

## Why GAO Did This Study

After the passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which included tax incentives for nuclear energy, NRC significantly expanded its workforce to meet the demands of an anticipated increase in workload that ultimately did not occur. More recently, a forecast for reduced growth in the nuclear industry prompted NRC to develop plans for changing its structure and workforce to better respond to changes in the nuclear industry. Strategic human capital planning is one of several actions the agency is taking.

The explanatory statement accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2016 included a provision for GAO to report on NRC's workforce management. GAO examined NRC's strategic human capital management efforts and the extent to which these efforts incorporate leading practices.

GAO reviewed NRC's strategic workforce plan and other related documents and interviewed knowledgeable NRC officials.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that NRC (1) set agencywide goals for workforce size and skills composition to meet workload demands that extend beyond the 2-year budget cycle, (2) establish a systematic approach for tracking employee skills, and (3) consistently train managers and supervisors in strategic human capital management and assessing employee skillsets. NRC generally agreed with these recommendations.

View [GAO-17-233](#). For more information, contact Frank Rusco at (202) 512-3841 or [ruscof@gao.gov](mailto:ruscof@gao.gov).

# STRATEGIC HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

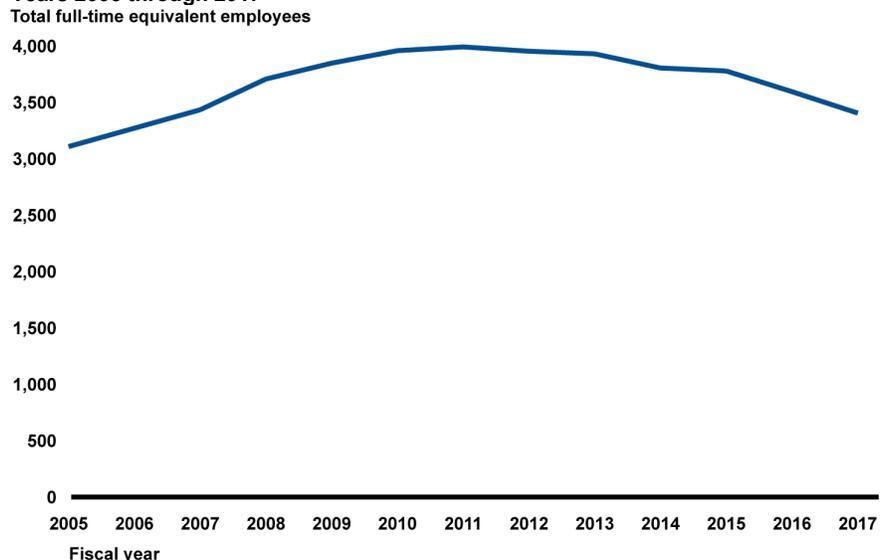
## NRC Could Better Manage the Size and Composition of Its Workforce by Further Incorporating Leading Practices

### What GAO Found

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has made efforts to enhance its strategic human capital management to ensure the agency has the right number and composition of staff; however, these efforts do not incorporate some leading practices. Leading practices—identified by GAO and others—indicate that using forward-looking strategies, setting goals, using data-driven planning and accountability systems, and ensuring that employees have relevant knowledge to carry out their responsibilities are essential for strategic human capital management. NRC has taken steps through Project Aim—an effort to help the agency respond more strategically to changes in the nuclear industry—and other efforts to manage its human capital, such as developing a strategic workforce plan, conducting workload forecasting, and cross-training employees.

However, GAO identified three areas where NRC's efforts do not fully incorporate leading practices. First, NRC has not established agencywide goals for its workforce size or composition—that is, goals for the number of people with specific skillsets and levels of expertise—beyond a 2-year budget cycle. Second, NRC does not have comprehensive employee skills information because it currently does not have a systematic approach or system to track this information. Third, in some cases, NRC has not consistently trained managers or supervisors on strategic human capital management or assessing employees' skillsets. Without incorporating these practices, NRC cannot determine the most appropriate size and composition of the agency's workforce, and it risks being unable to respond to changes in the nuclear industry. NRC has reduced its staff by 587 FTEs since its peak in 2011 (see figure), but if not carefully managed, imprecise reductions could lead NRC to miss efficiencies in matching its workforce with expected demand for services.

**Total Allocated Nuclear Regulatory Commission Full-Time Equivalent Employees, Fiscal Years 2005 through 2017**



Source: GAO analysis of Nuclear Regulatory Commission data. | GAO-17-233