



Report In Brief

U.S. Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General

December 21, 2011



Why We Did This Review

In response to a new law helping civilian agencies fortify their acquisition workforce, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued its plan for agencies on October 27, 2009, providing a structure for agencies to bolster the skills of their acquisition workforce. A key element of OMB's plan was to require each civilian agency covered by the Chief Financial Officers Act, beginning in 2010, to submit an annual 5-year Acquisition Human Capital Plan (AHCP) to OMB by March 31. The first AHCP identifies specific strategies and goals for increasing both the capacity and capability of its respective acquisition workforce for fiscal years (FYs) 2010–2014 and requires agencies to use this information to address acquisition workforce needs in their annual budget submissions.

The objective of our audit was to assess the adequacy of the Department's FY 2010 plan for determining its acquisition workforce needs and progress for implementing actions to address those needs.

Background

Congress included provisions in the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2009 (the Act) to help agencies develop plans to increase the size of their acquisition workforce. Enacted in 2008, the Act directed federal agencies other than the Department of Defense to develop a specific and actionable 5-year plan—an Acquisition Workforce Development Strategic Plan—to increase the acquisition workforce size and operate a government-wide acquisition intern program. It also outlined a number of other plan requirements, such as the development of a sustainable funding model to support efforts to hire, retain, and train an appropriately sized and skilled acquisition workforce.

Office of the Secretary

Further Actions Needed to Enhance Commerce's Acquisition Human Capital Plan (OIG-12-015-A)

What We Found

The Department's 5-year AHCP for FYs 2010–2014 discusses its challenges and the steps it has taken and plans to take to strengthen its workforce. We acknowledge OAM's challenges in developing this plan while experiencing turnover in its leadership. However, the plan lacks the following three critical program elements:

- **Reconciled baseline staffing data identifying the agency's entire acquisition workforce.** Although it relied on a human resources report to arrive at its baseline number of contracting officers working in the Department, OAM's numbers did not match. Also, each bureau procurement office submitted separate baseline acquisition workforce staffing figures; we found significant differences between the bureau figures and those OAM developed. Without process controls over the maintenance of documentation and the reconciliation of differences, OAM's calculations of baseline staffing levels by job series are not reliable.
- **Sufficient methodologies for determining the size and composition of the future acquisition workforce.** Rather than developing staffing projections by individual bureau procurement offices—to highlight specific differences between its plans and the bureau plans—OAM projected staffing requirements only from a single Department-wide perspective. The assumptions and data OAM used in projections were incomplete, raising concerns about the validity of the projected acquisition workforce requirements.
- **Time frames and milestones for action strategies.** OAM's March 2010 AHCP included 32 action strategies to accomplish 10 program goals under the following four broad categories: Workforce Analysis and Projections, Recruitment and Retention, Training and Development, and Monitoring Performance. However, OAM did not (1) establish time frames or milestones for assessing progress toward achieving program goals and strategies or (2) provide information on the status of the corrective action for 8 strategies.

We also found that the requests for additional full-time equivalent (FTE) staff identified in the plan did not match individual bureaus' FY 2012 budget submissions.

What We Recommended

We recommend that the Director of OAM:

1. Establish formal guidance and procedures for determining baseline staffing levels;
2. Prescribe minimum documentation standards required by the bureaus' procurement offices and OAM to support facts and figures contained in subsequent AHCPs;
3. Work with each bureau to establish acquisition human capital goals and measure progress toward meeting those goals; and
4. Work with the Office of Budget to access Departmental acquisition workforce budget data during the budget formulation process.