

# GAO@100 Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-21-287](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

PTAP helps businesses pursue and perform under contracts with the Department of Defense (DOD), other federal agencies, state and local governments, and prime contractors. In 2020, the program operated 90 centers in 49 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico.

The House Report on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 includes a provision for GAO to review PTAP. This report examines, among other things, oversight of PTAP, how DLA plans to track and evaluate new training requirements for PTACs, and whether PTAC and SBDC services overlap.

GAO reviewed DOD policies and procedures for overseeing PTAP and new training requirements and analyzed performance data for 2018–2020. GAO also interviewed agencies responsible for overseeing PTAP, as well as SBA, the Association of PTACs, and a selection of six PTACs and three SBDCs (selected based on geography, funding amount, and co-location of the centers).

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations to DOD: to require PTACs to use DOD's template to track training, reach an agreement with the Association of PTACs to provide DLA with aggregate test results to measure training effectiveness, and develop a collaborative agreement with SBA. DOD concurred with all three recommendations. The Association of PTACs said its test could help in assessing training, but should not be the only metric. SBA had no comments.

View [GAO-21-287](#). For more information, contact William B. Shear at (202) 512-8678 or [shearw@gao.gov](mailto:shearw@gao.gov).

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## PROCUREMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

### Opportunities Exist for DOD to Enhance Training and Collaboration

## What GAO Found

The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) of the Department of Defense administers and oversees the Procurement Technical Assistance Program (PTAP), which funds Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC) that provide counseling and training to businesses interested in government contracting. DLA plans to improve its oversight of the program.

- DLA has an online system for PTACs to report their quarterly performance, but the system has not allowed DLA to accurately aggregate data. As a result, DLA has been unable to easily assess the extent to which PTACs have met their performance goals. As of March 2021, DLA was updating its system so that it correctly aggregates these data. The system fixes should allow DLA to readily assess program-wide performance and goal attainment.
- Before fiscal year 2021, DLA delegated responsibility for award administration and performance reviews of PTACs to the Defense Contract Management Agency and Office of Naval Research. But those two agencies conducted performance reviews for 2017–2019 infrequently and the scope of those reviews varied. DLA assumed most administrative functions delegated to the agencies in fiscal year 2021 and plans to conduct quarterly performance reviews that should allow grants officers to more consistently identify and address performance issues.

DLA implemented new PTAC training requirements in 2020 and added a template (a standardized format) to track completion of training requirements on its website in May 2020, but made its use optional. By requiring use of the template, DLA could more consistently receive the information it needs to assess compliance with the requirements. DLA required the Association of PTACs to develop a training curriculum for PTAC staff and an associated proficiency test. However, DLA does not have access to the test results, even in the aggregate, which would help it measure the effectiveness of the training curriculum in improving PTAC counseling.

PTACs and Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) both provide government contracting assistance to small businesses, and this overlap can have positive and negative effects. PTACs serve businesses of all sizes but are limited to clients pursuing government contracts. SBDCs assist only small businesses, but cover a range of topics, including government procurement. The overlap could create more ways for businesses to access help on government procurement, but also could lead to clients getting advice that is not as good as from PTAC counselors (because SBDC counselors are not required to take procurement training). DLA also identified instances of PTAC counselors providing counseling on SBDC-related topics, potential double-counting of services, and comingling of funds at PTACs that are co-located with SBDCs. A collaborative agreement between DLA and the Small Business Administration (SBA), which administers the SBDC program, could help address the overlap between PTACs and SBDCs, such as by better clarifying their respective responsibilities when providing assistance on government contracting.