

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-513](#), 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 FY 2017 directed the Secretary of Defense to issue an organizational strategy that identifies critical objectives that span multiple functional boundaries and would benefit from the use of cross-functional teams. Additionally, DOD is to establish cross-functional teams to support this strategy, issue guidance on these teams, and provide training to team members and civilian leaders in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

The NDAA also included a provision for GAO to periodically assess DOD's actions in response to section 911. This is GAO's third report on the implementation of section 911. It assesses the status of DOD's efforts to (1) establish cross-functional teams, (2) issue an organizational strategy, and (3) issue guidance on cross-functional teams and provide training to team members and Office of the Secretary of Defense leaders.

GAO reviewed documentation on DOD's implementation of its cross-functional teams and DOD's draft organizational strategy, draft guidance on establishing cross-functional teams, and draft training curricula. GAO also interviewed DOD officials on efforts to implement section 911.

GAO is not making new recommendations in this report. DOD concurred and is taking actions to address GAO's previous recommendations on DOD's implementation of section 911. DOD also concurred with the findings in a draft of this report.

View [GAO-18-513](#). For more information, contact Elizabeth Field at (202) 512-2775 or [FieldE1@gao.gov](mailto:FieldE1@gao.gov).

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## DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

### DOD Senior Leadership Has Not Fully Implemented Statutory Requirements to Promote Department-Wide Collaboration

#### What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) has implemented some statutory requirements in section 911 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, enacted in December 2016, to address organizational challenges. However, senior leadership has not implemented several requirements intended to support cross-functional teams and promote department-wide collaboration (see table).

#### Status of DOD's Implementation of Requirements in Section 911 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017, as of May 2018

Section 911 requirement	Statutory due date	Status
Award contract for a study on cross-functional teams	March 15, 2017	Completed
Provide the results of the study to Congress	July 15, 2017	Completed
Establish cross-functional teams	September 30, 2017	Completed
Develop and issue an organizational strategy	September 1, 2017	Not completed
Issue guidance on cross-functional teams	September 30, 2017	Not completed
Provide training to cross-functional team members and their supervisors	Not specified	Not completed
Provide training to presidential appointees	Within 3 months of appointment	Not completed

Source: GAO analysis of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017 and Department of Defense information. | [GAO-18-513](#)

DOD has established 10 cross-functional teams, which are in various stages of implementation. Specifically, DOD is in the early stages of establishing one cross-functional team to address the backlog of the department's personnel security clearance background investigations and has assigned an interim leader and seven members to this team. In addition, DOD established 9 cross-functional teams to implement reform initiatives intended to improve the efficiency of the department's business operations. DOD generally appointed senior department officials to lead these teams, and the size of the teams, as of May 2018, ranged from 5 to 12 members.

DOD has drafted, but not issued, an organizational strategy. DOD officials stated that they have not completed the strategy because they want to align it with two department-wide strategy documents—the National Defense Strategy, which was issued in January 2018, and the National Defense Business Operations Plan, which was issued in May 2018.

DOD also has not fulfilled three statutory requirements related to guidance and training for cross-functional teams and civilian leaders in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Specifically, DOD has not (1) provided training to cross-functional team members, (2) issued guidance on cross-functional teams, or (3) provided training to presidential appointees in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. DOD officials stated that they plan to send the guidance and training curricula to the Secretary of Defense for review and approval after DOD issues the organizational strategy. Fully implementing these requirements and GAO's prior recommendations related to the organizational strategy, guidance, and training, will better position DOD to effectively implement its cross-functional teams and advance a collaborative culture as required by the NDAA.