



Highlights of [GAO-05-888](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

Training can play a key role in helping the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) successfully address the challenge of transformation and cultural change and help ensure that its workforce possesses the knowledge and skills needed to effectively respond to current and future threats. This report discusses (1) how DHS is addressing or planning to address departmentwide training and the related challenges it is encountering; (2) examples of how DHS training practices, specifically those related to planning and evaluation, reflect strategic practices; and (3) examples of how DHS uses training to foster transformation and cultural change.

What GAO Recommends

We recommend that the Secretary of Homeland Security (1) adopt additional good planning practices, specifically, creating a clearer crosswalk between training goals and DHS's organizational and human capital strategic goals and developing appropriate performance measures and targets; (2) specify authority/accountability relationships between CHCO and components on training; (3) ensure the department and components develop detailed training implementation plans; and (4) when setting funding priorities, give appropriate attention to supporting training councils and groups. DHS generally agreed with the report's recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-888.

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

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Strategic Management of Training Important for Successful Transformation

What GAO Found

DHS has taken several positive steps toward establishing an effective departmentwide approach to training, yet significant challenges remain.

Progress made in addressing departmentwide training issues, but efforts are still in the early stages and face several challenges.

Actions taken by DHS include issuing its first training strategic plan in July 2005, establishing training councils and groups to increase communication across components, and directly providing training for specific departmentwide needs. However, several challenges may impede DHS from achieving its departmental training goals. First, the sharing of training information across components is made more difficult by the lack of common or compatible information management systems and a commonly understood training terminology. Second, authority and accountability relationships between the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer and organizational components are not sufficiently clear. Third, DHS's planning may be insufficiently detailed to ensure effective and coordinated implementation of departmentwide training efforts. Finally, according to training officials, DHS lacks resources needed to implement its departmental training strategy.

Examples of planning and evaluation of training demonstrate some elements of strategic practice.

Specific training practices at both the component and departmental levels may provide useful models or insights to help others in DHS adopt a more strategic approach to training. We found that some components of DHS apply these practices, while others do not. For example, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) aligns training priorities with strategic goals through planning and budgeting processes. In the area of evaluation, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center obtains feedback from both the trainee and the trainee's job supervisor to inform training program designers in order to make improvements to the program curriculum.

Training has been used to help DHS's workforce as it undergoes transformation and cultural change.

The creation of DHS from different legacy organizations, each with its own distinct culture, has resulted in significant cultural and transformation challenges for the department. At the departmental level, one of the ways DHS is addressing these challenges is by encouraging the transformation to a shared performance-based culture through the implementation of its new human capital management system, MAX^{HR}. DHS considers training to be critical to effectively implementing this initiative and defining its culture. Toward that end, the department is providing a wide range of training, including programs targeted to executives, managers, and supervisors. For example, at the component level, CBP has developed cross-training to equip employees with the knowledge needed to integrate inspection functions once carried out by three different types of inspectors at three separate agencies.