GAO
Highlights

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Effective Practices Have Improved Agencies' FITARA Implementation

Why GAO Did This Study

Congress has long recognized that IT has the potential to enable federal agencies to accomplish their missions more quickly, effectively, and economically. However, fully exploiting this potential has presented challenges to covered agencies, and the federal government's management of IT has produced mixed results.

As part of its effort to reform the government-wide management of IT, in December 2014 Congress enacted FITARA. The law included specific requirements related to enhancing Chief Information Officers' (CIO) authorities, improving the risk management of IT investments, reviewing agencies' portfolio of IT investments, consolidating federal data centers, and purchasing software licenses. GAO has reported numerous times on agencies' effectiveness in implementing the provisions of the law and highlighted agencies that have had success in implementing selected provisions.

In this report, GAO identifies practices that agencies have used to effectively implement FITARA. GAO selected five provisions of FITARA to review: (1) CIO authority enhancements; (2) enhanced transparency and improved risk management; (3) portfolio review; (4) data center consolidation; and (5) software purchasing. GAO then selected nine agencies that had success in implementing at least one of the five provisions. GAO compiled practices where at least one agency was better positioned to implement a provision or realized an IT management improvement or cost savings.
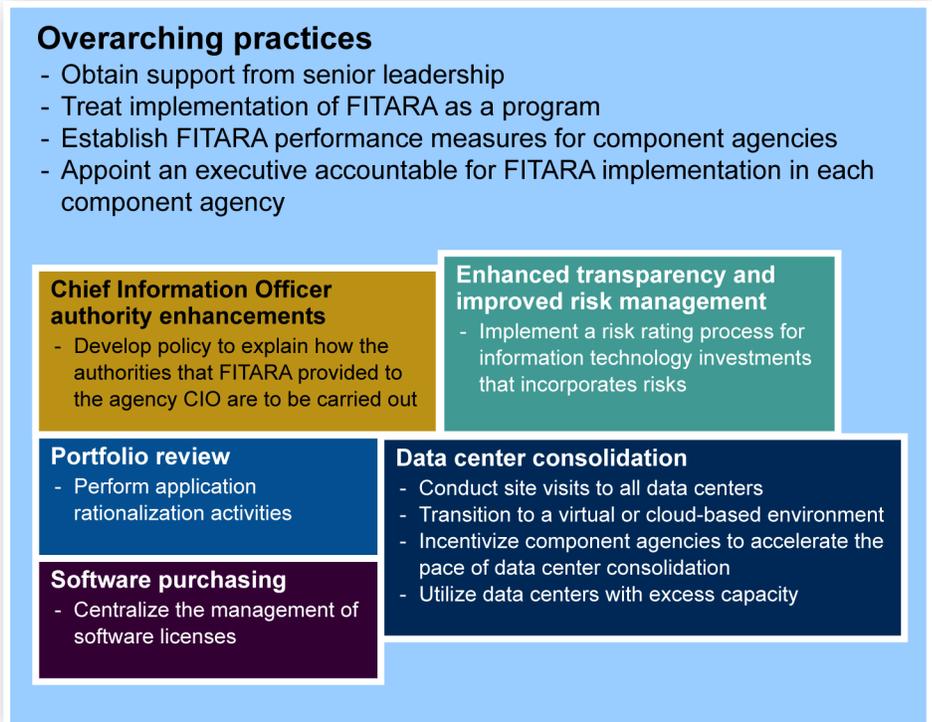
What GAO Found

Nine selected agencies (the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice, and Veterans Affairs; the Agency for International Development; the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; and the General Services Administration) identified 12 practices that helped them to effectively implement one or more Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act provisions (commonly referred to as FITARA). The following figure identifies the 12 practices, including the four overarching ones, considered vital to implementing all provisions.

Figure: Practices for Effectively Implementing Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA)

Overarching practices
- Obtain support from senior leadership
- Treat implementation of FITARA as a program
- Establish FITARA performance measures for component agencies
- Appoint an executive accountable for FITARA implementation in each component agency

Chief Information Officer authority enhancements
- Develop policy to explain how the authorities that FITARA provided to the agency CIO are to be carried out

Enhanced transparency and improved risk management
- Implement a risk rating process for information technology investments that incorporates risks

Portfolio review
- Perform application rationalization activities

Data center consolidation
- Conduct site visits to all data centers
- Transition to a virtual or cloud-based environment
- Incentivize component agencies to accelerate the pace of data center consolidation
- Utilize data centers with excess capacity

Software purchasing
- Centralize the management of software licenses

Source: GAO analysis of agency-provided information. | GAO-19-131

By applying the overarching practices, covered agencies were better positioned to implement FITARA. In addition, by implementing the practices relative to the five FITARA provisions GAO selected, covered agencies realized information technology (IT) management improvements, such as decommissioning old systems and cost savings.

_____ **United States Government Accountability Office**