

Highlights of [GAO-07-19](#), a report to Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

FBI Has Largely Staffed Key Modernization Program, but Strategic Approach to Managing Program’s Human Capital Is Needed

Why GAO Did This Study

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) recently began a 6-year, \$425 million program called Sentinel to replace and expand on both its failed Virtual Case File (VCF) project and its antiquated, paper-based, legacy system for supporting mission-critical intelligence analysis and investigative case management activities. Because of the FBI’s experience with VCF and the importance of Sentinel, GAO was requested to address a number of program management issues associated with acquiring Sentinel via a prime development contractor. This report focuses on one of these issues: whether the FBI is adequately providing for the program’s human capital needs. The findings are based on GAO’s review of relevant program documentation, interviews with program officials, and human capital management guidance.

What GAO Recommends

To strengthen the Sentinel program, GAO recommends that the FBI (1) establish policies and procedures for strategically managing IT programs’ human capital needs and implement those policies and procedures on all IT programs, including Sentinel and (2) treat and manage Sentinel human capital availability as a program risk. In its comments on a draft of this report, the FBI agreed with the recommendations and described steps completed, under way, and planned.

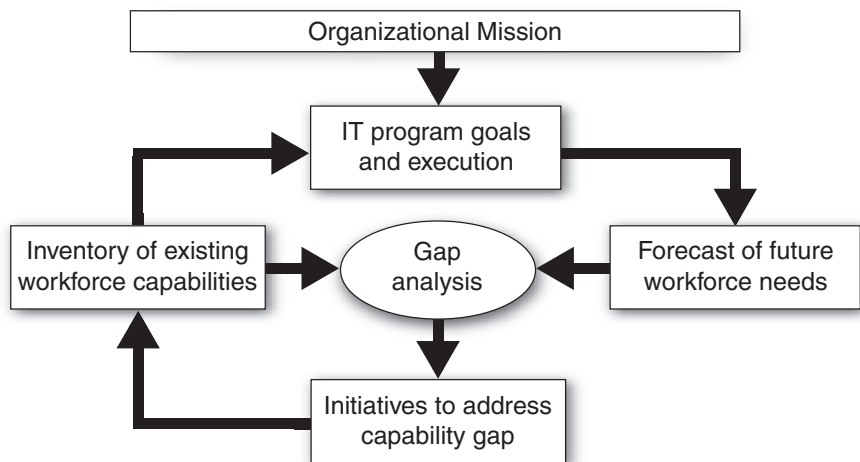
www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-19.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Randolph C. Hite at (202) 512-3439 or hiter@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

To its credit, the FBI has moved quickly to staff its Sentinel program office. During the last year, it created a staffing plan for Sentinel, which defines the positions needed for the program, and it has filled most of the positions in the plan, primarily by using contract staff (77 percent). However, a few key program management positions remain to be filled. More importantly, the Sentinel staffing plan addresses only the program office’s immediate staffing needs. It does not provide for the kind of strategic human capital management focus that GAO’s research and evaluations have shown to be essential to the success of any organizational entity. For example, the staffing plan was not derived using a documented, data-driven methodology and does not provide for inventorying the knowledge and skills of existing staff, forecasting future knowledge and skill needs, analyzing gaps in capabilities between the existing staff and future workforce needs, (including consideration of expected succession needs), and formulating strategies for filling expected gaps. (See figure below for an overview of this approach.) Exacerbating this situation is that the FBI is not proactively managing Sentinel human capital availability as a program risk; it has not included human capital in the program’s risk inventory nor has it developed and implemented a proactive risk mitigation strategy, even though program documents cite human capital as both a challenge and a risk. According to program officials, they plan to manage their human capital needs in the same way as when they initially staffed the program office, in part because the bureau’s IT system life cycle management policies and procedures do not require them to do otherwise. Unless the FBI adopts a more strategic approach to managing human capital for the Sentinel program and treats human capital as a program risk, the chances of delivering required intelligence and investigative support capabilities in a timely and cost-effective manner are reduced.

Summary of Strategic Approach to Managing Human Capital for IT Programs



Source: GAO.