



## **GAO Offers Private-Sector Executives a Chance to Experience Government From the Inside**

Washington (January 2, 2006) The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) is launching a new executive exchange program that offers private-sector employees a unique opportunity to work on high-profile projects to help transform how GAO and the federal government do business. Beginning January 1, 2006, up to 30 executives and mid-level employees with backgrounds in accounting, auditing, finance, information technology, economics, law, and other specialties as well as general managerial skills will be detailed to GAO to consult on assignments ranging from three months to one year. The program is authorized under legislation enacted in 2004, the GAO Human Capital Reform Act (P.L. 108-271).

Executive Exchange has two beneficiaries: First, it allows GAO to partner with accounting firms, think tanks, investment banks, information technology firms, consulting groups, and other organizations to develop solutions to current and emerging issues. Second, it provides private-sector employees a true hands-on experience in the public sector.

“Given the daunting challenges facing our nation in the years ahead, there’s never been a greater need for innovative ideas in government. Private sector professionals can bring a fresh perspective to the table. GAO’s executive exchange program is a chance for these individuals to exchange knowledge and contribute to their country and its future,” said Comptroller General David M. Walker, head of the GAO.

“Participants will be working at one of the most highly regarded agencies in government and one of the world’s leading professional services organizations. I’m confident that sponsoring organizations will be welcoming back a more valuable employee, one with a deeper understanding of how government carries out its diverse missions,” said Walker. “As a former executive in the private sector myself, I’ve found my experience at GAO and in other government agencies to be incredibly enlightening and rewarding.”

Selected candidates will be matched with a project in their area of expertise or interest. Depending on the project and the agreement with the sponsoring organization, individuals may be assigned to GAO’s Washington, D.C. headquarters or one of the agency’s 11 field offices in cities such as Boston, Atlanta, or San Francisco or they may, in appropriate circumstances, telecommute from their home locations. Possible projects include:

- comparing the federal government’s financial condition with that of other developed nations and identifying ways to make our finances more transparent in federal financing reporting, including such activities as Social Security and Medicare.

- reviewing disability insurance models in the private sector with an eye toward applying lessons learned to federally funded programs.
- developing criteria for physically locating government offices given the increasing use of the Internet and other technology.
- pinpointing cost-savings opportunities in federal operations through shared services and other techniques.
- designing and implementing an updated financial management system for GAO.
- evaluating GAO's information technology governance process in light of industry best practices.

At GAO, participants will work with an outstanding workforce that includes actuaries, research methodologists, attorneys, computer scientists, health care experts, defense analysts, and other professionals. During the course of their details, participants may find themselves meeting with key federal officials, including Members of Congress and their staffs, agency heads, and inspectors general.

Participants will be paid by their companies or other sponsoring organizations. This will allow an executive exchange employee to maintain his or her private-sector salary and benefits while working at GAO. Although the agency will be seeking external opportunities for GAO staff, companies detailing individuals to GAO will not be required to accept a GAO employee in return.

Known as the “investigative arm of Congress,” GAO is an independent agency in the legislative branch of the federal government. Senators and House Members regularly turn to GAO for timely, objective information to help them oversee executive branch operations. Recent GAO reports have addressed the war in Iraq, relief to victims of Hurricane Katrina, surging gasoline prices, airline bankruptcies, pension reform, and military base realignments and closures. Financial benefits to the taxpayer from GAO work totaled nearly \$40 billion in fiscal year 2005—an \$83 return on every dollar invested in GAO.

GAO aspires to be a model federal agency and a world-class professional services organization. In addition to Executive Exchange, GAO has pioneered the use of a number of human capital practices within the federal government, such as market-based classification and compensation systems, student loan repayments, and teleworking.

More information on the program and nomination and application processes is available on GAO's website at [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov). For additional inquiries, contact Jesse Hoskins at (202) 512-4583 or [hoskinsj@gao.gov](mailto:hoskinsj@gao.gov).