

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-688](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

DHS is the third-largest cabinet-level department in the federal government, with over 230,000 employees doing diverse jobs. To fulfill its complex mission, DHS's workforce must have the necessary skills and expertise. GAO previously reported on DHS's hiring and recruiting efforts. GAO was asked to assess DHS's training practices.

This report addresses (1) the extent to which DHS has documented processes to evaluate training and reliably capture costs and (2) the extent to which DHS measures the performance of its leader development programs. To conduct its work, GAO reviewed documented training evaluation processes, training cost data from fiscal year 2011 through fiscal year 2013, and leadership training programs. GAO also interviewed training officials at the department level and at the five DHS components selected for this review about their varieties of training and development programs. Information from these components cannot be generalized to all of DHS, but provides insights.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DHS update its documentation to fully reflect key attributes of an effective evaluation, identify challenges to and corrective measures for capturing training costs department-wide, and clearly identify LDP goals and ensure that LDP performance measures reflect key attributes. DHS concurred and identified actions to address our recommendations.

View [GAO-14-688](#). For more information, contact David C. Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov.

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DHS TRAINING

Improved Documentation, Resource Tracking, and Performance Measurement Could Strengthen Efforts

What GAO Found

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has processes to evaluate training, track resources, and assess leader development. However, various actions could better position the department to maximize the impact of its training efforts.

Training evaluation: All five DHS components in GAO's review—U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Transportation Security Administration, and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center—have a documented process to evaluate their training programs. Their documented processes fully included three of six attributes of effective training evaluation processes identifying goals, programs to evaluate, and how results are to be used. However, the documented processes did not consistently include the other three attributes: methodology, timeframes, and roles and responsibilities (see table). By updating documentation to address these attributes, DHS components would have more complete information to guide its efforts in conducting effective evaluations.

Summary of Training Evaluation Attributes DHS Could Better Document

	Customs and Border Protection	U.S. Coast Guard	Immigration and Customs Enforcement	Transportation Security Administration	Federal Law Enforcement Training Center
Methodology	●	●	●	●	●
Timeframes	●	●	●	●	●
Roles and responsibilities	●	●	●	●	●

●: Documented evaluation processes fully included information to meet the attribute.

●: Documented evaluation processes partly included some information to address a given attribute.

Source: GAO analysis of documented evaluation processes. | GAO-14-688

Capturing training cost: DHS identified efficiencies and cost savings for delivering a number of training programs. However, different methods are used for capturing training costs across the department, which poses challenges for reliably capturing these costs across DHS. Components capture training costs differently, contributing to inconsistencies in training costs captured across DHS. Variation in methods used to collect data can affect the reliability and quality of DHS-wide training program costs. However, DHS has not identified all challenges that contribute to these inconsistencies. DHS could improve its awareness about the costs of training programs DHS-wide and thereby enhance its resource stewardship by identifying existing challenges that prevent DHS from accurately capturing training costs and implementing corrective measures.

Leader development: DHS's Leader Development Program (LDP) Office is in the process of implementing a department-wide framework to build leadership skills. However, the LDP Office has not clearly identified program goals and the measures it uses to assess program effectiveness do not exhibit some attributes that GAO previously identified as key for successful performance measurement. These include linkage of performance measures to the program's goals, clarity, and establishment of measurable targets to assess the measures. By clearly identifying program goals and incorporating key attributes, the LDP could better ensure actionable information for identifying and making program improvements.

United States Government Accountability Office