

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-194](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD continues to confront organizational challenges that hinder collaboration. To address these challenges, section 911 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017 directed the Secretary of Defense to issue an organizational strategy that identifies critical objectives which span multiple functional boundaries and that would benefit from the use of cross-functional teams. Additionally, DOD is to establish cross-functional teams to support this strategy.

The NDAA also included a provision for GAO to assess DOD's actions in response to section 911. This report evaluates the extent to which DOD, in accordance with statutory requirements and leading practices, has (1) developed and issued an organizational strategy, (2) established Secretary of Defense-empowered cross-functional teams, and (3) provided associated training for Office of the Secretary of Defense leaders. GAO analyzed DOD's draft organizational strategy, draft guidance on establishing cross-functional teams, and draft training curriculum. GAO also interviewed DOD officials and subject-matter experts and identified leading practices for effective cross-functional teams.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations to DOD, including revising its organizational strategy, collaborating with key stakeholders on the development of its organizational strategy, revising cross-functional team guidance, and providing training. DOD concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-18-194](#). For more information, contact Elizabeth Field at (202) 512-2775 or FieldE1@gao.gov.

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DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

DOD Needs to Take Additional Actions to Promote Department-Wide Collaboration

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) has implemented some of the statutory requirements outlined in section 911 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017 to address organizational challenges, but could do more to promote department-wide collaboration, as required under the NDAA. Specifically, DOD:

- Drafted an organizational strategy that includes the two required statutory elements, but does not outline how DOD will advance a more collaborative culture, as required by statute. Incorporating GAO's leading practices on mergers and organizational transformations, such as setting goals, would help DOD better advance a collaborative culture.
- Plans to coordinate review of the organizational strategy with some DOD offices, but has not followed GAO's leading practices for collaboration—to coordinate with key stakeholders, such as the Secretary of Defense and the military departments—in drafting the strategy. Without obtaining key stakeholder input, DOD may not be well positioned to improve collaboration across the department.
- Established one cross-functional team to address the backlog on security clearances and developed draft guidance for cross-functional teams that addresses six of seven required statutory elements and incorporates five of eight leading practices that GAO has identified for effective cross-functional teams (see figure). Fully incorporating all statutory elements and leading practices will help the teams consistently and effectively address DOD's strategic objectives.

GAO Assessment of the Extent to Which DOD's Draft Guidance Addresses Leading Practices for Effective Cross-Functional Teams



Source: GAO analysis. | GAO-18-194

- Developed a draft training curriculum for Presidential appointees in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. However, the curriculum addresses only one of four required statutory elements, and has not been provided to appointees. In addition, although the statute allows a waiver for this training, DOD has not developed criteria for such a waiver. Providing training for these officials or ensuring that appropriate criteria are used to waive training will improve DOD's ability to implement its new organizational strategy.