

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-22-105932](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

State depends on information systems to support its mission to advance the interests of the American people in foreign policy. State in turn relies on its IT personnel to maintain and protect these information systems.

GAO was asked to review State's IT workforce. This report examines to what extent State has (1) implemented recruitment and retention processes that are consistent with applicable leading practices, and (2) identified IT workforce recruitment and retention challenges and evaluated the effectiveness of its actions to address these challenges.

GAO analyzed recruitment and retention processes and leading practices, and documentation on IT workforce challenges and actions taken by State. GAO also interviewed officials at State headquarters and six overseas posts, which it selected based on factors such as the number of IT staff.

This is a public version of a sensitive report that was distributed on a limited basis. In response to State officials' request, GAO excluded from this public report (1) its evaluation of IT workforce vacancies and the impact of such vacancies, and (2) selected recruiting and retention challenges.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making 16 recommendations to improve State's IT workforce management. State concurred with 15 but did not concur with one on expanding the number of Foreign Service IT positions available to external applicants year-round. As discussed in the report, GAO believes the recommendation is still warranted.

View [GAO-22-105932](#). For more information, contact David Hinchman at (214) 777-5719 or HinchmanD@gao.gov; or Jason Bair at (202) 512-6881 or BairJ@gao.gov.

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STATE DEPARTMENT

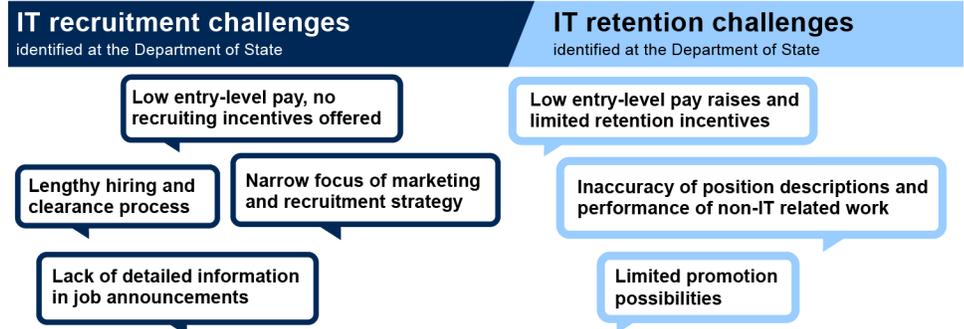
Additional Actions Needed to Address IT Workforce Challenges

What GAO Found

Implementing leading workforce practices is essential to successfully recruiting and retaining IT staff. Of 15 recruitment and retention practices GAO evaluated, the Department of State (State) has fully implemented one, partially implemented 11, and not implemented three. For example, State has collected training performance data, but has not recruited continuously year-round for most of its IT positions or regularly assessed staffing needs. If State increases its focus on recruitment and retention practices, the department can better compete with other employers for critical IT staff with key skills and abilities.

GAO identified 10 challenges related to State recruiting and retaining its IT workforce. GAO did not include three challenges in this report due to State's sensitivity concerns. The recruitment and retention challenges in State's IT workforce included a narrow marketing and recruiting focus, low pay and a limited number of incentives and promotions, a lengthy hiring and clearance process, and inaccurate position descriptions and insufficiently detailed announcements (see figure). For example, IT staff said State's marketing and recruitment strategies focused on reaching a small portion of the population. Further, IT staff noted the general public did not have an awareness of State's mission and the IT employment opportunities that were available.

IT Workforce Recruitment and Retention Challenges at the Department of State



Source: GAO analysis of Department of State data. | GAO-22-105932

Note: GAO did not include three challenges in this report due to State's sensitivity concerns.

State has acted to overcome some of these challenges, including raising entry-level pay for experienced IT applicants and expanding its incentive pay program. State's policy calls for access to timely and accurate data to set performance metrics and for a plan to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving goals. However, State does not have such IT workforce data needed to set performance metrics, nor does it have a plan to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving its goals. Consequently, State does not know if its actions are improving its recruitment and retention, and achieving its goals.