

Reducing Areas of Duplication and Overlap in Federal Programs Could Save Billions

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Last week, GAO released its fifth annual report on duplication, fragmentation and overlap in federal government programs. The report is meant to identify areas of opportunity to gain efficiencies, reduce costs, and increase federal revenue by decreasing duplication and overlap.

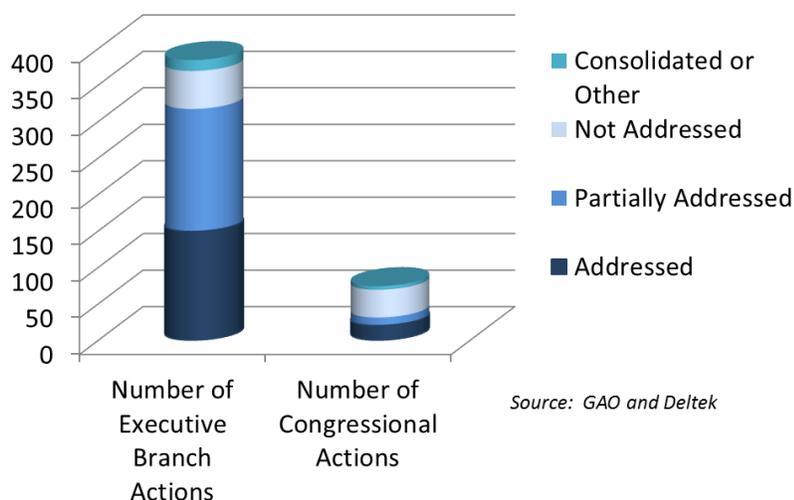
The report identifies 24 areas of opportunity to improve effectiveness and efficiency, and 66 new actions to this end. In this year's report GAO found 12 new areas in which there is evidence of fragmentation, overlap, or duplication, such as the Military Health System US Family Health Plan which duplicates the efforts of DoD's managed care support contractors. GAO also offers recommendations for reducing the cost of government operations or enhancing revenue collections in 12 other areas.

Many of the identified areas for improvement involve defense or health related programs and activities, but the report did point out that hundreds of millions of dollars could be saved government-wide if agencies applied better management of software licenses. GAO suggests OMB issue a directive to assist agencies in this area.

The report also reviewed progress toward areas and actions identified in previous reports to reduce fragmentation, duplication and overlap.

The chart below shows progress toward ending duplication and overlap in areas identified in FY 2011-2014 reports, as well as progress toward specific actions offered in those reports.

Progress Toward Reducing Duplication & Overlap Identified in FY 2011-2014 Annual Reports



According to GAO, 76% of 458 actions identified had been addressed or partially addressed, and 20% had not been addressed. Executive branch and congressional efforts to address these actions over the past 4 years have resulted in over \$20B in financial benefits, with about \$80B more in financial benefits anticipated in future years from these actions.

GAO urged Congress and executive branch agencies to continue progress toward reducing duplication and overlap. Fully addressing the remaining actions identified in GAO's annual reports could lead to tens of billions of dollars of additional savings.

GAO recognizes the difficulty in addressing duplication and fragmentation, in part due to the lack of reliable performance and budget data. It suggests that implementation of the DATA Act and the GPRM Modernization Act of 2010 should improve the amount and reliability of financial and performance information. GAO has also developed an [Evaluation and Management Guide](#) to assist agencies in identifying and resolving fragmentation and overlap, and options to consider for addressing or managing such instances.