Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

August 6, 2025

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro,

We write to request a Government Accountability Office (GAO) review of the reorganization plan announced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on July 24, 2025 and the effects of recent workforce reductions at USDA.

On February 11, 2025, the President signed Executive Order 14210, "Implementing the President's 'Department of Government Efficiency' Workforce Optimization Initiative", which directed agencies to prepare plans for large-scale reorganization and reductions in force (RIFs). Agencies were to submit reorganization plans to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that discuss whether the agency or any of its subcomponents should be eliminated or consolidated. This followed a hiring freeze announced on January 20, 2025, and two rounds of voluntary deferred resignations, which were accepted by more than 15,000 USDA employees. Media reports have suggested that USDA is trying to backfill mission-critical positions, like veterinarians or firefighters, that were left open because too many people took the buyout under the voluntary deferred resignation program, but it is unclear how many additional vacancies exist due to normal retirements and attrition.

On July 24, 2025, USDA announced a reorganization plan that would relocate much of the agency's headquarters and staff from the National Capital Region to five hub locations: Raleigh, NC; Kansas City, MO; Indianapolis, IN; Fort Collins, CO; and Salt Lake City, UT. The reorganization plan calls for the elimination and reduction of stand-alone regional offices and relocating them to hub locations, to the greatest extent possible. The plan also calls for vacating the South Building, Braddock Place, the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, and eventually the George Washington Carver Center. Additionally, the plan includes the consolidation of several key functions, including all civil rights functions into Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, all tribal relations functions into one office in each mission area and/or the Office of Tribal Relations, grant-making and financial assistance functions into one office, and the transfer of many contracting functions to the General Services Administration, including reducing the statutorily required Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business to a single person.

Experience with past government reforms indicates agencies can improve efficiency and save taxpayer dollars, but the ability of agencies to successfully implement change depends on following key change management practices and considering workforce needs during and after the reform.

Accordingly, we request GAO to conduct a study and report on the following:

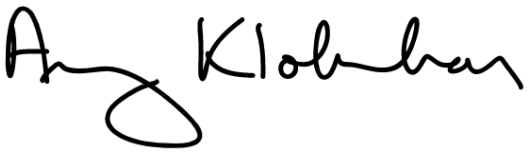
1. What analyses did USDA conduct prior to its July 24, 2025 announcement of its reorganization plan, including cost-benefit and civil rights analyses?
    a. What analysis did USDA conduct on the number of employees required to relocate under the reorganization plan who would accept the offer rather than leave the agency?
    b. What analysis did USDA conduct on the expected long-term costs to the agency from the reorganization plan, including vacating current Federal buildings?
2. To what extent has USDA followed selected leading practices for agency reforms to a) effectively plan for and implement its reorganization, and b) mitigate risks to its ability to deliver services to farmers and other members of the public?
    a. What methodology did USDA use in conducting any analyses regarding reorganization and were the methodology and the assumptions underlying the analyses valid?
3. What other regions or hub locations, including those already used by USDA such as the five regions of ARS: Midwest, Northeast, Pacific West, Plains, and Southeast) were considered by USDA for the reorganization or are already used by USDA?
4. What is the current status of the workforce as of the reorganization announcement relative to January 20, 2025:
    a. The number of employees that were offered and accepted deferred resignations (including employees who combined deferred resignations with other voluntary retirement or separation programs), by agency, location, type of office (field, regional or headquarters), and type of position;
    b. The cost of the deferred resignations broken out by the amount of salaries paid after the employees were placed on paid administrative leave and the lump-sum costs for accrued leave;
    c. The number of positions that have been vacated through other means outside the deferred resignation, by agency, location and type of position;
    d. The number of positions that have been refilled through new employees and not through transfers or where termination notices were rescinded such as farm loan officers, veterinarians, and researchers, firefighters or employees with red-cards; and
    e. The number of employees placed on paid administrative leave (other than through deferred resignation), by agency, location, type of position, salary, and length of time on paid administrative leave for each employee.
5. What are USDA's desired outcomes for its reorganization and workforce reduction effort, and how does it plan to achieve them?

6. How many USDA employees, by agency, have been involuntarily removed or voluntarily accepted an incentive to leave the agency from January 20, 2025, through September 30, 2025, what were their characteristics (e.g., occupation and location), and what were the associated savings and costs?

Given that Deputy Secretary Vaden stated during the Senate Agriculture Committee's July 31 hearing that USDA believes that the July 24 announcement started a 30-day consultation period, it is imperative that our offices receive an update from your office on any information under questions 1 and 3 prior to August 24, 2025.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Chu-Yuan Hwang, at Chu-Yuan_Hwang@ag.senate.gov and Michael Stein, at Michael.Stein@mail.house.gov. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry



Angie Craig
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture