What GAO Found

The CyberCorps® Scholarship for Service Program provides participating institutions of higher education with scholarships to students in approved IT and cybersecurity fields of study. As a condition of receiving scholarships, students are required to enter agreements to work in qualifying full-time jobs upon graduation for a period equal in length to their scholarship. See the figure below for how recipients progress through the program.

Scholarship Recipients Progress through Three Phases in the CyberCorps® Program

- **Scholarship Recipients Progress through Three Phases in the CyberCorps® Program**
  - **Academic Phase (Phase 1)**
    - Maintain full-time enrollment and be in good standing in an approved degree program.
    - Serve in an approved internship of at least 10 weeks.
    - Receive degree and search for postgraduate employment at an approved organization.

- **Service Commitment Phase (Phase 2)**
  - Work in an eligible position at an approved organization for a period equal to the length of the scholarship.
  - Submit employment verification form.

- **Monitoring Phase (Phase 3)**
  - Keep contact information current and respond to Scholarship for Service surveys.

Source: GAO analysis of Office of Personnel Management CyberCorps® Scholarship for Service program data; images: SeventyFourStock.adobe.com | GAO-22-105187

GAO identified 19 selected legal requirements on how National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) are to manage the program. GAO found that NSF and OPM fully complied with 13 of the requirements and partially complied with six. The partially complied with requirements include the following:

- Scholarship recipients are required to provide OPM with annual verifiable documentation of post-award employment. OPM officials acknowledge that recipients provide verifiable employment documentation and up-to-date contact information only at the beginning and end of the service commitment period, rather than annually as required by law.

- NSF is required to periodically report on program performance, including how long scholarship recipients stay in the positions they enter after graduation. OPM attempts to answer this by surveying recipients. However, recipient response rates ranging from 32 to 50 percent do not yield reliable and complete results.

GAO did not implement a risk management strategy and process to effectively identify, analyze, mitigate, and report on program risks and challenges. Absent such a strategy, NSF is not in a position to mitigate the adverse effects of risk events that do occur, which could negatively impact the accomplishment of program goals.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations to NSF and two to OPM to comply with legal requirements and implement a risk management strategy. Both agencies agreed with GAO’s recommendations.

View GAO-22-105187. For more information, contact David B. Hinchman at (214) 777-5719 or HinchmanD@gao.gov.