

Highlights of GAO-20-129, a report to congressional requesters

# Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government annually spends over \$90 billion on IT. Despite this large investment, projects too frequently fail or incur cost overruns and schedule slippages while contributing little to mission-related outcomes. Effectively implementing workforce planning activities can facilitate the success of major acquisitions.

GAO was asked to conduct a government-wide review of IT workforce planning. The objective was to determine the extent to which federal agencies effectively implemented IT workforce planning practices. To do so, GAO compared IT workforce policies and related documentation from each of the 24 Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 agencies to activities from an IT workforce planning framework GAO issued. GAO rated each agency as having fully, substantially, partially, minimally, or not implemented for each activity. GAO supplemented its reviews of agency documentation by interviewing agency officials.

### What GAO Recommends

GAO is making recommendations to 18 of the 24 federal agencies to fully implement the eight key IT workforce planning activities. Of the 18 agencies, 13 agreed with the recommendations, one partially agreed, three neither agreed nor disagreed, and one disagreed with the findings and provided evidence which led to a modification to its recommendation, as discussed in this report. For all of the remaining recommendations, GAO continues to believe that they are all warranted.

View GAO-20-129. For more information, contact Carol C. Harris at (202) 512-4456 or HarrisCC@gao.gov

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# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

# Agencies Need to Fully Implement Key Workforce Planning Activities

## What GAO Found

Federal agencies varied widely in their efforts to implement key information technology (IT) workforce planning activities that are critical to ensuring that agencies have the staff they need to support their missions. Specifically, at least 23 of the 24 agencies GAO reviewed partially implemented, substantially implemented, or fully implemented three activities, including assessing gaps in competencies and staffing. However, most agencies minimally implemented or did not implement five other workforce planning activities (see figure).

Agencies' Overall Implementation of the Key Information Technology (IT) Workforce Planning

**Activities** Set the strategic direction for IT workforce planning Establish and maintain a workforce planning process 8 Develop competency and staffing requirements 8 Analyze the IT workforce to identify skill gaps Assess competency and staffing needs regularly 20 Assess gaps in competencies and staffing 12 Develop strategies and implement activities to address IT skill gaps Develop strategies and plans to address gaps in competencies and staffing 13 Implement activities that address gaps 15 Monitor and report progress in addressing IT skill gaps Monitor the agency's progress in addressing gaps 5 16 Report to agency leadership on progress in addressing gaps 3 18 18 Number of agencies implementing the activity **Fully implemented** Substantially implemented Partially implemented Minimally implemented Not implemented

Agencies provided various reasons for their limited progress in implementing workforce planning activities, including competing priorities (six agencies), and limited resources (three agencies). Until agencies make it a priority to fully implement all key IT workforce planning activities, they will likely have difficulty anticipating and responding to changing staffing needs and controlling human capital risks when developing, implementing, and operating critical IT systems.

Source: GAO analysis of agency information technology workforce planning policies and documentation. | GAO-20-129

\_ United States Government Accountability Office