What GAO Found

Federal Protective Service Should Improve Human Capital Planning and Better Communicate with Tenants

Federal Protective Service (FPS), as part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is responsible for providing security services to about 9,000 federal facilities. In recent years, FPS downsized its workforce from 1,400 to about 1,000 full-time employees. In 2008, GAO expressed concerns about the impact that downsizing had on FPS’s mission, and in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 Congress mandated FPS maintain no fewer than 1,200 employees.

GAO was asked to determine the extent to which (1) FPS has hired and trained new staff to address its mandated staffing levels, (2) FPS has developed a strategic human capital plan to manage its current and future workforce needs, and (3) FPS’s customers are satisfied with the services it provides. To address these objectives, we reviewed relevant laws and documents, interviewed officials from FPS and other federal agencies, and conducted a generalizable survey of FPS’s customers.

On the basis of GAO’s generalizable survey of FPS customers, customers had mixed views about some of the services they pay FPS to provide. Survey results showed that 58 percent were satisfied, 7 percent were dissatisfied, 18 percent were neutral, and 17 percent were not able to comment on FPS’s overall services. The survey also showed that many of FPS’s customers did not rely on FPS for services. For example, in emergency situations, about 82 percent of FPS’s customers primarily rely on other agencies such as local law enforcement, while 18 percent rely on FPS. The survey also suggests that the roles and responsibilities of FPS and its customers are unclear, primarily because on average about one-third of FPS’s customers, i.e., tenant agencies, could not comment on how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with FPS’s level of communication on its services, partly because they had little to no interaction with FPS officers. Although FPS plans to implement education and outreach initiatives to improve customer service, it will face challenges because of its lack of complete and accurate contact data. Complete and accurate contact information for its customers is critical for information sharing and an essential component of any customer service initiative.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that FPS take steps to develop a strategic human capital plan to manage its current and future workforce needs, and clarify its roles and responsibilities to its customers. FPS concurred with our recommendations.