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The General Accounting Office (GAO) was established by the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921 (31 U.S.C. 702), to independently audit Government agencies. Over the years, the Congress has expanded GAO's audit authority, added new responsibilities and duties, and strengthened GAO's ability to perform independently.

The Office is under the control and direction of the Comptroller General of the United States, who is appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate for a term of 15 years.

Activities

Audits and Evaluations Supporting the Congress is GAO's fundamental responsibility. In meeting this objective, GAO performs a variety of services, the most prominent of which are audits and evaluations of Government programs and activities. The majority of these reviews are made in response to specific congressional requests. The Office is required to perform work requested by committee chairpersons and, as a matter of policy, assigns equal status to requests from Ranking Minority Members. The Office also responds to individual Member requests, as possible. Other assignments are initiated pursuant to standing commitments to congressional committees, and some reviews are specifically required by law. Finally, some assignments are independently undertaken in accordance with GAO's basic legislative responsibilities.

The ability to review practically any Government function requires a multidisciplinary staff able to conduct assignments wherever needed. The Office's staff has expertise in a variety of disciplines, including accounting, law, public and business administration, economics, the social and physical sciences, and others.

The Office is organized so that staff members concentrate on specific subject

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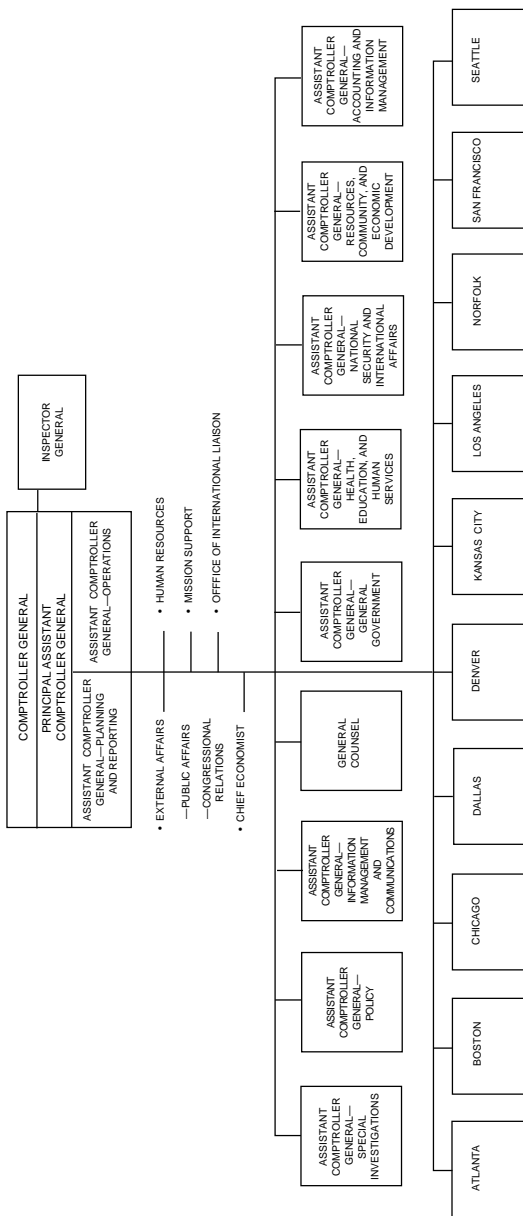
Other legal services include resolving bid protests that challenge Government contract awards and assisting Government agencies in interpreting the laws governing the expenditure of public funds.

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The Comptroller General, along with the Secretary of the Treasury and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, serves as a principal on the

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE



Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board. The Board considers and recommends issuance of accounting standards and principles and provides interpretations of existing ones.

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For further information, contact the Office of Public Affairs, General Accounting Office, 441 G Street NW., Washington, DC 20548. Phone, 202-512-4800. Internet, <http://www.gao.gov/>.

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