

Oversight Subcommittee and GAO Urge OMB and Agencies to Better Manage IT Investments

Posted At : August 20, 2013 9:09 AM | Posted By : Angie Petty

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A late July House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee hearing on Federal Data Centers and Cloud garnered much press recently, especially in light of GAO's proclamation that there are actually over 7,000 data centers, more than double original inventory counts.

Although the title of the hearing emphasized federal data center consolidation and cloud usage, testimonies and questions from subcommittee members aimed at addressing overall management and oversight of federal IT initiatives. The subcommittee heard testimony from David Powner, GAO's Director of Information Technology Management Issues; Steve VanRoekel, Federal CIO and OMB's Acting Deputy Director for Management; and David McClure, GSA's Associate Administrator in the Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies.

Powner's testimony highlighted a number of areas for improvement in IT investment management, but also gave credit to several OMB initiatives that have produced positive results over the last three years.

Positive Results

- Creation of the IT Dashboard
- Implementation of TechState Reviews
- Launch of the Federal Data Center Consolidation Initiative (FDCCI)
- Implementation of PortfolioStat Reviews

Needs Improvement

- Accuracy and reliability of cost and schedule data in the IT Dashboard
- Validation of cost savings from TechStat to date
- Implement TechStat for all investments with moderately-high or high-risk rating. (Currently only evaluating 33%)
- Track and report on key performance measures for the FDCCI and improve oversight mechanisms
- Determine whether agencies are completing key actions related to PortfolioStat and the incorporation of FDCCI into the process.

Powner stated, "Information technology should enable government to better serve the American people. However, according to OMB, despite spending more than \$600 billion on IT over the past decade, the federal government has achieved little of the productivity improvements that private industry has realized from IT." GAO's investigation of the IT Dashboard showed 154 investments at risk, totaling \$10.4 billion.

Oversight Subcommittee members agreed and asked pointed questions of those testifying and why the current tools and oversight programs are not producing better results. Subcommittee Chair Rep. Mica asked Powner where we were now on server utilization. Powner stated that server utilization is not being monitored now. Rep. Mica also stated that GSA was setting a poor example for data center consolidation having only closed one data center to date, with over 100 non-core data centers in existence. Rep. Meadows asked McClure how GSA planned to close 37 data centers in the next two months, when they only managed to close one in the three year existence of the FDCCI program.

Rep. Mica closed the hearing on a more positive note by telling the panelists that the subcommittee was going to figure out a way to give them all the tools they need to help get the job done. He also encouraged GAO to keep up the good work of monitoring federal agencies and programs, and bringing issues to light that need attention.