

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-22-105068](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts relies on IT systems to manage information to support its lines of business. These lines of business include case management, court administration, and probation and pretrial services.

GAO was asked to review the Office's IT management. This report evaluates, among other things, the extent to which the Office (1) implemented selected leading IT workforce planning and management practices, (2) implemented selected best practices for planning and managing IT projects, and (3) has a CIO with the authority to exercise enterprise control and oversight of the Office's IT workforce and project portfolio.

To do so, GAO assessed agency documentation against 12 selected leading workforce management practices within four topic areas. It also evaluated 23 best practices for managing the Office's three largest IT acquisition projects. In addition, GAO interviewed officials from the Office about the agency's management of its IT workforce and projects.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making 18 recommendations, including that the Office improve its IT workforce planning and management, enhance its IT project management practices, and establish a CIO position with enterprise-wide responsibility. The Office said it would evaluate the recommendations in light of its decentralized management model and determine what improvements to make. As discussed in the report, GAO maintains the recommendations are appropriate.

View [GAO-22-105068](#). For more information, contact Carol C. Harris at (202) 512-4456 or HarrisCC@gao.gov.

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U.S. COURTS

Action Needed to Improve IT Management and Establish a Chief Information Officer

What GAO Found

The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (the Office) is a judicial branch agency that, among other things, provides IT support services to federal courts. Regarding IT workforce management, the Office's implementation of 12 selected leading practices across four areas varied (see table). The Office substantially implemented practices in the performance management area, but was less successful in recruitment and hiring and training and development. For example, although the Office identified gaps in the cybersecurity skills of its IT workforce, it did not have a recruiting strategy for IT staff and did not establish a training program for its IT staff. Agency officials said that they did not establish such a training program because the agency's departments are to address training on an individual or project basis. Fully addressing practices in these areas would help ensure that it has the knowledge and skills to tackle pressing IT issues.

Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts' Implementation of 12 Selected Leading Practices Associated with Four Workforce Planning and Management Areas for Its IT Workforce

IT workforce area	Overall area rating	Number of practices fully implemented	Number of practices partially implemented	Number of practices not implemented
1. Strategic planning	Partially implemented	0	3	0
2. Recruitment and hiring	Minimally implemented	0	2	1
3. Training and development	Minimally implemented	0	2	1
4. Performance management	Substantially implemented	1	2	0
Total	—	1	9	2

Source: GAO analysis of data provided by Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts officials. | GAO-22-105068

The Office partially implemented most of the 23 selected project management best practices for its three largest IT projects: (1) the Judiciary Electronic Filing System, (2) JSPACE (an enterprise facilities management system), and (3) Probation and Pretrial Services Automated Case Tracking System 360. It fully implemented the majority of the supplier agreement management practices for each project. However, for project planning, while the Office had developed life cycle cost estimates and schedules for each project, none of the cost estimates were comprehensive and none of the schedules were well-constructed. Full implementation of these practices would help ensure that projects meet user needs and are delivered on schedule and within budget. However, insufficient oversight and incomplete IT project management guidance have hampered the projects and may have contributed to cost increases and schedule overruns.

Although a Chief Information Officer (CIO) with enterprise-wide authority could address IT oversight and guidance shortcomings, such a position does not exist at the Office. Instead, the Associate Director for the Department of Technology Services serves as the principal IT advisor to the Director. Agency officials acknowledged that the Associate Director does not have oversight of other Office units that separately manage their own IT workforces and projects. The judicial branch does not have a statutory requirement to establish a CIO. However, according to GAO's prior work at federal agencies, leading organizations adopt and use an enterprise-wide approach to managing IT under the leadership of a CIO.