

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-22-105031](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

VA's acquisition workforce acquires goods and services to support VA's mission. VA has faced challenges in acquisition management, such as in the areas of acquisition training and contracting officer workload. In 2019, GAO added VA acquisition management to its High-Risk List.

GAO was asked to examine VA's acquisition workforce. This report assesses (1) the extent to which VA has comprehensive data on its acquisition workforce, (2) VA's acquisition workforce's perspectives on performing its responsibilities, and (3) the extent to which VA leadership manages issues facing its acquisition workforce.

To conduct this work, GAO collected, reconciled, and analyzed data on the workforce for fiscal year 2021. GAO surveyed a statistical sample of contracting officers, their representatives, and program/project managers to identify issues reported by this workforce. The results of this survey are generalizable. GAO conducted follow-up discussions and interviews with VA's acquisition workforce staff and senior leadership.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making two recommendations: that VA (1) take steps to ensure accurate and up-to-date workforce data, and (2) document the HCAs' roles and responsibilities for managing the acquisition workforce. VA agreed with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-22-105031](#). For more information, contact Shelby S. Oakley at (202) 512-4841 or oakleys@gao.gov.

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VA ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT

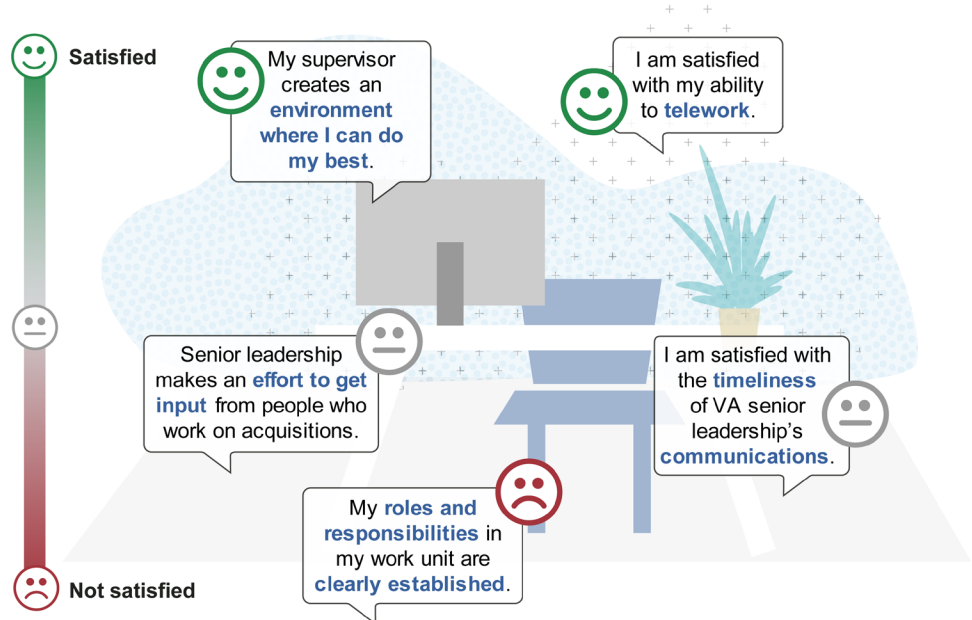
Actions Needed to Better Manage the Acquisition Workforce

What GAO Found

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) acquisition workforce plans, manages, and oversees a high volume of contracting to support its mission. However, VA does not have comprehensive data on this workforce. It does not have accurate counts of contracting officers, contracting officer representatives, and program/project managers; where they are located; and certifications. VA's insight into its workforce is hindered by inaccurate, outdated data that are manually updated. Taking steps to ensure the accuracy of its workforce data would better enable VA to make data-driven human capital decisions and address workforce issues.

VA's acquisition workforce provided perspectives on several aspects of their work experience as part of GAO's survey, including performance management, retention, telework, and workload. For example, a majority of respondents said they were generally satisfied with their ability to telework. However, a majority also reported that their roles and responsibilities are not clearly established.

Examples of Survey Results from GAO Survey of VA Acquisition Workforce



Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs acquisition workforce survey data. | GAO-22-105031

VA acquisition leadership acknowledged issues raised by the acquisition workforce, and has taken some steps to address them. For example, some Heads of Contracting Activity (HCA), who oversee individual contracting organizations, have asked managers to meet with their staff more frequently to discuss performance. VA acquisition leadership has delegated certain acquisition responsibilities to HCAs, but has not clearly defined their responsibilities in managing the workforce. The lack of documented roles and responsibilities for HCAs in managing the acquisition workforce poses an obstacle to effectively managing this workforce. Documenting these roles would better position VA to address the issues facing its acquisition workforce.