



EVALUATION

TIME TO HIRE: USING MORE RELIABLE DATA COULD HELP GAO MONITOR THE LENGTH OF ITS HIRING PROCESS



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Introduction

Hiring and maintaining a highly-qualified workforce is critical to GAO's ability to execute its mission. In its *Performance and Accountability Report, Fiscal Year 2024*, GAO highlighted managing a quality workforce—including hiring—as one of its top management challenges.¹ GAO's target for the length of the hiring process is 98 or 101 days, while the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) target for executive branch hiring is 80 days.² Timely hiring can help GAO meet its workforce goals and reduce the risk of losing highly-qualified candidates to other employers. Budget constraints in fiscal year (FY) 2025 led GAO to hire fewer than 10 entry-level employees and experience a net loss of about 100 employees because it did not backfill positions.³ These challenges underscore the need to have a timely hiring process for positions which are critical for the agency to fill.

This report presents the results of the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) self-initiated evaluation. The OIG's objective was to assess the timeliness of GAO's hiring process. The OIG focused its analysis on hiring actions which were completed in FY 2024 and related to employees in three government-wide mission critical occupations (MCOs)—contracting, human resources management, and information technology management.⁴ Using GAO's hiring data, the OIG calculated how long it took for GAO to hire employees for those government-wide MCOs. Details regarding the OIG's scope and methodology are included in appendix I.

Results in Brief

The OIG found that GAO's hiring of employees in government-wide MCOs took about 103 days on average in FY 2024, which is longer than GAO's internal target of 98 or 101 days, OPM's goal of 80 days for executive branch agencies, and executive branch agencies' reported time frames depicted on OPM's public dashboard.⁵ Further, the OIG found GAO did not use reliable data in its calculations on how long it took for hiring

¹ GAO, *Performance and Accountability Report, Fiscal Year 2024*, [GAO-25-900570](#), (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 15, 2024), 49.

² GAO's internal hiring target varies depending on whether Human Capital Office (HCO) staff or a subject matter expert panel reviews job applications to rank candidates (98 or 101 days, respectively). OPM is an executive branch agency. As a legislative branch agency, GAO is not required to follow OPM guidance.

³ GAO, *Performance and Accountability Report, Fiscal Year 2025*, [GAO-26-900644](#), (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 29, 2026), 54, 95.

⁴ OPM defines MCOs as "Occupations agencies consider core to carrying out their missions" and notes that they "usually reflect the primary mission of the organization without which mission-critical work cannot be completed." "Glossary," Reference Materials, OPM, accessed on April 23, 2026, <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/human-capital-framework/reference-materials/>.

⁵ OPM's public dashboard includes actual time frames for executive branch MCOs' hiring from 72.1 to 94.6 days for FY 2024.

actions which were completed in FY 2024. Specifically, GAO's internally-reported calculations of the length of the hiring process for employees hired in FY 2024 excluded about 30 percent of the employees hired in MCOs (20 of 66).⁶ The agency's calculations also relied on inconsistent or inaccurate dates for when hiring actions began. Finally, GAO's internal reporting and hiring guidance contained different targets for how long the process should take.

Not including all completed hiring actions in its calculations and using inaccurate or inconsistent hiring action start dates and target time frames may hamper GAO's ability to effectively monitor and assess the length of its hiring process. In addition, the length of GAO's hiring process increases the agency's risk of not meeting its stated goal of hiring well-qualified candidates because prospective employees may accept other job opportunities while waiting for GAO to complete its hiring process.

Finding 1: Meeting Targets for Timely Hiring Could Help GAO Mitigate the Risk of Losing Qualified Candidates

In FY 2024, GAO hired 66 employees into MCOs: seven employees to contracting positions, 14 employees to human resources management positions, and 45 employees to information technology management positions.⁷ These hiring actions took an average of about 103 days, which was longer than the agency's internal hiring target of 98 or 101 days.⁸ For comparison, OPM's hiring goal for executive branch agencies is 80 days.⁹

⁶ This includes new hires, internal promotions, and additional selections from a shared certificate for which the hiring process was completed in FY 2024.

⁷ For this analysis, the OIG included the employees excluded from HCO's calculations, as discussed below in Finding 2. One employee was involved in two separate hiring actions; for the purposes of this report, the OIG considered each hiring action to be a unique "employee."

⁸ The OIG calculated this length of time using the data provided by HCO and the same formula HCO used for calculating time to hire, but included the 20 employees which HCO previously omitted, as discussed below in Finding 2. Given the issues with the dates for the start of hiring actions identified in Finding 3, the average length for GAO's time to hire could be higher than the 103 days calculated using the data provided by HCO.

⁹ As a legislative branch agency, GAO is not required to follow OPM guidance.

Table 1 shows the average length of time for GAO and the executive branch to hire employees in government-wide MCOs.

Table 1. Average Time to Hire for Government-Wide Mission Critical Occupations, Fiscal Year 2024 (in Calendar Days)

Mission Critical Occupation	GAO Data (Goal: 98 or 101)	Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Dashboard (Goal: 80)
Contracting	110.1	72.1
Human Resources Management	93.1	75.5
Information Technology Management	105.4	94.6

Source: OIG analysis of GAO hiring data and OPM's Time to Hire dashboard (accessed on September 26, 2025). According to OPM, the dashboard only shows data for Chief Human Capital Officers Act agencies. | OIG-26-1

While GAO met its internal timeliness goal for hiring employees in human resources management positions in FY 2024, it did not meet its goal for employees hired in contracting and information technology management positions. In addition, it took GAO longer to hire employees in all three MCOs than it took for the executive branch agencies depicted on OPM's public dashboard—for example, on average, GAO took 38 days longer to hire employees in contracting positions than the time frame on OPM's dashboard.

According to GAO's Human Capital Office (HCO),¹⁰ the agency's hiring goal is longer than OPM's because GAO requires more time for eligibility and qualification determination reviews and analysis, subject matter expert panels, and, in some instances, multiple rounds of interviews to obtain "well-qualified staff." However, GAO is competing with agencies across the federal government for comparable MCO positions.¹¹ In some instances, GAO may also be competing with private employers for candidates. With a longer hiring process, GAO risks not meeting its stated goal of hiring "well-qualified staff" because these candidates may accept other job opportunities while waiting for GAO to complete its hiring process.

Finding 2: Including All Employees in Internal Calculations of Hiring Timeliness Would Improve GAO's Monitoring of Its Time to Hire

The OIG assessed the data that HCO used for its reporting to the Chief Administrative Office on the timeliness of GAO's hiring for positions where the hiring process was

¹⁰ HCO provides human capital management support and services to GAO units and teams.

¹¹ All employees who GAO hired to contracting and human resources management positions in FY 2024 were hired by non-mission teams (for example, Financial Management and Business Operations or HCO). In contrast, GAO hired employees to information technology management positions in both non-mission and mission teams.

completed in FY 2024.¹² The OIG found that HCO excluded about 30 percent of the employees hired for MCOs (20 of 66).¹³ All 20 excluded hiring actions were listed as being completed in FY 2024 in spreadsheets that GAO provided to the OIG but were not included in the hiring data that HCO used for its time-to-hire calculations reported to the Chief Administrative Office. This resulted in a lack of quality information being provided to agency leadership. According to HCO, 16 employees were excluded because, despite having completed the hiring action in FY 2024, HCO did not enter the “actual start date[s]” in the hiring database. HCO acknowledged that the four remaining employees were excluded from its calculations but did not provide a definitive explanation for why they were excluded.

Federal internal control standards require agencies to use and communicate quality information to manage their internal control systems.¹⁴ By not including all hiring actions in its calculations, GAO lacks the necessary information to monitor hiring actions; better information could help GAO include quality data in its internal reporting and identify ways to reduce the length of its hiring process.

Finding 3: Accurately Documenting the Start of Hiring Actions Would Provide GAO Better Data to Assess Its Time to Hire

GAO’s time-to-hire calculations were based on inaccurate or inconsistent dates for when hiring actions began. According to HCO, GAO’s hiring process starts when HCO staff consult with a hiring manager about the vacancy. However, HCO staff stated they recorded the date that consultations were completed, not started, as the initial date. By using the consultation completion dates, HCO’s calculations would have undercounted the days spent on some hiring actions. Further, HCO staff indicated that consultations often took longer than the allotted 2 days. However, because HCO did not record the start date for consultations, it cannot determine how long consultations took or accurately assess the length of its hiring process. Moreover, the OIG identified some hiring actions where the date recorded did not align with the date when a hiring manager and HCO held a consultation.¹⁵

¹² HCO reports to the Chief Administrative Office, which oversees GAO’s financial, human capital, infrastructure, and other operations.

¹³ The OIG identified these excluded employees by reviewing spreadsheets provided by GAO that had different data than what HCO used for its reporting to the Chief Administrative Office. As it was outside the scope of this evaluation, the OIG did not assess whether there were additional employees in other occupations who were similarly excluded from HCO’s calculations.

¹⁴ GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO-14-704G](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 10, 2014), 58, 60.

¹⁵ The OIG reviewed available documentation for a judgmental sample of MCO employees (nine of 66) to determine whether strategic consultation dates matched the “hiring need validation date” recorded in the hiring database. For two of the nine, the dates did not match. The OIG could not verify the dates for the remaining seven employees

Federal internal control standards require that management monitor the effectiveness of its internal control systems and take timely action to resolve identified deficiencies.¹⁶ By recording inaccurate or incomplete data for the start of hiring actions, HCO cannot effectively monitor the length of GAO's entire hiring process and target areas for improvement.

Finding 4: Using a Consistent Hiring Target Time Frame Would Allow HCO to Accurately Report on GAO's Time to Hire

The overall target time frame for hiring varied in HCO documents. Internal HCO documents state that GAO's hiring target is 98 or 101 days from when a hiring manager and HCO staff first discuss the need to fill a vacancy to when a candidate enters on duty. HCO confirmed to the OIG that this is the correct target. However, HCO's FY 2024 time-to-hire reporting to the Chief Administrative Office stated that the hiring target was 107 or 111 days. HCO officials could not account for the difference in these time frames.

Federal internal control standards require management to communicate quality information internally to achieve organizational objectives.¹⁷ Using a consistent target would support HCO's ability to meet its goals and provide quality information to stakeholders.

Conclusion

To address its management challenge of hiring and maintaining a highly-qualified workforce, GAO needs reliable data to calculate how long it takes to hire employees. With accurate and complete calculations, GAO could more effectively determine whether it meets its goals for the length of its hiring process. As GAO is competing with other federal agencies for qualified individuals in government-wide MCOs, reducing the length of its hiring process could decrease the risk of GAO losing qualified candidates to other opportunities. Hiring employees more quickly could also increase the likelihood of the agency meeting its stated goal of hiring well-qualified employees. This could enable GAO to increase its productivity and improve its ability to meet the needs of Congress.

Recommendations for Executive Action

The OIG recommends the Chief Human Capital Officer:

1. Develop and document a strategy for periodically reviewing the length of hiring actions and mitigating systemic inefficiencies.

because HCO indicated that it did not hold a strategic consultation or the documentation was unclear or unavailable due to GAO's email retention policies.

¹⁶ GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, 64.

¹⁷ GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, 60-61.

2. Define the types of hiring actions which should be included in time-to-hire calculations and implement controls to ensure all hiring actions within the defined scope are included in its calculations.
3. Establish controls to consistently document and record the start of hiring actions.
4. Evaluate the target hiring time frame, document the rationale, and update all internal documents to reflect the established time frame.

Agency Comments and OIG Evaluation

The OIG provided GAO with a draft of this report for review and comment. In its written comments, which are reproduced in full in appendix II, GAO concurred with recommendations 1 and 4 and provided projected completion dates. GAO did not fully concur with recommendations 2 and 3.

GAO did not fully concur with Finding 2: “Including All Employees in Internal Calculations of Hiring Timeliness Would Improve GAO’s Monitoring of Its Time to Hire” and recommendation 2: “Implement controls to ensure that all hiring actions are included in time-to-hire calculations and reporting.” GAO suggested modifying the recommendation to identify that all “defined” or “identified” actions are included for reporting. The agency also indicated that, for the finding and the recommendation, not all actions should be included, such as annual cycle promotions for analysts and other internal recruitment. However, GAO’s existing time-to-hire calculations which the OIG reviewed for this engagement included internal promotions. While the agency can determine what it reports on, it needs to clearly define what actions to include and implement controls to ensure those actions are consistently included in its calculations. In response to GAO’s comment, the OIG revised the recommendation as follows: “Define the types of hiring actions which should be included in time-to-hire calculations and implement controls to ensure all hiring actions within the defined scope are included in its calculations.”

GAO did not fully concur with recommendation 3: “Establish controls to ensure the documentation of accurate hiring dates, including actual start dates and completion dates for consultations.” GAO suggested that shifting to use the date the recruitment is approved in the system would eliminate the variations in the consultation dates and the manual process of tracking the consultation date. In response, the OIG revised the recommendation as follows: “Establish controls to consistently document and record the start of hiring actions.”

The OIG will monitor GAO’s actions to address all recommendations and will close the recommendations when it receives sufficient evidence that GAO’s corrective actions satisfy the intent of the recommendations.

Appendix I: Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Objective

The Office of Inspector General's (OIG) objective was to assess the timeliness of GAO's hiring process.

Scope

The OIG conducted its work from June 2025 through August 2026. The scope of this evaluation was GAO's hiring actions in fiscal year (FY) 2024.

Methodology

The OIG's review focused on GAO's hiring actions for employees in three government-wide mission critical occupations (MCO): contracting (job series 1102), human resources management (job series 0201), and information technology management (job series 2210).¹⁸ To achieve its objective, the OIG

- analyzed FY 2024 hiring data to identify the time to hire for GAO employees hired in three government-wide MCOs;¹⁹
- reviewed and analyzed spreadsheets, presentations, and other internal guidance provided by GAO's Human Capital Office (HCO) and Workforce Management Analysis division;
- reviewed GAO policies, procedures, and guidance related to its hiring process;
- reviewed the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Time to Hire dashboard, hiring framework for executive branch agencies, and related guidance;²⁰ and
- interviewed GAO officials from HCO, GAO's former Chief Administrative Officer/Chief Financial Officer, GAO's Chief Human Capital Officer, and OPM officials responsible for the Time to Hire dashboard.

Government Standards

The OIG conducted this evaluation in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation.

¹⁸ For the purposes of this report, the OIG considered "hires" to include external hires, internal promotions, additional hires from a shared certificate, and other types of hiring actions included on OPM's Time to Hire dashboard.

¹⁹ To ensure consistency with the data depicted on OPM's Time to Hire dashboard, the OIG excluded one Senior Executive Service employee from the data analysis. For reasons of independence, the OIG also excluded one OIG employee from the data analysis.

²⁰ The OIG did not independently verify the data on OPM's dashboard.

Appendix II: Agency Comments



U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Memorandum

Date: July 24, 2026

To: L. Nancy Birnbaum, Inspector General

Thru: Tina Kirschbaum, Management and Program Analyst

From: Renee S. Caputo, Chief Human Capital Officer RENE S. CAPUTO Digitally signed by RENE S. CAPUTO
Date: 2026.08.07 12:28:35 -04'00'

Subject: Response to OIG draft report entitled *Time to Hire: Using More Reliable Data Could Help GAO Monitor the Length of Its Hiring Process*

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the OIG's draft report entitled *Time to Hire: Using More Reliable Data Could Help GAO Monitor the Length of Its Hiring Process*. We appreciate the time and effort the team took to examine our program.

GAO partially concurs with the recommendations and findings outlined in the draft report, as outlined in the attached. It's important to note, though, that OPM's time to hire reporting assesses time to hire in an aggregate manner across large agencies. While it is interesting to look at it on a smaller basis, by particular occupational series, for example, this may also lead to a distorted view of the outcomes of our process. For example, the contracting positions that the OIG chose to target, are, by definition, in scarce supply across government and categorized as hard-to-fill. As a result, GAO's success in recruiting near the targeted timeframe should be viewed as a success rather than a failure.

There are a number of contributors to the length of time our hiring process takes. GAO relies heavily on multiple rounds of interviews as an important part of our assessment process to ensure that we are selecting the best candidates for our roles. Additionally, our pay banded system allows for salary negotiation, a process that is less typical across government, but which may simultaneously add time to the process and may increase our ability to attract a broader applicant pool.

GAO is committed to continuing to enhance our monitoring and assessment of progress in meeting the agency's hiring goals, and in continuing to refine our ability to collect and report on key data elements in a more automated fashion. As we consider how to address the OIG's recommendations, we will carefully weigh the need for the data against the time and value in tracking it, particularly for the portions of the process that can only be tracked via manual processes.

Attachment

cc:
William J. White, Jr, Chief Administrative Officer
Ana Caro, Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer
Dominique Joseph, Director, Human Capital Consulting Center

**GAO Response to OIG Findings and Recommendations for
Time to Hire: Using More Reliable Data Could Help GAO
Monitor the Length of Its Hiring Process**

Finding	Concur (Y/N)
1) Meeting Targets for Timely Hiring Could Help GAO Mitigate the Risk of Losing Qualified Candidates	Y
2) Including All Employees in Internal Calculations of Hiring Timeliness Would Improve GAO's Monitoring of Its Time to Hire	N
3) Accurately Documenting the Start of Hiring Actions Would Provide GAO Better Data to Assess Its Time to Hire	Y
4) Using a Consistent Hiring Target Time Frame Would Allow HCO to Accurately Report on GAO's Time to Hire	Y

GAO Response to OIG Findings and Recommendations for Time to Hire: Using More Reliable Data Could Help GAO Monitor the Length of Its Hiring Process

Recommendation	Concur (Y/N)	Actions Taken or to be Taken	Estimated Completion Date
1) Develop and document a strategy for periodically reviewing the length of hiring actions and mitigating systemic inefficiencies.	Y	Update existing time to hire documentation to include potential actions in response to delays at various points.	April 1, 2027
2) Implement controls to ensure that all hiring actions are included in time-to-hire calculations and reporting.	N	Not all actions should be included (ex: annual cycle promotions for analysts and other internal recruitment). Suggest modifying to identify that all "defined" or "identified" actions are included for reporting.	April 1, 2027, if modification is accepted.
3) Establish controls to ensure the documentation of accurate hiring dates, including actual start dates and completion dates for consultations.	N	The IG noted that there were differences in whether the consultation date tracked the beginning or end of this process. Shifting to use the date the recruitment is approved in the system would eliminate this variation, and the manual process of tracking the consultation. Inherently, this is a back and forth process with multiple steps.	April 1, 2027, if modification is accepted.

GAO Response to OIG Findings and Recommendations for Time to Hire: Using More Reliable Data Could Help GAO Monitor the Length of Its Hiring Process

		Assess whether separate tracking of early stages of the process (Workforce planning approval to job requisition approval) is needed.	
4) Evaluate the target hiring time frame, document the rationale, and update all internal documents to reflect the established time frame.	Y	Make timelines and scope of time to hire documentation internally consistent and ensure alignment with key dates in process map.	April 1, 2027

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