Better Documentation and Reporting Needed on Procurement Center Representatives

What GAO Found

The Small Business Administration (SBA) does not maintain complete documentation to support data on the activities of procurement center representatives (PCR), which is information used to oversee PCRs and assess their performance. PCRs are responsible for helping small businesses gain access to federal contracting and subcontracting opportunities—for example, by making set-aside recommendations to federal agency contracting officers. SBA area offices generate a monthly report that summarizes data on PCRs’ activities and accomplishments, and SBA procedures require PCRs to maintain these reports and the supporting documentation. GAO found that they do not consistently do either. According to SBA officials, in some cases the supporting documentation, which PCRs store on their individual computers or in their offices, either was destroyed or was not maintained after PCRs left their positions. Officials told GAO that SBA recently implemented a new database and established a policy requiring the monthly reports to be maintained in the database. However, SBA has not established a centralized means of maintaining the supporting documentation. A central repository for PCRs to store their supporting documentation would provide greater assurance that the documentation is maintained as required and help SBA verify the accuracy of the data PCRs report on their activities.

SBA assigns PCRs to buying activities, divisions in federal agencies that purchase goods and services based on geographic coverage and other factors. Specifically, PCRs are assigned

- within one of six regional areas to ensure geographic coverage,
- at specific federal agencies, and
- at buying activities that have significant opportunities for small business contracting.

However, SBA has not submitted required reports to Congress on its rationale for assigning PCRs to cover buying activities. The Small Business Act, as amended, requires that SBA submit a report (1) identifying each area for which SBA has assigned a PCR, (2) explaining why SBA selected the areas for assignment, and (3) describing the activities performed by PCRs. SBA was required to submit the first report to Congress by December 26, 2010, and subsequent reports every 3 years thereafter. SBA officials told GAO they were not aware of the reporting requirement. As a result, Congress lacks the information these reports were intended to provide, information that could be useful for its oversight of PCRs.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that SBA (1) develop a central repository for PCRs to store the supporting documentation for the data they report on their activities and (2) ensure that it submits required reports to Congress on PCRs’ assignments and activities. SBA concurred with both recommendations.