DHS TRAINING

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

Why GAO Did This Study

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.

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.

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.

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.

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