

Highlights of [GAO-06-538](#), a report to congressional addressees

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

DOD'S EEO Pilot Program Under Way, but Improvements Needed to DOD'S Evaluation Plan

Why GAO Did This Study

Delays in processing of equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaints have been a long-standing concern. In 2000, as part of the Department of Defense's (DOD) fiscal year 2001 authorization act, Congress authorized DOD to carry out a 3-year pilot program for improving processes to resolve complaints by civilian DOD employees by testing procedures that would reduce EEO complaint processing times and eliminate redundancy, among other things. The act requires two reports from GAO—90 days after the first and last fiscal years of the pilot program's operation. In December 2005 and January 2006, we provided briefings on our initial review of the pilot program. This report (1) describes key features and status of the three programs and (2) assesses DOD's plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the pilot program.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD develop a sound evaluation plan that includes key evaluation features to accurately and reliably assess the pilot programs' results.

DOD generally concurred with the recommendation and stated that it would incorporate our recommended key features into the evaluation plan as appropriate.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-538.

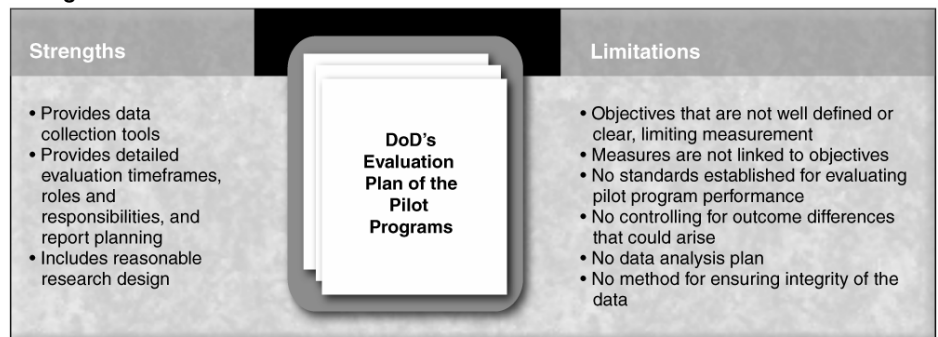
To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact George H. Stalcup at (202) 512-9490 or Stalcupg@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

In August 2004, the Secretary of Defense authorized 2-year programs in (1) Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), (2) the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA), and (3) components of the U.S. Air Force (USAF) which became operational in fiscal year 2005. While the legislation stated that the pilot program is exempt from procedural requirements of current Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations, to a large extent two of the three programs were designed and are operating within existing EEOC requirements, with a specific emphasis on alternative dispute resolution (ADR) as encouraged in DOD's memo soliciting pilot program proposals. ADR techniques include, but are not limited to, conciliation, facilitation, mediation, or arbitration and usually involve the intervention or facilitation by a neutral third party. After the first year, program officials reported low case activity and stated that they plan to request approval from the Secretary to continue their respective programs for a third year. To carry out the programs, officials used similar strategies—outreach to inform eligible staff about the pilot programs, staff training, and the use of electronic data collection—but implemented them differently.

Our assessment of DOD's evaluation plan for the pilot program found both strengths and limitations (see figure below). A sound evaluation plan contains such features as criteria for determining program performance and measures that are directly linked to program objectives. Such key features increase the likelihood that the evaluation will yield sound results, thereby supporting effective program and policy decisions. Lacking these key features, DOD is limited in its ability to conduct an accurate and reliable assessment of the program's results, and Congress is limited in its ability to determine whether features of the overall program have governmentwide applicability. Officials from DOD's pilot program oversight entities have acknowledged shortcomings and have indicated a willingness to modify the plan.

Strengths and Limitations of DOD's Evaluation Plan



Source: GAO.