

Why GAO Did This Study

With more than 240,000 employees doing diverse jobs, DHS's workforce supports the department's multiple missions to prevent terrorism and enhance security, secure and manage the nation's borders, and ensure resilience from disasters, amongst others. Strategic workforce planning focuses on developing long-term strategies for acquiring, developing, and retaining an organization's total workforce, including federal staff and contractors, to meet the needs of the future. GAO has previously identified workforce-related challenges faced by DHS components. In light of these ongoing challenges, GAO was asked to review DHS's strategic workforce planning efforts. This report assesses whether DHS has incorporated strategic workforce planning leading principles into the department's management of strategic workforce planning efforts. GAO reviewed DHS strategies and guidance related to strategic workforce planning, compared them with leading principles identified in previous GAO work, and discussed ongoing strategic workforce planning efforts with officials from the seven components selected because they constitute the majority of DHS personnel.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that, among other actions, the Secretary of Homeland Security (1) identify and document additional performance measures to assess workforce planning efforts and (2) document policies and procedures regarding the use of internal audit results. DHS concurred with our recommendations.

View [GAO-13-65](#). For more information, contact David C. Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov.

DHS STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING

Oversight of Departmentwide Efforts Should Be Strengthened

What GAO Found

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has taken some relatively recent steps to enhance strategic workforce planning across the department. These steps are generally consistent with leading principles, but the department has not yet implemented an effective oversight approach for monitoring and evaluating components' progress. Specifically, recent steps DHS has taken to develop and implement strategic workforce planning efforts are consistent with the leading principles GAO has reported that include involving management and stakeholders, identifying skills and competencies, developing strategies to fill gaps, and building capability through training. For example, the department demonstrated stakeholder involvement by including component-level stakeholders in the development of the DHS Workforce Strategy. Though DHS has taken steps to implement strategic workforce planning, recent internal audits, as well as GAO's previous work, identified challenges related to workforce planning at the component level that could impair the continued implementation of recently initiated strategic workforce planning efforts. For example, GAO reported in July 2009 that the Federal Protective Service's (FPS) workforce planning was limited because FPS headquarters did not collect data on its workforce's knowledge, skills, and abilities and subsequently could not determine optimal staffing levels or determine how to modify its workforce planning strategies accordingly, amongst others. GAO recommended that FPS take steps to address these issues. FPS officials agreed with our recommendations, and in June 2010 drafted a staffing plan consistent with our recommendation, but as of November 2012, FPS has not gained approval of its staffing plan.

Although DHS began taking positive steps for managing strategic workforce planning in 2011, DHS officials have not yet taken steps to implement an effective oversight approach for monitoring and evaluating components' progress in implementing strategic workforce planning. According to this principle, agencies should measure the effectiveness of the workforce plan and help ensure that the strategies work as intended by monitoring and evaluating the contributions workforce plans make to strategic results. To do this, agencies should determine how well the agency implemented its workforce plan and the contribution that its implementation made toward achieving programmatic goals. However, the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) has developed limited performance measures to provide a basis for monitoring and evaluating departmentwide strategic workforce planning efforts. GAO's analysis identified performance measures that reported on only 2 of the 15 elements in DHS's strategic workforce planning model. OCHCO relies on an informal process to evaluate component workforce planning, though processes exist that it could leverage to provide oversight. For example, OCHCO performs internal audits and requires components to develop annual operations plans to implement the department's workforce strategy. However, the results of the audits are not used to evaluate components' workforce planning. Without (1) performance measures that more comprehensively address DHS's strategic workforce planning process, and (2) policies and procedures for ensuring monitoring and evaluation of departmentwide workforce planning, DHS's OCHCO does not have reasonable assurance that such efforts will be institutionalized. Further, the department will not be able to produce departmentwide evidence of component alignment with DHS strategic workforce planning guidance.