



Highlights of [GAO-07-425](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

In performing its missions, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) relies extensively on information technology (IT). Recognizing this, DHS's fiscal year 2006 appropriations act required its Chief Information Officer (CIO) to submit a report to congressional appropriations committees that includes, among other things, an IT human capital plan, and the act directs GAO to review the report. GAO's review addressed (1) whether the IT human capital plan is consistent with federal guidance and associated best practices and (2) the status of the plan's implementation. In performing its review, GAO compared DHS's plan and supporting documentation with 27 practices in the *Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework* of the Office of Personnel Management, and examined plan implementation activities at three DHS component agencies.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that DHS make completion and implementation of a comprehensive IT human capital plan an imperative, and in doing so, ensure that implementation roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and adequate resources are made available. DHS agreed with GAO's recommendations and acknowledged that IT human capital has been a lower priority relative to other IT initiatives. It committed to having a highly skilled IT workforce and described efforts planned and under way to do so.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-425.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Randolph C. Hite at (202) 512-3429 or hiter@gao.gov.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

DHS's Human Capital Plan Is Largely Consistent with Relevant Guidance, but Improvements and Implementation Steps Are Still Needed

What GAO Found

DHS's IT human capital plan is largely consistent with federal guidance and associated best practices; however, it does not fully address a number of important practices that GAO examined. Specifically, the plan and supporting documentation fully address 15 practices; for example, they provide for developing a complete inventory of existing staff skills, identifying IT skills that will be needed to achieve agency goals, determining skill gaps, and developing plans to address such gaps. They also provides for involving key stakeholders—such as the CIO, the Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO), and component agency CIOs and human capital directors—in carrying out the skill gap analyses and other workforce planning activities. Nevertheless, elements of 12 of the 27 practices are not included in the plan or related documentation. For example, although the plan and supporting documents describe the department's IT human capital goals and steps necessary to implement them, most steps do not include associated milestones. In addition, although the plan and supporting documents provide for involving key stakeholders, they do not specifically assign these stakeholders responsibility and accountability for carrying out planned activities. These and other missing elements of the practices are important because they help ensure that the plan is implemented efficiently and effectively. DHS officials provided various reasons why the missing practices were omitted, including uncertainty surrounding the source of resources for implementing the plan and the demands of other IT priorities, such as consolidating component agency data centers.

To date, DHS has made limited progress in implementing the plan, according to officials from the offices of the department's CIO and CHCO and three DHS agencies (the Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency). These officials said that they are nonetheless following several of the practices because they are required to report quarterly to the Office of Management and Budget on progress in meeting such human capital goals as filling mission-critical positions and delivering key IT training. DHS officials stated that the department's limited progress in implementing the plan was due to its focus on other priorities, and ambiguity surrounding plan implementation roles and responsibilities. Until DHS has a complete plan that fully addresses all practices and the department and components implement the plan, DHS will continue to be at risk of not having sufficient people with the right knowledge, skills, and abilities to manage and deliver the IT systems that are essential to executing the department's mission and achieving its transformation goals.