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Comptroller General  
of the United States

**Accessible Version**

April 27, 2020

The Honorable Michael Rigas  
Acting Director  
Office of Personnel Management  
1900 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20415-1000

**Priority Open Recommendations: Office of Personnel Management**

Dear Mr. Rigas:

The purpose of this letter is to provide an update on the overall status of the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) implementation of GAO's recommendations and to call your personal attention to areas where open recommendations should be given high priority.<sup>1</sup> In November 2019, we reported that on a government-wide basis 77 percent of our recommendations made 4 years ago were implemented.<sup>2</sup> OPM's recommendation implementation rate was about 75 percent. As of April 2020, OPM had 84 open recommendations. Fully implementing these open recommendations could significantly improve OPM's operations.

Since our last letter of April 2019, OPM has implemented three of our 18 open priority recommendations. In doing so, OPM developed a common set of metrics as part of an analytical tool to identify mission critical occupations. In addition, OPM took actions to strengthen controls over its information technology (IT) systems by updating a system security plan to address controls specific to all high-impact systems. OPM also has identified and implemented enterprise solutions to address government-wide human capital challenges, which can enable the federal government to be more responsive in managing priorities and future federal workforce needs.

OPM has 15 priority recommendations remaining from those we identified in our 2019 letter. We ask your continued attention to these remaining recommendations. We are adding three new recommendations as priorities this year related to strengthening IT security and management. This brings the total number of priority recommendations to 18. In a number of areas, OPM has taken promising steps in response to these recommendations, although additional actions are needed. (See enclosure for the list of these recommendations.)

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<sup>1</sup>Priority recommendations are those that GAO believes warrant priority attention from heads of key departments or agencies. They are highlighted because, upon implementation, they may significantly improve government operation, for example, by realizing large dollar savings; eliminating mismanagement, fraud, and abuse; or making progress toward addressing a high-risk or duplication issue.

<sup>2</sup>GAO, *Performance and Accountability Report Fiscal Year 2019*, [GAO-20-1SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 19, 2019).

The 18 priority recommendations fall into the following six areas.

### **Addressing mission critical skills gaps.**

Because of challenges the federal government has faced in addressing critical skills gaps and ensuring agencies hire the employees needed to meet their respective missions, [strategic human capital management](#) has been on GAO's [High-Risk List](#) since 2001.<sup>3</sup> Mission critical skills gaps are a factor in 16 of 35 high-risk areas. OPM plays a critical leadership role in addressing this issue, with a priority recommendation centered on the high-risk area of strategic human capital management.

Specifically, in January 2015, we recommended that OPM, in conjunction with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council, and other federal agencies should establish a schedule and process for collecting government-wide staffing and competency data. OPM has taken some actions to address this recommendation, by collecting and sharing lessons learned related to closing skills gaps. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to collect and store a consistent set of staffing and competency data, which would allow it to perform valuable government-wide analyses to predict and address skills gaps in occupations affecting multiple agencies.

### **Improving the federal classification system.**

Almost since the General Schedule (GS) system was established in 1949, questions have been raised about its ability to keep pace with the evolving nature of government work. Our July 2014 report included a recommendation that OPM—working through the CHCO Council and other stakeholders—use prior studies and lessons learned from demonstration projects and alternative systems to examine ways to make the GS system's design and implementation more consistent with the attributes of a modern, effective classification system. According to OPM, it has made incremental improvements to the classification system. We continue to believe that OPM should fully implement the recommendation.

### **Making hiring and special pay authorities more effective.**

To ensure agencies have the talent they need to meet their missions, federal agencies must have a hiring process that is applicant-friendly and flexible while meeting policy requirements, such as hiring on the basis of merit. To further help their efforts to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel, federal agencies can provide additional payments—known as special payments—to current employees and offer additional compensation to prospective employees in certain circumstances.

OPM has taken actions in recent weeks to provide guidance to agencies on various human capital management issues in response to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic.<sup>4</sup> This guidance covers both new and existing authorities and flexibilities, including those related to certain hiring authorities as well as the use of recruitment, relocation, and retention

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<sup>3</sup>GAO, *High-Risk Series: Substantial Efforts Needed to Achieve Greater Progress on High-Risk Areas*, [GAO-19-157SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 6, 2019). See pages 75-77 for Strategic Human Capital Management.

<sup>4</sup>This guidance is available at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/covid-19/>. Last accessed April 16, 2020.

incentives. Implementing two priority recommendations could help OPM and agencies better understand and improve their use of hiring and special payment authorities.

In August 2016, we recommended that OPM, along with the CHCO Council, expand access to specific hiring authorities found to be highly efficient and effective and eliminate those found to be less effective. OPM has made some progress in this area including by proposing ways to improve hiring by using flexibilities that exist within current authority. However, to fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to prioritize and follow through on its planned actions to streamline hiring authorities and develop legislative proposals to implement these changes, as appropriate.

Our December 2017 report included a recommendation that OPM, together with the CHCO Council, track government-wide data to establish a baseline and analyze the extent to which special pay authorities are effective in improving employee recruitment and retention and determine what potential changes may be needed to improve the authorities' effectiveness. Subsequently, OPM has collected data from agencies on their use of special pay authorities, and recommendations to improve their effectiveness. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to work with the CHCO Council to analyze the data it collected from agencies and determine the extent to which special pay authorities are effective.

#### **Improving Enterprise Human Resource Integration (EHRI) payroll data.**

OPM is responsible for supporting federal agencies' human capital management activities, which includes ensuring that agencies have the data needed to make staffing and resource decisions to support their missions. The EHRI system is OPM's primary data warehouse to support these efforts. In our October 2016 report, we made two recommendations to OPM for it to (1) improve the availability of EHRI data for other agencies and researchers and (2) consistently monitor and address system-generated error and edit check reports.

In response to recent statutory requirements, OPM told us in January 2020 that it had taken some steps, such as establishing a data governance process, to make more of its data publicly available.<sup>5</sup> To fully implement these two recommendations, OPM needs to further improve the availability of EHRI data and take timely action on system-generated edit checks to improve the quality of EHRI data.

#### **Addressing employee misconduct and improving performance management.**

Misconduct is generally considered an action by an employee that impedes the efficiency of the agency's service or mission. OPM has a role in ensuring that agencies have the tools and guidance they need to effectively address misconduct and maximize the productivity of their workforces. In our July 2018 report, we made two recommendations to OPM for it to (1) identify and disseminate promising practices and lessons learned to help agencies address misconduct and (2) provide guidance on training supervisors and human resources staff on addressing misconduct.

OPM has taken actions towards addressing these recommendations, including issuing government-wide guidance and publishing a proposed rule, that among other things, cover

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<sup>5</sup>Open, Public, Electronic and Necessary (OPEN) Government Data Act, title II of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, Pub. L. No. 115-435, 132 Stat. 5529, 5534 (2019).

misconduct-related topics.<sup>6</sup> To fully implement these two recommendations, OPM needs to (1) build on its existing efforts by identifying and disseminating additional promising practices, such as those from other agencies, and (2) follow through on its plans to help agencies improve the training they provide to supervisors, managers, and human resources staff on addressing misconduct.

In our November 2018 report, we made three recommendations related to improving performance management. Managing employee performance has been a long-standing government-wide issue and the subject of numerous reforms since the beginning of the modern civil service. Without effective performance management, agencies risk losing the skills of top talent and missing the opportunity to effectively address increasingly complex and evolving mission challenges.

OPM informed us in January 2020 that it had taken steps to implement these three recommendations, in part, by establishing and documenting a process to regularly update a performance management website with available guidance and resources. To fully address these recommendations, OPM needs to implement that process, create a mechanism for agencies to share lessons learned, and share innovations in performance management with agencies.

### **Strengthening IT security and management.**

OPM collects and maintains personal information on millions of individuals, including sensitive security clearance data. Protecting this sensitive information is imperative. We have seven priority recommendations in this area.

Five of these recommendations relate to strengthening IT security.

- In a May 2016 report, two of the recommendations we made to OPM were to: (1) provide and track training for individuals with significant security responsibilities, and (2) ensure that security control assessments specific to high-impact systems are comprehensive. According to information provided in January 2020, OPM has taken initial steps to address the first recommendation, and stated—but did not provide sufficient materials to corroborate—that it has taken actions to address the second. To fully implement these recommendations, OPM needs to define and complete its planned corrective actions on training, and provide documentation that would allow us to verify that it has conducted reviews of completed security control assessments.
- In an August 2017 report, we made additional IT security-related recommendations to OPM, including to: (1) more quickly validate actions taken on recommendations from the U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT), and (2) develop and implement role-based training requirements for staff who use Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation (CDM) tools.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>OPM, *Guidance on Progressive Discipline and Tables of Penalties* (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 10, 2019) and *Probation on Initial Appointment to a Competitive Position, Performance-Based Reductions in Grade and Removal Actions and Adverse Actions*, 84 Fed. Reg. 48794 (Sept. 17, 2019).

<sup>7</sup>The Department of Homeland Security established the U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team to, among other things, coordinate the nation's efforts to prepare for, prevent, and respond to cyber threats to systems and communications networks.

According to OPM, the agency has taken some actions in response to these recommendations, such as tracking actions to address the two US-CERT recommendations that remain open. However, it told us it does not believe the required actions will be completed in the near future. To fully implement these recommendations, OPM needs to validate the effectiveness of actions taken for the US-CERT recommendations and issue role-based training requirements for individuals who use CDM tools.

- In July 2019, we recommended that OPM establish a process for conducting an organization-wide cybersecurity risk assessment. OPM plans to establish this process by August 2020 as part of an Enterprise Risk Management project. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to ensure that this process aggregates information from across its organization to help the agency consider the totality of risk derived from the operation and use of its information systems.

The final two recommendations in this area deal with improving IT management.

- In May 2019, we recommended that OPM develop, document, and implement a Retirement Services IT modernization plan for initial project phases that is consistent with key aspects of IT project management. In December 2019, OPM stated that it was evaluating what corrective actions it plans to take. To implement the recommendation, OPM needs to create and then implement an IT modernization plan.
- Finally, in October 2019, we recommended that OPM ensure it fully implements each of eight key IT workforce planning activities. Doing so would provide OPM greater assurance that it has the IT staff with the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to support its mission and goals. In December 2019, OPM stated that it has partnered with the General Services Administration's IT Modernization Center of Excellence to assess the current state of its IT workforce planning activities, but has not yet implemented any of the eight key planning activities we recommended.

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In March 2019 we issued our biennial update to our high-risk program, which identifies government operations with vulnerabilities to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement or the need for transformation to address economy, efficiency, or effectiveness challenges.<sup>8</sup> Our [High Risk List](#) has served to identify and help resolve serious weaknesses in areas that involve substantial resources and provide critical service to the public.

One of our high-risk areas, [strategic human capital management](#), centers directly on OPM. Several other government-wide high-risk areas also have direct implications for OPM and its operations. These include (1) the [government-wide personnel security clearance process](#), (2) [ensuring cybersecurity of the nation](#), and (3) [improving management of IT acquisitions and operations](#).<sup>9</sup> We urge your attention to these OPM and government-wide high-risk issues as

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<sup>8</sup>GAO-19-157SP.

<sup>9</sup>GAO-19-157SP. See pages 75-77 for Strategic Human Capital Management, pages 170-177 for Government-wide Personnel Security Clearance Process, pages 178-184 for Ensuring the Cybersecurity of the Nation, and pages 123-127 for Improving the Management of IT Acquisitions and Operations.

they relate to OPM. Progress on high-risk issues has been possible through the concerted actions and efforts of Congress, OMB, and the leadership and staff in agencies, including OPM.

Copies of this report are being sent to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and to appropriate congressional committees, including the Committees on Appropriations, Budget, and Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States Senate; and the Committees on Appropriations, Budget, and Oversight and Reform, House of Representatives. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

I appreciate OPM's continued commitment to these important issues. If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the issues outlined in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me or Michelle Rosenberg, Acting Director, Strategic Issues at 202-512-6806 or [RosenbergM@gao.gov](mailto:RosenbergM@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report.

Our teams coordinated with your staff to obtain updates on the priority recommendations in January 2020, and in some cases, your staff subsequently provided further updates.<sup>10</sup> We will continue to coordinate with your staff on all of the 84 open recommendations, as well as those additional recommendations in the high-risk areas for which OPM has a leading role. Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely yours,



Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General  
of the United States

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Russell Vought, Acting Director, OMB

The Honorable Kenneth Zawodny Jr., Associate Director, Retirement Services, OPM

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<sup>10</sup>According to the *Fiscal Year 2021 Congressional Justification* published jointly by the General Services Administration and OPM in February 2020, OPM was still working at that time to meet reporting requirements in the Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act (GAO-IG Act), Pub. L. No. 115-414, 132 Stat. 5430 (2019). The GAO-IG Act requires federal agencies, including OPM, to include a report in their annual budget justifications that, among other things, describes the agency's implementation status of each of GAO's recommendations to it that has been designated as "open" or "closed, unimplemented" for a period of at least one year prior to the submission of the budget justification. As of April 2020, OPM had not yet publicly published that report nor provided us with a copy.

## Enclosure -- Priority Open Recommendations to OPM

### **Addressing Mission Critical Skills Gaps.**

Federal Workforce: OPM and Agencies Need to Strengthen Efforts to Identify and Close Mission-Critical Skills Gaps. [GAO-15-223](#). Washington, D.C.: January 30, 2015.

#### **Recommendations:**

The Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council—should establish a schedule specifying when OPM will modify its Enterprise Human Resources Integration (EHRI) database to capture staffing data that it currently collects from agencies through its annual workforce data reporting process.

#### **Action needed:**

OPM did not concur with this recommendation. However, OPM has taken actions towards addressing it by using the EHRI database, in combination with other sources, to collect workforce data and related information to assist agencies in their efforts to identify skills gaps. However, to fully address this recommendation, OPM needs to collect and store a consistent set of staffing and competency data, which would allow it to perform valuable government-wide analyses to predict and address skills gaps in occupations affecting multiple agencies.

**High-risk area:** [Strategic Human Capital Management](#)

**Director:** Michelle Rosenberg

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### **Improving the Federal Classification System**

Human Capital: OPM Needs to Improve the Design, Management, and Oversight of the Federal Classification System. [GAO-14-677](#). Washington, D.C.: July 31, 2014.

**Recommendation:** The Director of OPM—working through the CHCO Council and key stakeholders such as the office of Management and Budget (OMB), unions, and others—should use prior studies and lessons learned from demonstration projects and alternative systems to examine ways to make the General Schedule (GS) system’s design and implementation more consistent with the attributes of a modern, effective classification system. To the extent warranted, OPM should develop a legislative proposal for consideration.

**Action needed:** Although OPM originally partially agreed with this recommendation, in January 2020, it reported that it concurred with the recommendation. Since we made this recommendation, OPM has taken various actions towards addressing it, including studying challenges agencies face in implementing OPM-issued classification standards, and reviewing and updating individual occupational series. However, to fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to work with key stakeholders to complete its reviews and, if warranted, develop a legislative proposal to revise the design and implementation of the GS system.

**High-risk area:** [Strategic Human Capital Management](#)

**Director:** Michelle Rosenberg

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**Making Hiring and Special Pay Authorities More Effective**

*Federal Hiring: OPM Needs to Improve Management and Oversight of Hiring Authorities.* [GAO-16-521](#). Washington, D.C: August 2, 2016.

**Recommendation:** To help strengthen the government's ability to compete in the labor market for top talent and to improve the federal hiring process, the Director of OPM, in conjunction with the CHCO Council, should use available information to determine whether opportunities exist to refine, consolidate, eliminate, or expand agency-specific authorities to other agencies and implement changes where OPM is authorized, including seeking presidential authorization (as necessary) to do so. In cases where legislation would be necessary to implement changes, OPM should work with the CHCO Council to develop legislative proposals.

**Action needed:** OPM agreed with the recommendation. During the past few years, OPM has taken several actions aimed at addressing it, including activities aimed at modernizing federal hiring practices as part of the President's Management Agenda. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to prioritize and follow through on its planned actions to streamline hiring authorities and, as appropriate, develop legislative proposals in consultation with the CHCO Council.

**High-risk area:** [Strategic Human Capital Management](#)

**Director:** Michelle Rosenberg

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*Federal Pay: Opportunities Exist to Enhance Strategic Use of Special Payments.* [GAO-18-91](#). Washington, D.C.: December 7, 2017.

**Recommendation:** The Director of OPM, together with the CHCO Council, should track government-wide data to establish a baseline and analyze the extent to which the seven Title 5 special payment authorities are effective in improving employee recruitment and retention, and determine what potential changes may be needed to improve the seven authorities' effectiveness.

**Action needed:** OPM partially agreed with the recommendation, and has taken steps to collect relevant data and agency recommendations to improve the effectiveness of special payment authorities. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to work with the CHCO Council to analyze changes in government-wide data, determine the extent to which the seven special payment authorities are effective, and what changes are needed to improve their effectiveness.

**High-risk area:** [Strategic Human Capital Management](#)

**Director:** Yvonne D. Jones



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### **Improving Enterprise Human Resource Integration (EHRI) Payroll Data**

Federal Human Resources Data: OPM Should Improve the Availability and Reliability of Payroll Data to Support Accountability and Workforce Analytics. [GAO-17-127](#). Washington, D.C.: October 7, 2016.

**Recommendation:** The Director of OPM should take the following two actions:

1. Improve the availability of the EHRI payroll data—for example, by preparing the data for analytics, making them available through online tools such as FedScope, and including them among the EHRI data sources on the OPM website and Data.gov.
2. Consistently monitor system-generated error and edit check reports and ensure that timely action is taken to address identified issues.

#### **Action needed:**

OPM agreed with both recommendations. For the first recommendation, OPM has taken steps to establish a data governance process that could inform actions to making payroll data available, but has not yet established a plan or timeframes for doing so. To fully address the recommendation, OPM needs to take steps to further improve the availability of payroll data.

To implement the second recommendation, OPM needs to follow up with shared services centers and agencies regarding issues identified with the payroll data they submit to EHRI.

**Director:** Rebecca Shea

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### **Addressing Employee Misconduct and Improving Performance Management**

Federal Employee Misconduct: Actions Needed to Ensure Agencies Have Tools to Effectively Address Misconduct. [GAO-18-48](#). Washington, D.C.: July 16, 2018.

**Recommendation:** The Director of OPM, after consultation with the CHCO Council, should take the following two actions:

1. Broadly disseminate to agencies the promising practices and lessons learned, such as those described in this report, as well as work with agencies through such vehicles as the CHCO Council, to identify any additional practices.
2. Provide guidance to agencies to enhance the training received by managers/supervisors and human capital staff to ensure that they have the guidance and technical assistance they need to effectively address misconduct and maximize the productivity of their workforces.

**Action needed:** OPM partially agreed with both of these recommendations. In January 2020, OPM shared various actions it had taken related to addressing the first recommendation. These actions included collecting disciplinary information from agencies; and issuing guidance in October 2019, and publishing a proposed rule in September 2019, that, among other things

cover misconduct-related topics. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to build on its existing efforts by identifying and disseminating additional promising practices, such as those from other agencies.

For the second recommendation, OPM stated in January 2020 that it was reviewing, analyzing, and adjudicating comments received on the rule it proposed in September 2019 to prepare a final rule later in 2020. OPM stated it would work with the CHCO Council to educate supervisors on the final rule after it is published. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs follow through on its plans to help agencies improve the training they provide to supervisors, managers, and human resources staff on addressing misconduct.

**High-risk area:** [Strategic Human Capital Management](#)

**Director:** Michelle Rosenberg

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*Federal Workforce: Opportunities Exist for OPM to Further Innovation in Performance Management.* [GAO-19-35](#), Washington, D.C.: November 20, 2018.

**Recommendation:** The Director of OPM, in consultation with the CHCO Council, should take the following three actions:

1. Establish and implement a process for regularly updating the performance management website to include all available guidance and resources, making this information easily accessible, and providing links to other related websites.
2. Develop and implement a mechanism for agencies to routinely and independently share promising practices and lessons learned, such as through allowing agencies to post such information on OPM's Performance Management portal.
3. Develop a strategic approach for identifying and sharing emerging research and innovations in performance management.

**Action needed:** OPM agreed with these recommendations. As of January 2020, OPM stated that it is in the process of implementing all three recommendations. For example, it stated it is establishing a process, which will be documented via standard operating procedures, to regularly update the performance management website with available guidance and resources.

To fully address these three recommendations, OPM needs to finalize its process to regularly update its performance management website with all available guidance and resources. It also needs to fully implement a mechanism for agencies to share lessons learned, and develop a strategic approach for identifying and sharing emerging research and innovations in performance management.

**High-risk area:** [Strategic Human Capital Management](#)

**Director:** Michelle Rosenberg

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## Strengthening Information Technology (IT) Security and Management

*Information Security: Agencies Need to Improve Controls over Selected High-Impact Systems.* [GAO-16-501](#). Washington, D.C.: May 18, 2016.

**Recommendation:** The Acting Director of OPM should take the following two actions:

1. Provide and track specialized training for all individuals, including contractors, who have significant security responsibilities.
2. Re-evaluate security control assessments to ensure that they comprehensively test technical controls.

**Action needed:** OPM partially agreed with the first recommendation. In January 2020, OPM stated that it had completed some actions, but additional steps were needed, such as coordinating across programs to develop further system requirements and capabilities for providing and tracking specialized training. OPM stated it anticipated needing an additional 2 to 3 years to complete these actions. To fully implement the recommendation, OPM needs to complete its efforts to provide and track training for individuals with significant security responsibilities.

Although, OPM disagreed with the second recommendation, in January 2020, OPM stated it had gathered evidence of its monitoring efforts to demonstrate that security controls are regularly tested. However, as of March 2020, OPM had not yet provided us with sufficient materials to corroborate its statement.

Because of the importance of ensuring personally identifiable information is protected and our national IT systems are secure, we maintain that OPM should fully address this recommendation. To do so, OPM needs to provide us with documentation so that we can independently verify that it has updated security assessments to include required technical controls.

**High-risk area:** [Ensuring the Cybersecurity of the Nation](#)

**Director:** Vijay A. D'Souza

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*Information Security: OPM Has Improved Controls, but Further Efforts Are Needed.* [GAO-17-614](#). Washington, D.C.: August 3, 2017.

**Recommendation:** The Acting Director of OPM should take the following two actions:

1. Improve the timeliness of validating evidence associated with actions taken to address the United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT) recommendations.
2. Develop and implement role-based training requirements for staff using continuous diagnostics and mitigation tools.

**Action needed:** OPM partially agreed with the first recommendation. In January 2020, OPM stated it is tracking the remaining two open US-CERT recommendations in its remedial action management system. However, OPM does not expect that it would be able to complete, and

validate evidence associated with, the required actions to fully implement those recommendations in the near-term. To fully implement the recommendation, OPM needs to promptly validate the effectiveness of the actions taken to implement the US-CERT recommendations.

OPM agreed with the second recommendation. In January 2020, OPM stated that it has completed some actions to implement the recommendation. However, OPM indicated additional actions that it needed to take including coordinating across programs to develop further system requirements and capabilities for providing and tracking specialized training for staff using continuous diagnostics and mitigation tools. OPM told us it anticipates needing an additional 2 to 3 years to complete these actions. To fully implement the recommendation, OPM needs to issue role-based training requirements for individuals who configure and maintain the deployed continuous diagnostics and mitigation tools.

**High-risk area:** [Ensuring the Cybersecurity of the Nation](#)

**Director:** Vijay A. D'Souza

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*Cybersecurity: Agencies Need to Fully Establish Risk Management Programs and Address Challenges.* [GAO-19-384](#). Washington, D.C.: July 25, 2019.

**Recommendation:** The Director of OPM should establish a process for conducting an organization-wide cybersecurity risk assessment.

**Action Needed:** OPM agreed with this recommendation. As of January 2020, the agency stated that it plans to formalize its process for conducting an organization-wide cybersecurity risk assessment by August 2020 as part of an Enterprise Risk Management project. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to ensure that its process aggregates information from across its organization to help the agency consider the totality of risk derived from the operation and use of its information systems.

**High-risk area:** [Ensuring the Cybersecurity of the Nation](#)

**Director:** Nicholas Marinos, Information Technology and Cybersecurity

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*Federal Retirement: OPM Actions Needed to Improve Application Processing Times.* [GAO-19-217](#). Washington, D.C.: May 15, 2019.

**Recommendation:** The Associate Director of OPM's Retirement Services, working in coordination with the Chief Information Officer, should develop, document, and implement a Retirement Services IT modernization plan for initial project phases that is consistent with key aspects of IT project management, such as determining objectives, costs, and time frames for each initial phase.

**Action Needed:** OPM partially concurred with the recommendation. To fully implement the recommendation, OPM needs to create an IT modernization plan for initial project phases that

includes objectives, cost estimates, and timeframes, which could help measure progress in implementing the initiatives.

**Director:** Yvonne Jones, Strategic Issues

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*Information Technology: Agencies Need to Fully Implement Key Workforce Planning Activities.* [GAO-20-129](#). Washington, D.C.: October 30, 2019

**Recommendation:** The Director of the Office of Personnel Management should ensure that the agency fully implements each of the eight key IT workforce planning activities it did not fully implement.

**Action Needed:** OPM agreed with our recommendation. In December 2019, the agency reported that it had partnered with the General Service Administration's IT Modernization Center of Excellence to assess the current state of its IT workforce planning activities. While this is a first step, to address this recommendation, OPM needs to fully implement each of the eight key IT workforce planning activities, including developing a workforce planning process.

**Director:** Carol Harris, Information Technology and Cybersecurity

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(Job code 103894)