

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105719](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Technology Modernization, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

VA annually spends billions of dollars on IT each year to support the delivery of veterans' benefits and health care services. IT acquisition reform legislation, commonly referred to as FITARA, strengthens the authority of CIOs to provide needed direction and oversight.

GAO was asked to review VA's IT management. The specific objective was to determine the extent to which VA's IT and IT-related assets and activities are being procured with CIO approval.

GAO identified IT-categorized contract actions for new awards from March 2018 through the end of fiscal year 2021. GAO also selected 26 IT-categorized contract actions from fiscal year 2021 for an in-depth individual review of the approval documentation. The 26 actions selected represented a range of cost thresholds and different VA contracting offices.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that VA implement automated controls into relevant contracting systems to ensure CIO review of IT procurements. VA concurred with the recommendation.

View [GAO-23-105719](#). For more information, contact Carol C. Harris at (202) 512-4456 or harriscc@gao.gov.

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IT MANAGEMENT

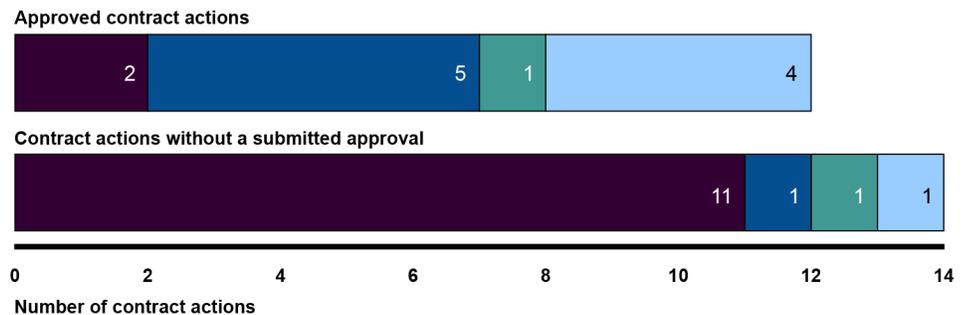
VA Needs to Improve CIO Oversight of Procurements

What GAO Found

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) procured IT and IT-related assets and activities that were often not approved by its Chief Information Officer (CIO). Such approval is required by the *Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act* (FITARA). VA awarded 11,644 new contract actions categorized as IT between March 2018 and the end of fiscal year 2021. VA did not provide evidence of CIO approval for 4,513 (or 39 percent) of these contract actions.

A more in-depth review of 26 selected IT contract actions from fiscal year 2021 confirmed that 12 had documentation showing approval by appropriate agency officials at the required level of authority. The remaining 14 contract actions lacked CIO approval documentation (see figure).

The Department of Veterans Affairs' Documented Chief Information Officer Approvals for Selected Fiscal Year 2021 IT Contract Actions



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs contract data. | GAO-23-105719

Of the 14 contract actions lacking CIO approval, 13 were managed by non-IT contracting offices. According to VA officials, their contracting systems lack an automated control that would remind contracting officers of CIO review and approval requirements. Without an automated check or control to ensure contracting officer compliance, it is likely that there will continue to be IT procurements that will not be routed for CIO review, particularly for non-IT contracting offices. The lack of visibility into the procurement of much of VA's IT assets and activities constrained the CIO's opportunity to provide input on current and planned IT acquisitions. This, in turn, could result in awarding contracts that are duplicative or poorly conceived.