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Federal Management and
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Area

Active Assignments

Foreword

This report was prepared primarily to inform Congressional members and key staff of ongoing assignments in the General Accounting Office's Federal Management and Workforce Issues issue area. This report contains assignments that were ongoing as of May 3, 1998, and presents a brief background statement and a list of key questions to be answered on each assignment. The report will be issued quarterly.

This report was compiled from information available in GAO's internal management information systems. Because the information was downloaded from computerized data bases intended for internal use, some information may appear in abbreviated form.

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Federal Management and Workforce Issues

MANAGING A GOVERNMENT IN TRANSITION

TITLE: COMPARISON OF FOUR DEPARTMENT'S ACTIVITIES TO RESTRUCTURE HUMAN RESOURCE OPERATIONS (410134)

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Are agencies restructuring/streamlining Human Resource (HR) operations? Why? (2) What activities do agencies have underway to streamline HR operations? (3) Have agencies followed recognized business practices to restructure their HR operations?

TITLE: PROFILES OF SUCCESSFUL FEDERAL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS (410184)

KEY QUESTIONS : The requester asked GAO to review and profile innovative federal public-private partnerships (P3s) as they pertain to real estate and facilities, and to answer the following questions: (1) Among the innovative P3s we profile, what types are most prevalent? (2) What were the rationales for entering the partnership for both the public and private sector entities? (3) What contractual arrangements were used to execute the partnership? (4) Were major barriers encountered, if so, what strategies were used to overcome those barriers? (5) What results were reported?

TITLE: PRIVATIZATION: QUESTIONS STATE AND LOCAL DECISIONMAKERS USED IN CONSIDERING PRIVATIZATION OPTIONS (410307)

KEY QUESTIONS : Over the past several years, state and local governments have increased their use of various types of privatization (shifting functions and responsibilities, in whole or in part, from the government to the private sector). This product responds to a request from several Members of Congress that we identify the critical questions that state and local decisionmakers confronted as they considered whether to privatize a government function. Decisionmakers from the states of Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, and Virginia as well as the city of Indianapolis, Indiana, worked with us to identify the questions.

MANAGING FOR RESULTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

TITLE: REVIEW OF OPM'S CENTRAL PERSONNEL DATA FILE (CPDF) RELIABILITY AND DATA ACCURACY (410071)

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Is the CPDF system documented as recommended by established standards? Does the system process data as OPM intended? (2) What does OPM do to ensure that CPDF data is complete and accurate? (3) How satisfied are users of CPDF data with information OPM provides on any limitations of the data? Do users of CPDF data independently check its accuracy?

TITLE: REVIEW OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES AT GPRA PILOTS (410082)

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What are the lessons learned by, and the related experiences of, GPRA pilots that have made efforts to address the issue of linking employee performance management (PM) to organizational goals?

Federal Management and Workforce Issues

TITLE: STUDY OF POOR PERFORMING EXECUTIVES AT THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (410090)

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What are VHA's exec. perform. mgmt. policies & do they align w/fed. gov policies? (2) What are VHA's exec. conduct policies & do they align w/fed. gov policies? (3) What actions did VHA take in FY 94-96 on exec. perform.? (4) What actions did VHA take on exec. misconduct? (5) How does the no. of VHA exec. pers. actions compare w/the rest of VA/fed. gov's?

TITLE: ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PLAN CONGRESSIONAL GUIDE VERSION 2 (410311)

KEY QUESTIONS : Agencies will be revising their FY1999 plans and preparing their FY2000 plans this fall. In February 1998, we issued "Agencies Annual Performance Plans Under the Results Act: An Assessment Guide to Facilitate Congressional Decisionmaking, Version 1." Because agency performance plans were not yet available, this version does not contain any examples from plans to illustrate key issues. We plan to update this guide to reflect congressional and agency experiences with the first round of performance plans. Jointly with AIMD/BI, we will (1) determine how congressional decisionmakers used the FY99 performance plans and what they believed were the plans' strengths and weaknesses and (2) identify examples from the plans to illustrate ways to improve the usefulness of performance plans.

REEVALUATING THE MERIT SYSTEM

TITLE: REVIEW OF ALLEGED WRONGFUL PERSONNEL ACTIONS AT THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (410226)

KEY QUESTIONS : The requester asked that we examine selected Small Business Administration (SBA) personnel activities in response to allegations of possible wrongdoing. (1) How many District Directors did SBA hire since January 1993? (2) What was the disposition of the SBA regional employees following the 1994 reorganization? (3) What shifting of SBA employees occurred from headquarters and district offices to the regions following the 1994 reorganization? (4) How many details occurred from SBA to other federal agencies; was Congressional reporting required and complied with? (5) What was SBA's salary setting and increase practices for political appointees? (6) What was SBA's salary setting and increase practices for Ramspeck Act appointees?

TITLE: IMPLICATIONS OF THE TRENDS IN EEO COMPLAINT CASELOADS IN THE FUTURE PROCESSING OF COMPLAINTS (410267)

KEY QUESTIONS : Hearings were held in the the Fall, 1997, that elicited testimony about growing inventories of unprocessed EEO complaints and lengthy processing time. The requesters asked us to develop information about inventory levels and analyze how trends in the number of complaints filed and the time taken to process them have contributed to inventory levels by addressing the following questions: (1) What have been the trends in the size and age of cases in inventory at the various stages of the complaint process? (2) What have been the trends in the number of complaints filed by federal employees and the time taken by agencies and EEOC to process them? (3) What are the implications of these trends for the future processing of complaints?

REDESIGNING COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Federal Management and Workforce Issues

TITLE: COMPARISON OF WAGE LOSS COMPENSATION BENEFITS UNDER THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ACT WITH ESTIMATED PRE-INJURY TAKE-HOME PAY (410199)

KEY QUESTIONS : The requester asked that GAO determine if some Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) beneficiaries received more FECA benefits than estimated preinjury take-home pay. Workers' compensation experts generally agree that if compensation benefits approximate or exceed injured workers' preinjury take home pay, disincentives for returning to work may be related. How do current FECA benefits compare to the estimated current value of injured workers' preinjury take-home pay for beneficiaries on the long-term roll that we studied? For these beneficiaries, what are their ages, ages when injured, and occupations? For selected occupations, what would "typical" career patterns look like, had workers not been injured?

TITLE: A COMPARISON: STATE RETIREMENT PROGRAMS AND FEDERAL RETIREMENT PROGRAMS FOR GENERAL EMPLOYEES (410257)

KEY QUESTIONS : GAO has completed a series of reports on private sector retirement programs. State retirement programs offer an additional comparison group for policymakers to consider. This report will answer three questions: (1) How many retirement programs for state general employees are designed similar to CSRS or FERS? (2) What changes, if any, have been made to the designs of state retirement programs since they were established and why? What changes, if any, do state officials currently anticipate? What are the reasons that states have or have not considered changing to a defined contribution only program? (3) How do eligibility, benefits, contributions, and funding features of state retirement programs compare with those of CSRS and FERS?

TITLE: STUDY OF RAILROAD RETIREMENT PORTABILITY TO THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM (410259)

KEY QUESTIONS : As requested, GAO is studying the portability of retirement benefits earned under the Railroad Retirement Acts to the Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS). This assignment will (1) describe the types of retirement plan features that affect portability, (2) document which railroad retirement program features enhance or limit the program's portability, (3) identify potential changes to the railroad retirement program that would enhance portability in that program and describe the cost implications of those changes and (4) identify the key changes to FERS that would enhance the railroad retirement program's portability to FERS and describe the cost and management implications of the changes for civilian retirement.

TITLE: FEDERAL RETIREMENT EDUCATION AND COUNSELING (410261)

KEY QUESTIONS : The retirement education and counseling that civilian employees of the federal government receive during their careers may greatly affect the transition to and quality of their retirement. OPM and agencies have responsibility for providing these services to CSRS and FERS employees, but little is known about OPM and agency practices in this regard. This assignment will provide information on (1) OPM and agency roles and responsibilities for retirement education and counseling, (2) the practices that agencies follow in providing these services, (3) expert views as to the recommended elements of a retirement education and counseling program, and (4) examples of agency activities that exemplify the recommended elements and could serve as examples for the government.

Federal Management and Workforce Issues

TITLE: ACTUARIAL AND BUDGETARY COST TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS FOR CSRS AND FERS (410262)

KEY QUESTIONS : Historical summary information on CSRS and FERS actuarial and budgetary cost trends and projections is not readily available and could help policymakers better understand the nature and direction of these costs and the factors that contribute to changes in costs. Also, information provided annually to Congress on program costs is technical and not easily understood. Thus, the study questions are (1) how are CSRS/FERS pension costs reported to Congress and how do OPM recordkeeping systems compare to other large pension systems, (2) what are the actuarial and budgetary trends in CSRS/FERS pension costs and what accounts for changes in OPM cost estimates and (3) what program oversight issues are raised by the pension cost trends that may warrant further congressional and OPM attention ?

COLLECTING & DISSEMINATING INFORMATION

TITLE: DIFFERENCES IN DEFINITIONS FOR REPORTING UNDER THE LOBBYING DISCLOSURE ACT OF 1995 (LDA) (410094)

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What are the differences in lobbying-related definitions between those in the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) and those in the LDA? (2) What impact does the registrant's election of these different definitions have on filing and reporting (a) under the LDA? (b) under the IRC?

TITLE: REVIEW AND COMPARISON OF THE REGISTRATIONS OF FOREIGN LOBBYING UNDER THE NEW LOBBYING DISCLOSURE ACT, THE OLD LOBBYING ACT, AND THE FOREIGN AGENTS REGISTRATION ACT (410122)

KEY QUESTIONS : The requester is interested in how the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 (LDA), which went into effect in 1996, affected registrations of lobbyists working on behalf of foreign clients. Previously, the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), which has more stringent reporting standards, required lobbyists representing foreign clients to register with the Department of Justice (DOJ). LDA amended FARA by allowing lobbyists for foreign entities, e.g., Toyota, (but not foreign governments or foreign political parties which must still register under FARA) to register under LDA instead of under FARA. We will compare the number of registrations under FARA and the old lobbying law in 1995 with the number of registrations under FARA and the new lobbying law in 1996.

TITLE: COMPARISON OF LOBBYIST REGISTRATIONS IN 1995 AND 1996 (410182)

KEY QUESTIONS : In 1995, Congress passed the The Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 (LDA), which superseded the Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act of 1946. The LDA broadened the definitions of lobbying-related terms. The effect of these broader definitions was the expected increase in the disclosure of the number of individuals identified on lobbyists. The LDA also adopted a new standard for registration: individuals who spend less than 20 percent of their time lobbying on behalf of a client are no longer required to be registered. The requester wants to know (1) how many individuals and organizations registered under the new lobbying law that were not registered under the old lobbying law and, (2) how many were registered under the old law that are not registered under the new law.

Federal Management and Workforce Issues

TITLE: HIRA:30 HISTORICAL CENSUS OVERVIEW (410187)

KEY QUESTIONS : A decennial census is taken every 10 years as is constitutionally required. The requester has asked that we examine (1) historical census-taking methods in the United States and (2) changes the Bureau is making in its procedures for the 2000 Census.

TITLE: STUDY OF THE QUALITY ADJUSTMENTS MADE TO THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (410197)

KEY QUESTIONS : Over \$1 trillion annually of federal tax receipts and spending is linked to price changes measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). In 1996 an advisory commission said that the CPI overstated the cost of living, mostly because of quality change bias, for which it criticized the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for not adequately adjusting for quality changes. This bias occurs when improvements in goods and services are recorded as price increases in the CPI. (1) What are BLS' policies and procedures for collecting price data for the CPI? (2) What are BLS' policies and procedures for substituting goods and services? (3) What were BLS' procedures and methods for making quality adjustments to the CPI? (4) What are BLS' plans to improve the way it makes adjustments?

TITLE: MANAGEMENT AUDIT OF SELECTED GPO PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONAL PROCESS (410219)

KEY QUESTIONS : Public Law 105-55 provides that the Government Printing Office (GPO) make available up to \$1.5 million to GAO for a management audit of selected GPO procedures and operational processes. The Conference Report (105-254) states that GAO should rely on outside contractors and produce a report with recommendations by April 30, 1998. The areas to be covered are: (1) the sales program and its inventory management, (2) the printing procurement program, (3) in-plant production, (4) personnel, and (5) the budgeting, accounting, and financial reporting systems. The audit must also include an evaluation of the observations and recommendations made as a result of GPO's consolidated financial statement audit for fiscal year 1995.

TITLE: HIRA:30 STATISTICAL ISSUES IN THE CENSUS 2000 DRESS REHEARSAL (410223)

KEY QUESTIONS : To reduce costs and increase accuracy, the Census Bureau plans to use statistical sampling techniques for non-response follow-up and for checking the quality of results. What sampling procedures will be tested during the dress rehearsal? What is the sample design for each of these procedures, and will these procedures produce unbiased, accurate results? How has the Bureau modified implementation of its sampling designs to date, and were those modifications justifiable? What were the results of the Bureau's activities that relied on statistical sampling methods, and what are the implications of these results for the use of statistical sampling in 2000?

Federal Management and Workforce Issues

TITLE: FEDERAL POLICIES AFFECTING IMMIGRATION STATISTICS (966703)

KEY QUESTIONS : Concern has been raised about inadequate, incomplete, and unreliable demographic immigration statistics. We agreed to determine (1) the existing policies and the current implementation of the policies for producing immigration statistics (organizations; budgets and staffing; priorities; and the standards and activities to ensure quality, direction of effort, and coordination); (2) how these policies are set and which agencies are responsible for setting them; and (3) whether these policies and their implementation affect independence, the capacity to produce quality statistics, or the efficiency (coordination) of efforts to produce immigration statistics.

IMPROVING FEDERAL REGULATORY MANAGEMENT

TITLE: REVIEW OF INTERIM RULES, DIRECT FINAL RULES, AND OTHER RULES WITHOUT A NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING (410221)

KEY QUESTIONS : During our review of regulatory actions in current jobs, we found that some significant rules were promulgated without going through the proposed rule stage, often as interim final rules. Because some statutory requirements (e.g., for regulatory flexibility analyses) are triggered by a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM), use of these other procedures merits closer examination. In this job, we will attempt to (1) identify the extent to which agencies published final regulatory actions without an NPRM during 1997, (2) describe the circumstances under which agencies can and did publish final rules without an NPRM, and (3) determine what potential implications or consequences are associated with publishing final regulatory actions without an NPRM.

TITLE: IMPLEMENTATION OF PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995 RESPONSIBILITIES BY THE OFFICE OF INFORMATION AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS (410253)

KEY QUESTIONS : The Paperwork Reduction (PRA) of 1995 amended and recodified the PRA of 1980. The 1995 act reauthorized the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) in OMB and gave OIRA responsibility for oversight of governmentwide information resources management and paperwork reduction. This review will focus on OIRA's implementation of these responsibilities. Specifically, we will examine how OIRA has implemented (1) its information collection (IC) and paperwork control functions (2) its general information resources management functions and (3) its responsibility to keep Congress fully and currently informed. We will examine the staff resources and tools OIRA has used to perform its PRA responsibilities.

TITLE: REVIEW OF AGENCIES' STATUTORY DISCRETION FOR SELECTED REGULATIONS (410254)

KEY QUESTIONS : GAO was asked to do a follow up to two reports on regulatory concerns raised by 15 selected companies (GAO/GGD-97-2 and GGD-97-26R). GAO was asked to determine, for the company concerns in the noted reports that the agencies said were statutorily mandated, (1) which regulations were the subject of each of the concerns, (2) the statutory basis for each of the regulations, and (3) the extent to which these regulations were mandated by the underlying statutes. Where possible, we will also determine whether the statutory language would have allowed the agency to use a different regulatory approach that might have been less burdensome than the approach the agency selected.

Federal Management and Workforce Issues

TITLE: REVIEW OF FEDERAL AGENCIES' MAJOR RULES (410263)

KEY QUESTIONS : GAO's Office of the General Counsel has received and reported on 100 final "major" rules (those with a \$100 million impact on the economy) since the enactment of the congressional review requirements in the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (SBREFA). In that process, GAO receives both the rule, and the associated cost-benefit analysis. In a GAO regulatory issues planning conference, participating congressional staff members agreed that GAO should use the information that it has collected to describe those rules. Describe (1) how long it took to develop the rules; (2) which agencies issued the rules; (3) how many rules the agencies said triggered other regulatory requirements such as Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995; and (4) the cost-benefit analyses for the rules.

OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK - FMW

TITLE: IS THE FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT APPLICABLE TO WEEKLY MEETINGS BEING HOSTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, AND IF SO, IS THE DEPARTMENT IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ACT (410201)

KEY QUESTIONS : The requester has asked GAO to examine the applicability of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) to weekly meetings held by officials of the Department of Education (DOEd) with education-related lobbyists. (1) Are DOEd meetings with education-related lobbyists subject to FACA? (2) Are the meetings in violation of prohibitions against federal officials lobbying Members of Congress? (3) What costs are DOEd incurring for these meetings?

TITLE: REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES IN FEDERAL AGENCY POLICYMAKING AND MANAGEMENT (410229)

KEY QUESTIONS : There are about 1,000 federal advisory committees providing advice and recommendations to the President and federal agencies. Under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), the General Services Administration (GSA) is responsible for overseeing advisory committee activities governmentwide and agencies are responsible for establishing and administering the committees in accordance with the law. (1) Do committee members believe they are providing balanced and independent advice and recommendations? (2) Do agencies believe that compliance with FACA is burdensome? (3) Do agencies and committee members believe that FACA limits input by outside interests and individuals on committee issues?

TITLE: HRA:30 CENSUS MANAGEMENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION (410299)

KEY QUESTIONS : In our June 1994 testimony (GAO/T-GGD/AIMD-94-171), we identified a number of problems with the Census Bureau's budget and accounting systems, including the management of unliquidated obligations for unemployment compensation. These problems prevented the Bureau from accurately accounting for its unemployment insurance (UI) expenses for the 1990 Census. Because of these financial management problems, the requester is concerned about the Bureau's management of UI for the 2000 decennial census. The requester asked that we (1) describe the Bureau's current and past authority to pay UI; (2) obtain UI budget and cost estimates for the dress rehearsal and 2000 decennial census; and (3) review the Bureau's actions taken to improve its financial management of UI funds.

Federal Management and Workforce Issues

TITLE: HRA:28 REVIEW OF OPM'S EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE YEAR 2000 COMPLIANCE (410305)

KEY QUESTIONS : Unless timely corrective action is taken, federal agencies could face critical computer systems failures at the turn of the century. In many systems, the year 2000 will be indistinguishable from 1900. Because of the potential for serious governmentwide disruption to critical functions and services, the Year 2000 computing problem has been added to GAO's list of high-risk areas. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM), like other federal agencies, must develop and implement a structured approach for achieving Year 2000 compliance. (1) What is the status of OPM's efforts to identify and correct its Year 2000 systems problems? (2) What is the appropriateness of OPM's strategy and actions for ensuring that its Year 2000 problems will be successfully addressed?