DEFENSE ACQUISITION WORKFORCE

Opportunities Exist to Improve Practices for Developing Program Managers

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense’s (DOD) major acquisition programs continue to experience cost and schedule overruns. GAO previously found that selecting skilled program managers is a key factor to achieving successful program outcomes. DOD relies on military and civilian program managers to deliver its most expensive new weapon systems, meaning its approach to training, mentoring, retaining, and selecting program managers is critical.

House Report 114-537 included a provision for GAO to review the career paths, development, and incentives for program managers. This report addresses how leading organizations train, mentor, retain, and ultimately select program managers; and the extent to which military service practices align with those leading practices. To conduct this work, GAO identified leading practices documented in prior work and by the Project Management Institute, and interviewed commercial companies identified by the Institute as leaders in this field. GAO also analyzed military service practices for developing program managers and compared those to leading practices.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making eight recommendations, including that the military services improve practices that do not align extensively with leading practices and make greater use of existing financial rewards for good performance. DOD concurred with the recommendations.

View GAO-18-217. For more information, contact Michael J. Sullivan at (202) 512-4841 or sullivanm@gao.gov.