



Highlights of [GAO-10-413](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

GAO and others have shown that successful organizations use strategic workforce planning to help meet present and future mission requirements. Although agency approaches to strategic workforce planning can vary depending on needs and mission, GAO and the Office of Personnel Management have identified six leading principles that workforce planning should address. The Appropriations Committees directed GAO to review workforce planning at the Department of the Interior (Interior), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service. GAO examined (1) workforce planning processes used at each agency, (2) the extent to which these processes incorporate the six principles, and (3) how, if at all, the agencies link workforce planning with the annual budget allocation processes. GAO reviewed agencies' workforce plans, strategic plans, and budget documents and interviewed human resources, planning, and budget officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends, among other things, that the agencies establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate their workforce planning efforts. In commenting on a draft of this report, EPA generally agreed with the recommendations but proposed a modification, and the Forest Service generally agreed with the report's findings and conclusions. Interior provided a technical comment.

View [GAO-10-413](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Anu K. Mittal at (202) 512-3841 or mittala@gao.gov, or John B. Stephenson at (202) 512-3841 or stephensonj@gao.gov.

WORKFORCE PLANNING

Interior, EPA, and the Forest Service Should Strengthen Linkages to Their Strategic Plans and Improve Evaluation

What GAO Found

Interior, EPA, and the Forest Service vary in their approaches to workforce planning. Interior's workforce planning occurs at its eight bureaus, which use departmental guidance to develop their own workforce plans in a generally consistent format. EPA issued an agencywide plan in 2006 that is currently being updated, and the Forest Service has issued annual agencywide workforce plans since 2007.

The agencies vary in the extent to which they incorporate the six leading workforce planning principles, but they generally do not link their workforce plans and their strategic plans or monitor and evaluate their workforce planning efforts. The six leading principles and agency actions are as follows:

- *Align workforce planning with strategic planning and budget formulation.* The agencies generally do not align their workforce and strategic plans and differ in whether they considered their workforce plans when formulating their budgets.
- *Involve managers, employees, and other stakeholders in planning.* The agencies varied in the extent to which they involved top managers and others in developing workforce plans.
- *Identify critical occupations, skills, and competencies and analyze workforce gaps.* The agencies have taken some steps to identify mission-critical occupations and competencies, which form the basis for much of the agencies' workforce planning.
- *Develop strategies to address workforce gaps.* The agencies have identified some strategies to address certain workforce gaps.
- *Build capacity to support workforce strategies.* The agencies varied in the actions they have taken to support workforce planning efforts through the effective use of human capital flexibilities, such as recruitment and retention incentives.
- *Monitor and evaluate progress.* The agencies generally have not monitored and evaluated the results of their workforce planning efforts.

The agencies do not directly link their workforce planning and budget allocation processes. At Interior, although unit and program officials in some bureaus use workforce plans to distribute staff geographically, the bureaus do not track how program officials use workforce plans to allocate funds. EPA's process for allocating resources involves making annual incremental adjustments to prior year allocations and does not directly link to workforce plans. The Forest Service's budget allocation guidance does not mention workforce planning directly. However, according to Forest Service executive leaders, the agency takes workforce planning information into consideration at the unit and program levels during budget formulation and again during the annual budget allocation process.