

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-39](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

## Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government's management of its real property holdings costs billions of dollars and has been on GAO's High Risk List since 2003. Some agencies lack the staff expertise needed to oversee building management activities. GAO was asked to report on the status of the implementation of the Act, which directed GSA to, among other things, consult with the training industry to identify core competencies for federal buildings personnel and required these personnel to demonstrate proficiency in these competencies.

This report examines (1) the progress GSA has made in implementing the Act's requirements, (2) the actions selected agencies have taken to respond to the Act, and (3) the factors that have affected implementation of the Act. To conduct this study, GAO reviewed the Act and agency documentation and studies. GAO also interviewed officials from GSA as well as DOD, DOE, DOI, DOJ, and VA. Together with GSA, the agencies GAO interviewed occupy about 90 percent of federal real property gross square footage.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that GSA develop a legislative proposal to establish agency authorities and reporting responsibilities—as well as an interagency group—to enhance accountability for implementation of the Act. GSA stated that it agreed with the report's findings and would work with the appropriate agencies to address them.

View [GAO-16-39](#). For more information, contact David Wise at (202) 512-2834 or [wised@gao.gov](mailto:wised@gao.gov).

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## FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY

### Additional Authorities and Accountability Would Enhance the Implementation of the Federal Buildings Personnel Training Act of 2010

## What GAO Found

The General Services Administration (GSA) has largely met its lead-agency responsibilities for implementing the Federal Buildings Personnel Training Act of 2010 (the Act) government-wide. For example, it has identified core competencies and a recommended curriculum for federal buildings personnel. While not required by the Act, GSA has also drafted a charter for an interagency advisory board to help coordinate government-wide implementation and has developed software tools to assist agencies with compliance efforts. GSA is in the process of implementing the requirements for its own employees. GSA has identified affected personnel, directed them to inventory their qualifications, and assessed their skills. GSA must still align job descriptions and performance reviews with the Act's requirements and implement contractor compliance efforts.

Of the five selected agencies GAO reviewed, the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Energy (DOE) have taken some actions to respond to the Act, while the Departments of Justice (DOJ), Interior (DOI), and Veterans Affairs (VA) have not yet determined how to respond. For example, DOD is conducting a pilot program through its Defense Health Agency to align five positions with the core competency model GSA developed, while DOI's National Park Service has only discussed potential responses to the Act. As a result, little is known about the numbers of federal and contractor employees at these agencies covered by the Act or the status of their compliance with the Act.

The pace of implementation of the Act has been limited by at least four factors that make compliance essentially voluntary. First, the Act does not provide any agency with the authority to enforce compliance government-wide. According to GSA, it is not authorized to issue official government-wide guidance on implementation, and it has come to see its role as advisory. In addition, the Act does not provide an implementation role for the Office of Personnel Management, the agency generally responsible for government-wide personnel related issues. Second, agencies are not required to report the status of their employees' compliance with the Act, a circumstance that leaves agencies with little incentive to determine how many employees are affected or complying. Third, the Act did not provide funding for additional training, and according to agency officials, many other priorities compete for limited training resources. Fourth, no interagency group has been established that ensures consistent implementation of the Act government-wide. This gap has resulted in a lack of coordinated implementation policy and guidance. While GSA has taken steps to create such a group, this process is still in the development stage. Federal internal control standards emphasize that establishing good human capital policies and practices, including ensuring that personnel are properly trained, is critical for achieving results and improving organizational accountability. These standards also call for assessing the quality of performance over time. Such an assessment would include monitoring training practices. Further, prior GAO work has found that agencies can benefit from considering government-wide reforms when planning training programs and that the coordinated efforts of several agencies through interagency groups can help develop policy, guide program implementation, and conduct oversight and monitoring.