

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-13-742](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

With more than 240,000 employees doing diverse jobs, DHS's workforce supports the department's multiple missions to prevent terrorism and enhance security and ensure resilience from disasters, amongst others. Given these missions, it is important that DHS effectively recruit and hire employees with the appropriate skills. Within DHS, the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) is responsible for human capital policy development and implementation. GAO has previously reported on DHS's challenges in attracting and retaining a qualified workforce. GAO was asked to assess DHS's recruiting and hiring strategies. This report addresses the extent to which (1) DHS and four selected components have implemented recruiting and hiring strategies to fill MCOs, and (2) DHS has assessed these efforts. To conduct its work, GAO reviewed recruiting strategies and data on MCO hiring and losses, and interviewed officials from OCHCO and the four DHS components selected for this review based on their varieties of MCOs and recruiting strategies. Information from these components cannot be generalized to all of DHS, but provides insights.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DHS require all components to provide recruiting cost information in a consistent manner. DHS concurred with GAO's recommendation.

View [GAO-13-742](#). For more information, contact David C. Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov.

September 2013

DHS RECRUITING AND HIRING

DHS Is Generally Filling Mission-Critical Positions, but Could Better Track Costs of Coordinated Recruiting Efforts

What GAO Found

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and selected components are implementing strategies to fill mission-critical occupations (MCO), which are those occupations most critical to an agency's mission. In 2011, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I)—which coordinates component recruiting efforts—developed the *Coordinated Recruiting and Outreach Strategy* (CROS). Through the CROS, D&I intends to better coordinate and link component recruiting and outreach efforts to hiring for DHS mission and workforce needs (for all positions, including MCOs), and to leverage resources as well as reduce recruiting costs, among other things. D&I has begun to implement the CROS through various means, including requiring components to develop their own outreach and recruiting plans that align with the CROS. However, D&I has been limited in its ability to implement some elements of the CROS—such as recruiter training—because of budget constraints, according to D&I officials. The components selected for GAO's review—the National Protection and Programs Directorate, Transportation Security Administration (TSA), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and U.S. Secret Service (USSS)—have also implemented various strategies to recruit and hire MCOs. In addition, these four components have generally been able to address hiring needs for MCOs. For example, USSS data show that vacancy rates were generally below 3 percent for MCO positions during fiscal years 2010 through 2012. Still, some officials have reported experiencing challenges attracting qualified candidates because of factors such as financial constraints and regional competition, among other things. For example, TSA has been challenged in filling certain positions in some areas where competition for other jobs makes it difficult to attract qualified candidates.

D&I is taking steps to assess implementation of the CROS, but could improve efforts to track recruiting costs. D&I assesses progress in implementing the CROS by tracking and monitoring component performance for six measures, such as compliance with data-tracking requirements. These measures are aligned with the two overarching goals of the CROS; however, they do not include targets to measure DHS's progress in achieving the goals over the period the strategy covers (2012–2017). D&I officials stated that they are gathering baseline data on these measures and plan to use these data to help develop targets in the future. In addition, three of the CROS's six annual measures are associated with its goal of recruiting a highly qualified workforce. However, DHS does not require components to report the information needed to accurately assess component performance for one of these measures—which calls for standardized data tracking of recruiting and outreach activities. D&I has developed a database for components to use to track recruiting efforts and costs, but it does not require that all components use this tool or provide data to DHS in a consistent manner. D&I officials said that since some components have their own tracking systems, they do not want the tracking systems to duplicate efforts. D&I acknowledges the importance of obtaining comprehensive and consistent cost information from components, but has not determined whether and how it will do so. As a result, D&I does not know the total amount of money being spent on recruiting and outreach throughout DHS, nor is it able to fully track component recruiting costs—and therefore cannot measure the results of the second goal in the CROS of optimizing outreach and recruiting resources.