

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-19-605T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight, Management and Accountability, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

FPS conducts physical security and law enforcement activities for about 9,000 federal facilities and the millions of employees or visitors who work in or visit these facilities. Legislation enacted in November 2018 required DHS to determine the appropriate placement for FPS. The legislation also gave the Secretary of DHS authority to move FPS within DHS. In May 2019, DHS announced its decision to place FPS within the DHS Management Directorate as a direct report to the Under Secretary for Management.

GAO has reported that FPS faces persistent challenges in meeting its mission to protect facilities, and, as of 2019, physical security continues to be part of GAO's federal real property management high-risk area. For example, FPS has not yet fully implemented its guard management system. Thus, FPS is unable to obtain information to assess its guards' capability to address physical security risks across its portfolio.

This statement describes considerations for FPS's placement in DHS's Management Directorate based upon five key organizational placement criteria GAO identified, as well as steps to transition FPS based upon GAO's prior work on organizational change.

This testimony is based on reports GAO issued from 2002 through 2019, particularly, GAO's January 2019 report on FPS's organizational placement. Detailed information on the scope and methodology for this work can be found in these published products, cited throughout this testimony.

View [GAO-19-605T](#). For more information, contact Lori Rectanus at (202) 512-2834 or rectanusl@gao.gov.

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FEDERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICE'S ORGANIZATIONAL PLACEMENT

Considerations for Transition to the DHS Management Directorate

What GAO Found

In its January 2019 report, GAO identified five key criteria relevant for evaluating placement options for the Federal Protective Service (FPS) within the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) or other federal agencies. (See table.)

Key Criteria for Evaluating Placement Options for the Federal Protective Service (FPS)

Key criteria	Description
Mission, goals, and objectives	An agency's ability to function well is dependent upon having a clear mission, goals and objectives.
Responsibilities	In order for an agency to perform its duties, it needs to have clear responsibilities and the capacity to do them. Agency responsibilities generally stem from the objectives outlined in strategic plans and can take the form of Memoranda of Agreement or agency directives.
Organizational culture	Organizational culture includes the underlying beliefs, values, attitudes, and expectations that influence the behaviors of agency employees.
Information sharing and coordination	An agency's ability to share information related to national homeland security is necessary for the protection of federal facilities. Coordination refers to working with other agencies to provide this protection.
Mission support	Mission support includes training, financial management, human capital, and information technology (IT) to support the agency in fulfilling its mission.

Source: GAO. | GAO-19-605T

Placing FPS, in the DHS Management Directorate was not an option GAO assessed in its January 2019 report. However, GAO did assess the option of making FPS a "standalone" entity reporting directly to the Deputy Secretary of DHS. GAO found that this placement met the first criteria (**mission, goals, and objectives**) and the third criteria (**organizational culture**) but did not completely meet the other criteria. For example, FPS had joint responsibility for coordinating facility protection with other federal agencies. DHS did not have joint responsibility for coordinating facility protection with FPS. GAO recommended DHS fully evaluate placement options for FPS. DHS concurred, and officials stated they conducted an assessment. GAO has not yet received DHS's assessment of placement options.

GAO's prior work on implementing an organizational change provides valuable insights for making any transition regarding FPS. These insights include key questions to consider such as: "What are the goals of the consolidation?" "How have stakeholders been involved in the decision-making?" In addition, GAO has identified key practices for organizational transformation, practices that include ensuring that top leadership drives the transformation and establishing a communication strategy to create shared expectations, among others. These questions and practices could provide insights to DHS and FPS as they implement FPS's new placement.