CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

Protégés Value DOD’s Mentor-Protégé Program, but Annual Reporting to Congress Needs Improvement

What GAO Found

Most of the 48 former protégés that responded to GAO’s questionnaire reported that the Mentor-Protégé Program was a valuable experience and enhanced business development. Ninety-three percent of responding protégés reported the Mentor-Protégé Program enhanced, at least to some degree, their firms’ overall capabilities. While protégés also attributed increases in contracts and revenues as a result of their participation in the program, about one-quarter reported that the program had no impact on gaining new contracts or on increasing revenues.

![Protégé Attribution of Outcomes to Program Participation](image)

Source: GAO analysis of protégé questionnaire responses.

Although DOD’s annual reports to the Congress indicate the program has increased business opportunities, the accuracy of these reports is questionable, primarily because the data are not validated before the reports are submitted to Congress. Specifically, each March DOD submits its annual report to Congress, based on mentor-prepared reports on protégé progress, but the Defense Contract Management Agency does not complete its validation of the mentor-prepared reports until the following September. In addition, many of the validations are incomplete or not done at all.

GAO could not measure the contribution of the Mentor-Protégé Program to the statutory objective of awarding 5 percent of DOD’s contracting dollars to small disadvantaged businesses. To do this, the progress of those protégés completing the program since the program’s inception would need to be identified. This data is not available.

Over the past 3 years, the majority of the Mentor-Protégé Program’s funds, which totaled about $70 million, were obligated to mentors. The mentors were reimbursed for the developmental assistance they provided to protégés either directly or indirectly. Defense Contract Management Agency reviews determined that the reimbursements received by mentors during fiscal years 2003 and 2004 were reasonable.