

## Why GAO Did This Study

GSA is responsible for contracts providing telecommunications services for federal agencies. Transitions involving previous contracts faced significant delays resulting in increased costs. Because GSA's current telecommunications program, *Networx*, expires in May 2020, planning for the next transition has begun.

GAO was asked to review preparations for the transition. This report addresses the extent to which (1) GSA's plans and guidance to agencies incorporate lessons learned from prior transitions, and (2) agencies are following established planning practices in their transitions. In performing this work, GAO analyzed GSA lessons learned and transition guidance. GAO also selected five agencies—USDA, DOL, DOT, SEC, and SSA—based on size, structure, and *Networx* spending. GAO then reviewed the agencies' documentation to determine how they followed five planning practices identified in previous GAO reports.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that GSA disseminate guidance that includes all agency-directed lessons learned. In addition, GAO recommends that USDA, DOL, DOT, SEC, and SSA complete adoption of the planning practices to avoid schedule delays and unnecessary costs. Five agencies agreed with all of our recommendations. SSA agreed with two recommendations, partially disagreed with one, disagreed with two, and provided updated information. GAO stands by the recommendations, as discussed in the report, and revised the report based on SSA's new information.

View [GAO-17-464](#). For more information, contact Carol C. Harris at (202) 512-4456 or [harriscc@gao.gov](mailto:harriscc@gao.gov).

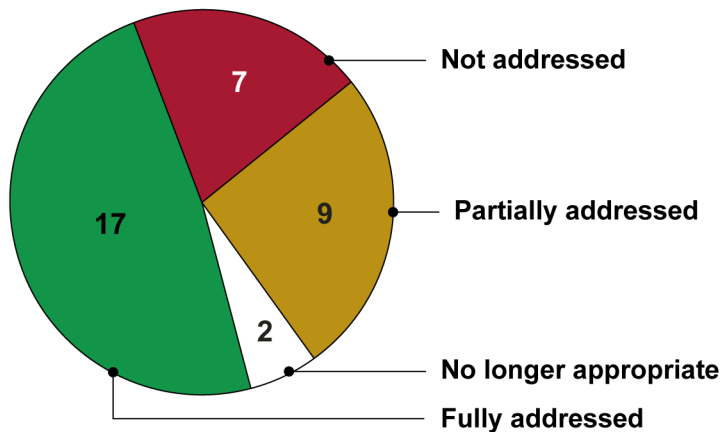
## TELECOMMUNICATIONS

# Agencies Need to Apply Transition Planning Practices to Reduce Potential Delays and Added Costs

## What GAO Found

The General Services Administration's (GSA's) transition guidance to agencies addressed roughly half of its previously identified lessons learned. GSA identified 35 lessons learned from previous telecommunications contract transitions that identify actions that agencies should take. In transition guidance released to agencies, GSA fully addressed 17 of the 35 lessons. Two lessons from previous transitions were not appropriate for the current transition. GSA partially addressed an additional nine lessons. Seven lessons were not addressed at all (see figure). For example, GSA's guidance did not address the previous lesson that agencies should not assume that a transition to a new contract with the same vendor will be easier than a change in vendors. By not including all lessons learned in its plans and guidance to agencies, GSA limits agencies' ability to plan for actions that will need to be taken later in the transition. As a result, agencies face an increased risk that they could repeat prior mistakes, including those that could result in schedule delays or unnecessary costs.

Number of Lessons-Learned Addressed in GSA's Plans and Guidance



Source: GAO analysis of General Services Administration data. | GAO-17-464

Selected agencies—the Departments of Agriculture (USDA), Labor (DOL), and Transportation (DOT); the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and the Social Security Administration (SSA)—have yet to fully apply most of the five planning practices previously identified by GAO as key to a successful telecommunications transition. The practices encompass: (1) developing inventories, incorporating strategic needs into transition planning, (2) incorporating strategic needs into transition planning, (3) developing a structured transition-management approach, (4) identifying resources necessary for the transition, and (5) establishing transition processes and measures of success. SEC fully implemented one practice, partially implemented three practices, and did not implement another. The other four agencies partially implemented each of the five practices. Agencies provided various reasons for not following planning practices, including uncertainty due to delays in GSA awarding the new contracts, plans to implement practices later as part of established agency procedures for managing IT projects, and a lack of direction and contractor assistance from GSA. If agencies do not fully implement the practices in the next transition, they will be more likely to experience the kinds of delays and increased costs that occurred in previous transitions.