Expanding Telework in an Audit Organization: GAO's Experience

Western Intergovernmental Audit Forum
September 12-13, 2013
Tempe AZ

Bonnie Dedeaux Hall, Assistant Director, Los Angeles Office
Kerry Gail Dunn, Assistant Director, San Francisco Office
U.S. Government Accountability Office

Overview

GAO Telework History and Policies

Design and Implementation of Pilots

Results from Pilots

Next Steps and Future Challenges

Telework at GAO

1991 – Began "Flexiplace" pilot program

1993 – Formalized program

2004 – Changed name to "Telework" program and created categories of telework

- Continuing
- Episodic
- Short-term

2009 – Added an online, intranet-based application process

2010 – Refined program to address The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010

2011 – CG announced pilot on liberal telework policy

Why GAO Expanded Telework Now

- Internal discussions of "21st Century Workplace" became budget driven need for savings
  - Transform where and how work gets done
  - Enhance flexibility for staff

- Implementation Goals (through FY15)
  - Reduce infrastructure costs
  - Reduce footprint of field offices by average of 40 percent
  - Increase use of telework
  - Support staff flexibility with no negative impact on productivity or collaboration

Telework Requirements at GAO

- Work is appropriate for telework and tasks are agreed upon

- Performance must be at least acceptable

- Approved written telework agreement

- Alternate work site safe and appropriate

- Work within agency's business hours, 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.

- Be in office the majority of work hours

Changes in Telework Requirement and Processes for Pilot

Requirement Change: maximum continuous telework for an office varies and was determined through negotiation with union

Process Changes

- Amount of telework sets eligibility for assigned workspace
- Staff without assigned workspace can share or "hotel"
- All staff eligible for desktop VTC
- Additional support determined by union agreement
  - VOIP
  - Monitor, keyboard, mouse, docking station, security cables
  - Lockable file cabinet, desk chair

Initial Steps to Start Pilots

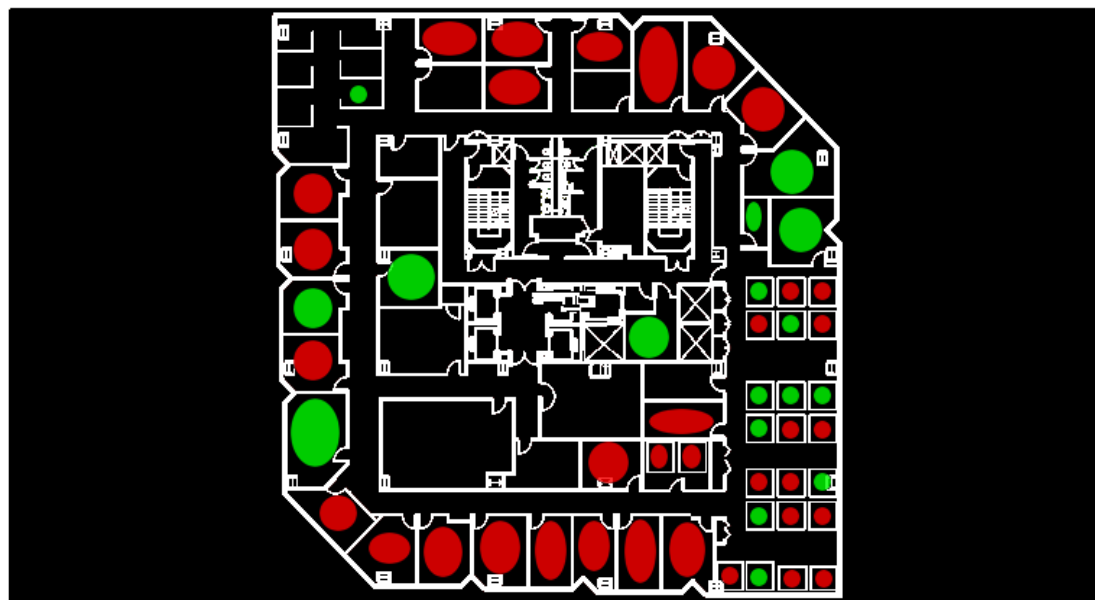| Steps	Key to…
Negotiated with union	Decision to move forward
Selected locations based on real estate costs and commuting patterns	Savings
Prepared staff by holding day-long info sessions, surveying interest	Gaining acceptance and support
Analyzed planned telework patterns to learn workspace, team room needs	Successful hoteling/workspace sharing
Assessed technology needs	Ensuring flexibility to facilitate productivity and collaboration

Technology Upgrades for Pilots

- Purchased more powerful servers to run Citrix, boosted both speed and concurrent user access from approximately 25 users to 100 users per location

- Installed wi-fi access in offices

- VOIP "softphones" provided with a DC phone number

- Slow rollout of desktop VTC using WebEx and webcams

- Purchased hoteling software
  - Reservations are made online
  - Check in required in office

Agilquest Hoteling Software

Past Practices Prepared GAO for Pilots

- Audit teams have been geographically dispersed for years, requiring a results-based management approach

- Management skills for geographically dispersed teams are readily transferrable to the telework environment

- Electronic document management system for workpapers is well established

Past Practices, continued

- Well established VTC experience for key job meetings is readily transferrable to desktop VTC

- New document sharing process (through desktop VTC) builds on past experience with similar software

- Slow buildup of technology, including assigning laptops, allowed agency and staff to gain experience in remote access

Evaluations Track Progress and Issues

- Management periodically surveys staff and internal stakeholders
  - Employee satisfaction
  - Teamwork and Collaboration
  - Supervision and Feedback
  - Efficiency
  - Productivity (including Quality)
  - Impact of Teleworking
  - Technology

- GAO Inspector General also conducting evaluation

Where GAO Started: By the Numbers

- 11 field offices
  - 775 analysts and 65 support staff
  - 247,000 square feet of leased space
  - $7.5 million in lease and security costs in FY13

- Agency-wide telework participation rates in 2011
  - 10.6 percent = 3 or more days/pay period
  - 29.6 percent = 1 or 2 days/pay period

How GAO Is Doing

- **Goal: Reduce lease and security costs**
  - FY13 = $1.2 million (on track)
  - FY14 = $2.0 million (estimated savings)
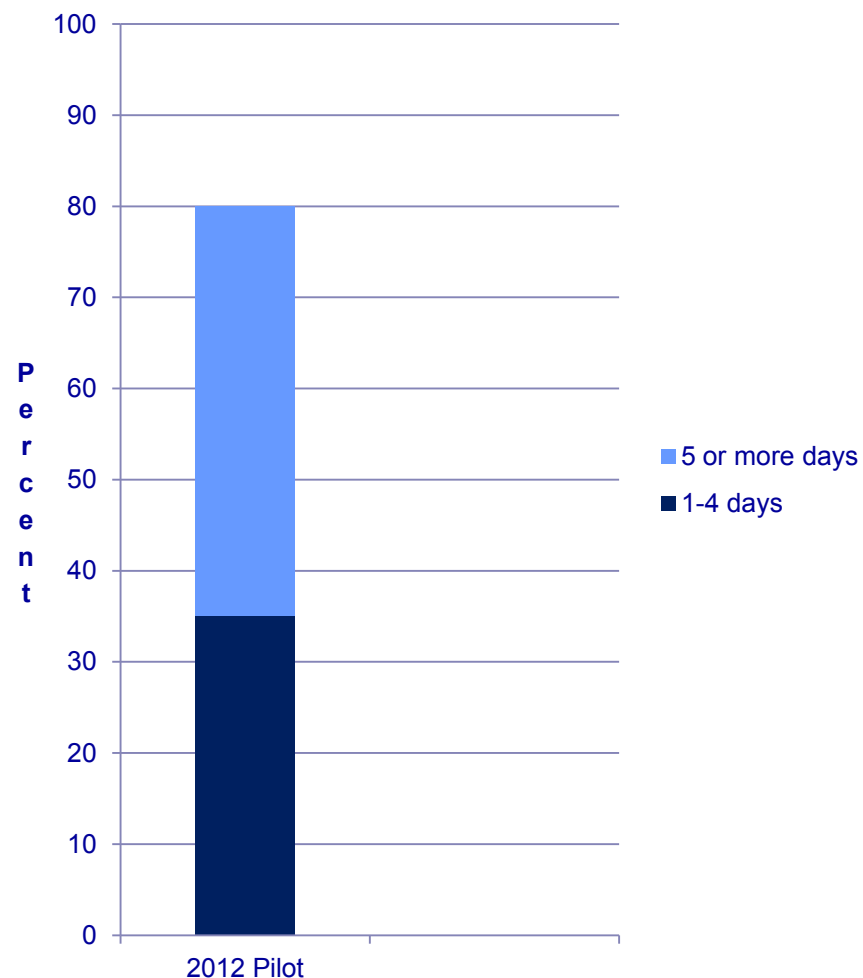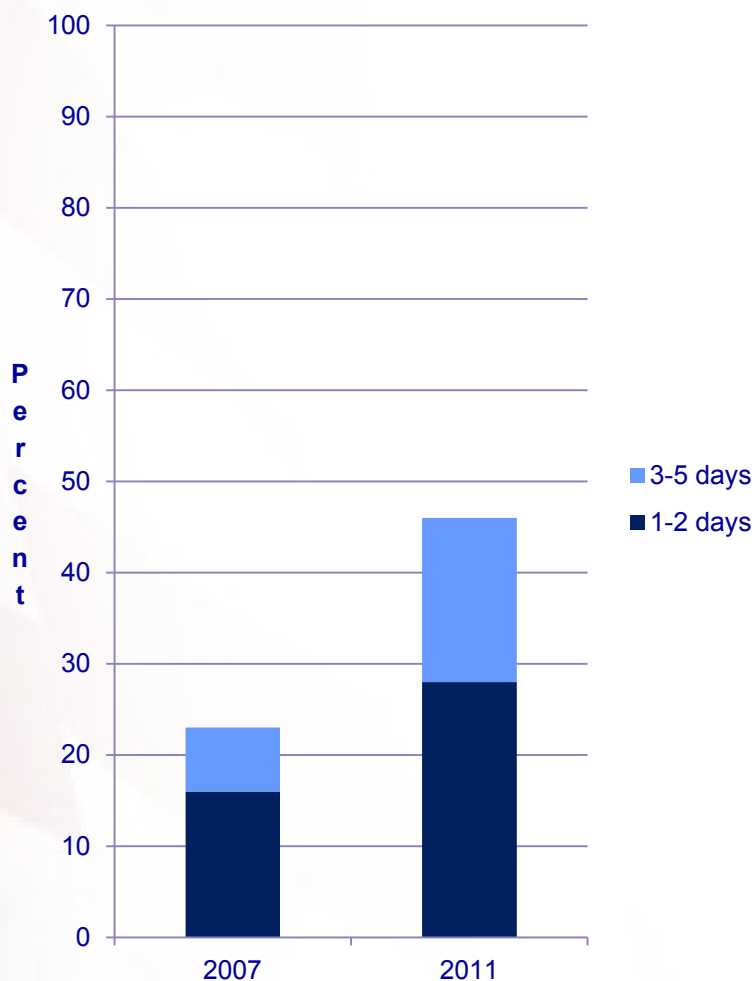 - FY15 = $2.5 million (minimum estimated savings)

- **Goal: Reduce footprint**
  - Released over 35,000 square feet total in two locations (about 45 percent)
  - Six additional locations in process

How GAO Is Doing, continued

- **Goal: Increase telework and support staff flexibility**
  - 27 – 55 percent of staff telework 50 percent or more
  - Participant survey
    - 88 percent of staff satisfied with pilot, 8 percent neutral
    - 96 percent of staff had improved or the same morale

How GAO Is Doing, continued

Average Percent of Analyst Staff/Managers Teleworking in a Pay Period

How GAO is Doing, continued

- **Goal: No negative impact on productivity or collaboration**
  - Participant survey
    - 92 percent of staff had same or improved productivity
  - Internal stakeholder survey
    - 3 percent indicated decrease in productivity, teamwork, or collaboration among pilot participants

Overall, A Smooth Transition

- Some staff reluctance/concern

- Workspace selection and moves

- Storage for SBU and other information

- Cannot telework with classified or taxpayer data

GAO

Next Steps

- Implement the pilot in the remaining 3 smaller offices and headquarters

- Conducting another survey and will issue a report on the pilot

- Assuming good survey results, move from pilot to final operationalization in all offices

GAO

Future Challenges

- 21st century workplace needs 21st century facilities
- Continue to improve technological support for teleworkers
- Furniture for reasonable accommodation
- Effectively integrate and train new analysts
- Maintain sense of community
- Provide telework opportunities for support staff