GAO Highlights

Background

GAO's mission is to support 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. We provide nonpartisan, objective, and reliable information to Congress, federal agencies, and to the public, and recommend improvements across the full breadth and scope of the federal government's responsibilities.

GAO responded to requests from 95 percent of the standing full committees of the Congress in fiscal year 2016. GAO issued 697 reports, 2,071 new recommendations, and testified before congressional committees 119 times. Congress used our work extensively to inform its decisions on key fiscal year 2016 and 2017 legislation. Since fiscal year 2002, GAO's work has resulted in:

- over $750 billion dollars in financial benefits; and
- about 19,200 program and operational benefits that helped

to change laws, improve public services, and promote sound management throughout government.

GAO remains an employer of choice in the public sector. The Partnership for Public Service announced that GAO is one of the top places to work in the federal government. We improved our scores in 2016, rising to second place among mid-size agencies. We are ranked first for diversity and inclusion.

FISCAL YEAR 2018 BUDGET REQUEST

U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

In fiscal year 2016 GAO's work resulted in a return of $112 for every dollar invested in GAO, generating over $63 billion in financial benefits to the federal government. Implementation of GAO's recommendations led to 1,234 program and operational improvements across the federal government including many important contributions to enacted budget, appropriations and authorization legislation. GAO reports contained more than 2,000 recommendations across a vast array of areas to foster government efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness on high priority challenges facing Congress and the nation.

Congress used GAO's work to improve agency operations and generate billions in savings. These will result in improved program efficiencies and services through implementation of GAO's recommendations, including such areas as DOD acquisitions and financial management, services to veterans, management of IT systems, and fraud detection.

GAO also continues to draw attention to issues facing Congress and the nation by producing regular updates based on our bodies of work. In February 2017 we issued our biennial high risk report updating Congress on progress made on the 32 areas identified in 2015 and added 3 new areas: (1) Improving Federal Programs that Serve Tribes and their Members; (2) the 2020 Decennial Census; and (3) U.S. Government Environmental Liabilities. In April we issued our seventh annual report on fragmentation, overlap and duplication among federal programs and opportunities to reduce government operations costs or enhance revenues. It identified 79 new actions that Congress and executive branch agencies can take to improve government efficiency and effectiveness. Progress in addressing the 645 actions identified in the six previous years resulted in roughly $136 billion in financial benefits.

GAO is requesting a fiscal year 2018 appropriation of $618.2 million to continue to address congressional priorities, and fulfill our mission. This will support a staffing level of 3,100 full-time equivalents (FTE). We expect to offset our funding needs with $27.5 million in reimbursements from program and financial audits, as well as rental income, resulting in a net appropriation request of $590.7 million.

In planning fiscal year 2018 resources, GAO recognized several key areas that merit increased attention as additional staffing is made available. Focus in these areas will provide long term benefits to the nation. They include identifying strategies and actions agencies can take to reduce a growing amount, now over $140 billion annually, of improper government payments; finding ways to close the yawning tax gap of over $400 billion dollars annually between taxes owed to the government and total taxes paid; and helping the Congress determine policy implications of increasingly complex and rapidly evolving development of science and technology.

United States Government Accountability Office