



Highlights of [GAO-12-878](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia; Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

OPM and agency CHCOs play an important role in ensuring that federal training dollars are invested effectively. GAO was asked to review the extent to which: (1) CHCOs of selected federal agencies have established processes to set and prioritize training investments that are aligned with leading practices; and (2) OPM's guidance and assistance for developing training investment strategies align with these leading practices. GAO obtained information from 27 CHCOs on their training investment practices through a questionnaire, and selected four agencies—the Departments of Energy (DOE), Homeland Security (DHS), the Interior (DOI) and Veterans Affairs (VA)—to provide illustrative examples. We compared both CHCO and OPM practices to leading practices, identified through past GAO and expert studies.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends, among other things, that OPM improve guidance and assistance to agencies in establishing a process for setting and prioritizing training investments; improve the reliability of agency training investment information; and identify the best existing courses that fulfill governmentwide training requirements, and offer them to all agencies through the HR University or other appropriate platforms. OPM fully or partially concurred with four recommendations and did not concur with a portion of another. OPM, DOI and VA provided technical comments, which GAO incorporated, as appropriate, into the report. DOE and DHS had no comments.

View [GAO-12-878](#). For more information, contact Yvonne J. Jones at (202) 512-2717 or Jonesy@gao.gov.

FEDERAL TRAINING INVESTMENTS

Office of Personnel Management and Agencies Can Do More to Ensure Cost-Effective Decisions

What GAO Found

Many Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs) reported that they are implementing several leading practices important to making strategic decisions about training delivery, such as determining the best mix of decentralized and centralized training and considering government-wide reform when planning training. However, many CHCOs reported they are not implementing some practices that support making more cost-effective training investment decisions, such as prioritizing training so that the most important needs are met first and evaluating the benefits of training. In addition, many CHCOs do not have information from component or sub-agency leaders regarding their level of investments and priorities. Consequently, some agencies are duplicating internal training investments and missing opportunities to leverage economies of scale across their agencies. Federal agencies also need reliable information on how much they spend on training and for what purposes. However, several CHCOs reported they do not completely and reliably track training costs agency-wide.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) provides guidance and assistance to agencies on a number of the leading practices, such as evaluating the benefits of training in three of its guides and in workshops. In some practice areas that are challenges to agencies, such as prioritization of investments and determining whether to design training and development programs in-house or obtain these services from a contractor, guidance is minimal or absent. OPM also requires agencies to submit training investment data and provides guidance on how to do so, but considers this data to be unreliable because it is incomplete. However, OPM officials have not internally assessed improvements in the completeness of the data over the last 3 years or the quality of the data in the six years that agencies have been required to submit it, and have only provided agencies with one summary of their data for correction. Agencies and OPM reported there are also opportunities for OPM to help agencies reduce duplicative investments across agencies. For example, currently, agencies independently purchase or develop training for the same mandated or common occupational training. Agency leaders and OPM recognize that this has led to redundant and inefficient federal training investments. According to OPM officials, HR University—which is a website currently administered by OPM to provide training for the HR community—has already resulted in a cost savings of \$14.5 million as a result of sharing the best HR training government-wide. Several agencies and OPM officials reported that HR University could be expanded to provide mandatory training and serve as a model for centralizing training in other occupations or functional areas, which could save millions more and help standardize training.