



Highlights of [GAO-09-342](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

Since 2001, the Department of Defense's (DOD) spending on goods and services has more than doubled to \$388 billion in 2008, while the number of civilian and military acquisition personnel has remained relatively stable. To augment its in-house workforce, DOD relies heavily on contractor personnel. If it does not maintain an adequate workforce, DOD places its billion-dollar acquisitions at an increased risk of poor outcomes and vulnerability to fraud, waste, and abuse.

GAO was asked to (1) assess DOD's ability to determine whether it has a sufficient acquisition workforce, (2) assess DOD initiatives to improve the management and oversight of its acquisition workforce, and (3) discuss practices of leading organizations that could provide insights for DOD's acquisition workforce oversight. To do this, GAO analyzed key DOD studies, obtained data from 66 major weapon system program offices across DOD, and interviewed officials from 4 program offices. GAO also met with representatives from six companies recognized as leaders in workforce management.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making recommendations aimed at improving DOD's management and oversight of its acquisition workforce, including the collection of data on contractor personnel. DOD concurred with three of the recommendations and noted that implementing the other requires careful consideration.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, [click on GAO-09-342](#). For more information, contact John K. Needham at (202) 512-5274 or [needhamjk1@gao.gov](mailto:needhamjk1@gao.gov).

## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### Additional Actions and Data Are Needed to Effectively Manage and Oversee DOD's Acquisition Workforce

#### What GAO Found

DOD lacks critical departmentwide information to ensure its acquisition workforce is sufficient to meet its national security mission. First, in its acquisition workforce assessments, DOD does not collect or track information on contractor personnel, despite their being a key segment of the total acquisition workforce. DOD also lacks information on why contractor personnel are used, which limits its ability to determine whether decisions to use contractors to augment the in-house acquisition workforce are appropriate. GAO found that program office decisions to use contractor personnel are often driven by factors such as quicker hiring time frames and civilian staffing limits, rather than by the skills needed or the nature or criticality of the work. Second, DOD's lack of key pieces of information limits its ability to determine gaps in the acquisition workforce it needs to meet current and future missions. For example, DOD lacks information on the use and skill sets of contractor personnel, and lacks complete information on the skill sets of its in-house personnel. Omitting data on contractor personnel and needed skills from DOD's workforce assessments not only skews analyses of workforce gaps, but also limits DOD's ability to make informed workforce allocation decisions and determine whether the total acquisition workforce—in-house and contractor personnel—is sufficient to accomplish its mission.

DOD has initiated several recent actions aimed at improving the management and oversight of its acquisition workforce. For example, DOD is developing a plan for managing the civilian acquisition workforce and is establishing practices for overseeing additional hiring, recruiting, and retention activities. It has also taken actions to develop some of the data and tools necessary to monitor the acquisition workforce, such as a competency assessment scheduled to be completed in March 2010. Each military service and agency has also begun, to varying degrees, efforts to assess its workforce at the service level. In addition, some efforts aimed at improving DOD's overall workforce may also provide additional information to support acquisition workforce efforts. However, these initiatives may not provide the comprehensive information DOD needs to manage and oversee its acquisition workforce.

To manage their workforces, the leading organizations GAO reviewed (1) identify gaps in their current workforces by assessing the overall competencies needed to achieve business objectives; (2) establish mechanisms to track and evaluate the effectiveness of their initiatives to close these gaps; (3) take a strategic approach in deciding when to use contractor personnel to supplement the workforce, such as limiting the use of contractor personnel to performing noncore-business functions and meeting surges in work demands; and (4) track and analyze data on contractor personnel. These practices could provide insights to DOD as it moves forward with its acquisition workforce initiatives.