

Highlights of [GAO-12-464T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, led to profound changes in government agendas, policies, and structures to confront homeland security threats facing the nation. Most notably, DHS began operations in 2003 with missions that included preventing terrorist attacks in the United States, reducing the nation's vulnerability to terrorism, and minimizing damages from attacks. DHS is now the third-largest federal department, with more than 200,000 employees, and has an annual budget of almost \$60 billion. Since 2003, GAO has issued over 1,200 products on DHS's operations in such areas as transportation security and emergency management, among others. Moreover, GAO has reported that overlap and fragmentation among government programs, including DHS, can cause potential unnecessary duplication, and reducing it could save billions of tax dollars annually and help agencies provide more efficient and effective services. As requested, this testimony addresses (1) opportunities for DHS to reduce potential unnecessary duplication in its programs, save tax dollars, and enhance revenue, and (2) crosscutting and management issues that have affected DHS's implementation efforts. This testimony is based on GAO reports issued from March 2011 through February 2012.

What GAO Recommends

While this testimony contains no new recommendations, GAO previously made about 1,600 recommendations to DHS. The department has addressed about half of them, has efforts to address others, and has taken action to strengthen its operations.

View [GAO-12-464T](#) or key components. For more information, contact Cathleen A. Berrick at (202) 512-3404 or berrickc@gao.gov.

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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Actions Needed to Reduce Overlap and Potential Unnecessary Duplication, Achieve Cost Savings, and Strengthen Mission Functions

What GAO Found

In March 2011 and February 2012, GAO reported on 6 areas where the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or Congress could take action to reduce overlap and potential unnecessary duplication, and 9 areas to achieve cost-savings. Of the 22 actions GAO suggested be taken in March 2011 to address such issues, 2 were fully implemented, 14 were partially implemented, and 6 have not been addressed. GAO's February 2012 report identified 18 additional actions to address overlap, potential duplication, and costs savings, including the following examples.

Table 1: Examples of Overlap, Potential Duplication, and Cost Savings Areas

Homeland security grants	DHS lack of oversight contributed to the risk of funding unnecessarily duplicative projects among 4 overlapping programs that in total constitute \$20 billion in grants from fiscal years 2002 through 2011.
Immigration inspection fees	Air passenger immigration inspection fees should be reviewed and adjusted to fully recover the cost of inspection activities conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and CBP.
Border security technology	Delaying proposed border security technology investments until DHS better measures benefits and estimates life-cycle costs could help ensure the most effective use of program funding.
Domestic disaster assistance	DHS could reduce the billions of federal dollars spent on major disasters by adjusting the indicator used for disaster assistance awards and better measuring a state's capacity to respond.
Federal facility risk assessments	Agencies are making duplicate payments by funding their own assessments, and paying the Federal Protective Service millions for assessments it is not performing.

Source: GAO analysis.

In September 2011, GAO reported on three key themes that should be addressed to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of DHS's operations.

Leading and coordinating the homeland security enterprise. DHS has made important strides in providing leadership and coordinating efforts among its stakeholders. However, DHS needs to take additional action to forge effective partnerships and strengthen the sharing and utilization of information, which has affected its ability to effectively satisfy its missions, such as sharing information with private sector stakeholders on cyber-based threats to critical infrastructure.

Implementing and integrating management functions for results. DHS has enhanced its management functions, and has plans to further strengthen the management of the department. However, DHS has not always effectively executed or integrated these functions, which has contributed to schedule delays, cost increases, and performance issues in a number of programs aimed at delivering important mission capabilities, such as border security technologies.

Strategically managing risks and assessing homeland security efforts. While progress has been made, limited strategic and program planning and limited assessment to inform approaches and investment decisions have contributed to DHS programs not meeting strategic needs in an efficient manner, such as the lack of risk based plans for deploying aviation security technologies.