Agencies Not Poised to Meet Data Center Consolidation Goals

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Four years after the launch of the Federal Data Center Consolidation Initiative (FDCCI), agencies have only closed 746 data centers. With less than six months to go before the end of the fiscal year, it's unlikely agencies will meet the goal of closing 1200 data centers.
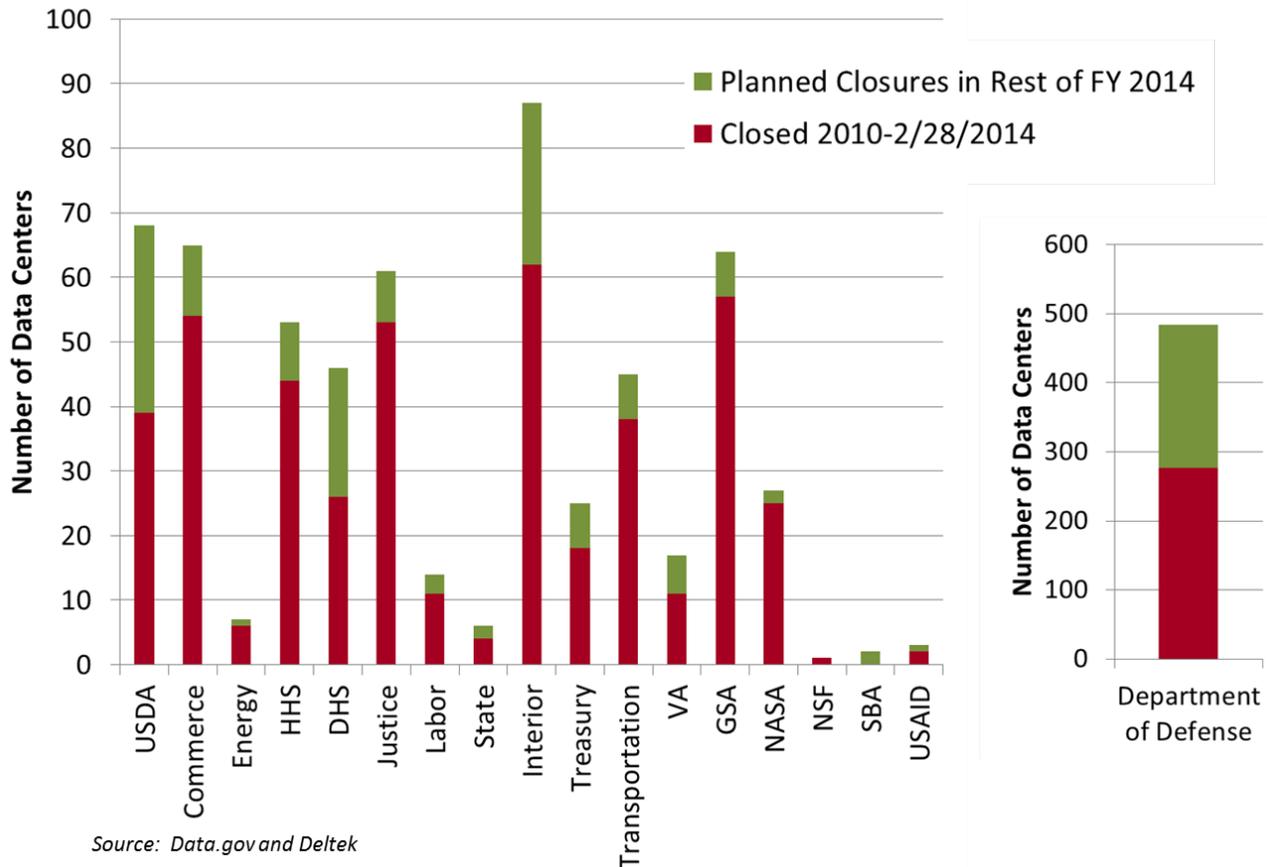
New data released via data.gov shows agencies only plan to close an additional 352 data centers by the end of the fiscal year, for a total of 1098. However, all of these numbers may be moot given the ever evolving definition of a data center and end goals of the consolidation initiative.

Announced in February 2010, the FDCCI intended to promote the use of Green IT by lowering the energy and real estate footprint of government data centers; reduce the cost of data center hardware, software, and operations; shift IT investments to more efficient computing platforms; and increase the overall IT security posture of the government. In doing so, the administration planned to save $5 billion by closing 40% of federal data centers by 2015.

2010 data center inventories uncovered 2,094 data centers over 500 square feet, with a goal of closing 800. A change in the definition of a data center to include spaces down to 100 square feet grew that number to 3,133 and resulted in a new closure goal of shuttering 1200 data centers. Since then, with even further changes to the definition of a data center, GAO efforts uncovered over 7,000 data centers to date. All the while, agencies have plodded away at closing data centers and optimizing those that remain.

The latest closure data shows 1098 total closures planned by the end of the fiscal year.
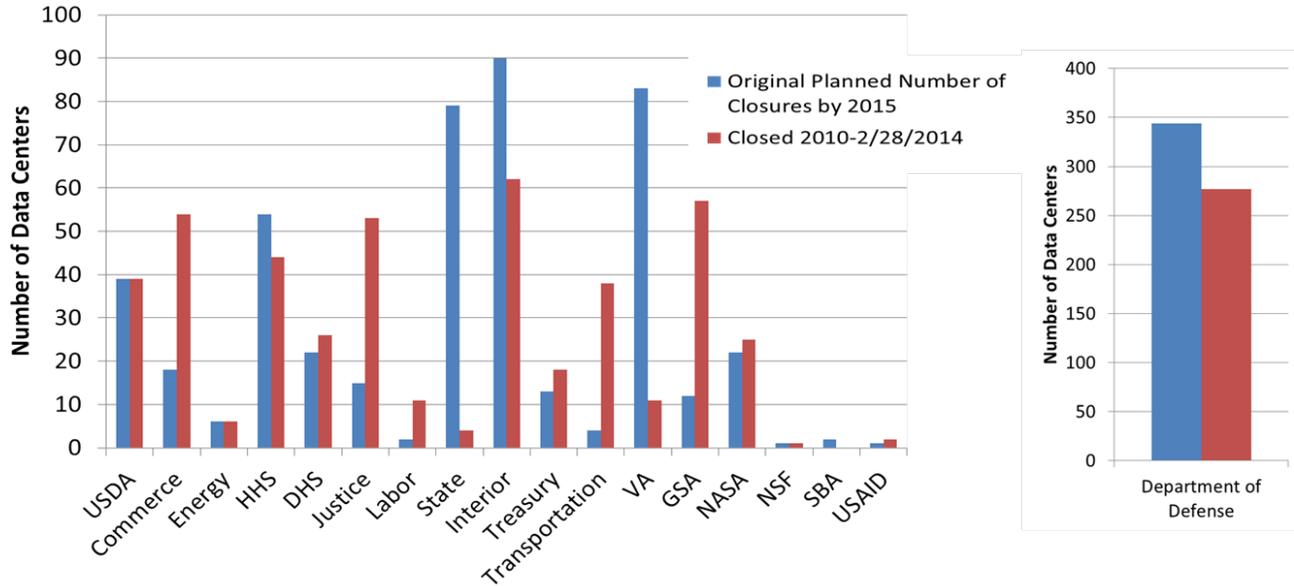

Data Center Closures and Planned Closures

Source: Data.gov and Deltek

No baseline data has been published regarding the total number of original data centers or targeted number of closures by agency given new definitions. Additionally, the focus of FDCCI has shifted to data center optimization versus data center closures or reductions, and it has moved to the PortfolioStat program for continued monitoring and reporting. However, I thought it would be interesting to compare today's data center closure goals as reported to data.gov to the original closure goals which would have resulted in 800 closures.

Original Data Center Closure Goals vs. Actual Closed to Date

Source: FY 2012 President's Budget Request, Data.gov, & Deltek

In many ways, this is an apples to oranges comparison, because the definition of a data center changed since the original targets were established. The logical assumption would be that agencies would be able to close more data centers than originally targeted back in 2010, because the definition of a data center now includes small data centers, upping each agency's baseline number of data centers. For some agencies, this holds true. Commerce has closed 54 data centers opposed to its original target of only closing 18. The same holds true for Justice and GSA.

However, other agencies are not even close to meeting their original closure goals. The Department of State originally planned to close 79 data centers, but to date has only closed four. Veterans Affairs planned to close 83, but has only closed eleven to date. And DOD planned to close 344, but has only closed 277.

Maybe closure numbers are irrelevant at this point, but even GAO has criticized OMB for not putting in place proper leadership and mechanisms for measuring progress.

Investments are paying off in the form of freed up floor space, savings on energy expenses, decreases in O&M costs, improved visibility into the IT infrastructure, and better utilization of IT staff. However, savings have fallen well short of the original intent of saving $5 billion. At the end of FY 2013, FDCCI had documented about $63 million in savings. DOD projected savings of $575 million through FY 2014.