

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105239](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

In fiscal year 2021, DOD used three times as much energy as all other federal agencies combined. Executive Order 14057, *Catalyzing Clean Energy Industries and Jobs Through Federal Sustainability*, created the most recent federal sustainability goals on greenhouse gas emissions reductions, energy and water efficiencies, and waste reduction.

The Conference Report accompanying the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 includes a provision for GAO to report on the progress of DOD-wide and military service efforts toward achieving federal environmental sustainability goals and any challenges in achieving the goals. This report (1) describes DOD efforts to achieve the sustainability goals in Executive Order 14057, and (2) evaluates the extent to which DOD faces and has addressed any challenges achieving these goals.

To address the objectives, GAO reviewed statutory and regulatory requirements, analyzed DOD plans and guidance documents related to the order, and interviewed DOD officials about the department's approach and challenges to achieving these goals.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD conduct an assessment to identify the staffing resources needed to achieve the sustainability goals of Executive Order 14057 and ensure that they are incorporated in DOD's human capital planning efforts. DOD concurred with this recommendation.

View [GAO-23-105239](#). For more information, contact Elizabeth Field at (202) 512-2775 or [FieldE1@gao.gov](mailto:FieldE1@gao.gov).

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## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

### DOD Should Identify Workforce Capacity Needed to Achieve Goals

#### What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) has efforts underway to achieve sustainability goals associated with greenhouse gas emissions reductions, energy and water efficiencies, and waste reduction in the December 2021 Executive Order 14057. Specifically, DOD has (1) established an organizational structure that supports implementation of the order, (2) developed some implementation plans, (3) started dedicating staff to support implementation of the order, and (4) increased funding and updated guidance for key energy resilience and conservation installation projects. For example:

- The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Environment and Energy Resilience is hiring about 24 staff with expertise in engineering and finance, among other fields, to implement the new federal sustainability goals. This is part of its integrated approach to addressing installation resilience, climate adaptation and greenhouse gas emissions reductions, according to officials.
- The Defense Logistics Agency, Energy office plans to hire 20 to 28 staff with contracting expertise and with technical, data, and financial analysis expertise to support military installations' energy procurement.

#### Example of Carbon Pollution-Free On-Site Energy Generation, Photovoltaic (solar) Energy Panels, Naval Base San Diego, Ca.



Source: GAO. | GAO-23-105239

However, DOD officials identified a workforce capacity gap—not having sufficient staff with the necessary skills and expertise—as their most immediate challenge in implementing Executive Order 14057. The goals of Executive Order 14057 are at a different scale and pace than past federal sustainability efforts. For example, the order calls for more greenhouse gas emissions reductions over a shorter period of time than did certain other recent federal sustainability executive orders. GAO found that, while some parts of DOD have been increasing hiring to implement the order, the department has not yet conducted an assessment to identify the staff it needs to fully implement the order across the department, including the military services. With a clearer picture of the staffing resources needed to address its workforce capacity gap, DOD would be better positioned to address those gaps through its human capital planning efforts and to communicate its needs to Congress as part of the annual budget process.