performance was tracked. For example, the Department of Justice downgraded an investment in July 2012, but the Dashboard was not updated to reflect this until April 2013. Further, the Social Security Administration resets investment cost and schedule performance baselines annually, an approach that increases the risk of undetected cost or schedule variances that will impact investment success.

Of the eight investments that were at highest risk in 2012, seven were reviewed by their agencies using tools such as TechStat sessions—evidence-based reviews intended to improve investment performance and other high-level reviews. Each of these resulted in action items intended to improve performance. The final investment was scheduled to have a TechStat, but instead, according to department officials, a decision was made to modify its program cost and schedule commitments to better reflect the investment's actual performance.