Additional Insights Could Enhance Agency Efforts Related to Hispanic Representation

What GAO Found

U.S. citizenship and educational attainment had the greatest effect, of the measurable factors we identified, on Hispanic representation in the federal workforce. Our statistical model showed that when accounting for citizenship, required for most federal employment, Hispanics were nearly as likely as non-Hispanics to be employed in the federal workforce, relative to the nonfederal workforce (the portion of the CLF excluding federal employees). In addition, the federal workforce has a greater proportion of occupations that require higher levels of education than the CLF. When we compared citizens with similar levels of education, Hispanics were more likely than non-Hispanics to be employed in the federal workforce relative to the nonfederal workforce. Other factors in our model, including age, gender, race, veteran’s status, English proficiency, and geography (state where employed), had a more limited or almost no effect on the likelihood of Hispanics being in the federal workforce.

In addition to reporting and comparing representation levels overall and in subsets of the federal workforce to the CLF, EEOC and OPM require that agencies analyze their own workforces. However, the CLF benchmarks of representation that EEOC, OPM, and the agencies use do not differentiate between citizens and noncitizens, and therefore do not identify how citizenship affects the pool of persons qualified to work for the federal government. Where these analyses identify differences in representation, EEOC, for example, requires agencies to determine if there are barriers to participation and develop strategies to address them. OPM provides resources and guidance to assist agencies in implementing human capital strategies. Through these efforts, OPM has promoted the use of student employment programs as a source of qualified candidates. Analyzing agency use of these programs, including the extent to which agencies convert participants to permanent employment, could provide OPM with valuable information to assist agencies in maximizing the use of these programs in their strategic workforce planning.

The agencies we reviewed use a variety of approaches to address Hispanic representation, including recruiting at colleges and universities with large Hispanic populations, publicizing employment opportunities in Hispanic media, reaching out to Hispanic communities and Hispanic-serving organizations, and using student employment, internship, career development, and training programs. For example, the U.S. Air Force partners with vocational-technical schools to develop aircraft maintenance technicians, and staff at selected National Aeronautics and Space Administration facilities mentor and tutor students to encourage careers in science, technology, engineering, and math.