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U.S. SECRET SERVICE

Action Needed to Address Gaps in IT Workforce Planning and Management Practices

Why GAO Did This Study

Commonly known for protecting the President, the Secret Service also plays a leading role in investigating and preventing financial and electronic crimes. To accomplish its mission, the Secret Service relies heavily on the use of IT infrastructure and systems. In 2009, the component initiated the IITT investment—a portfolio of programs and projects that are intended to, among other things, improve systems availability and security in support of the component's business operations.

GAO was asked to review the Secret Service's oversight of its IT portfolio and workforce. This report discusses the extent to which the (1) CIO implemented selected IT oversight responsibilities, (2) Secret Service implemented leading IT workforce planning and management practices, and (3) Secret Service and DHS implemented selected performance monitoring practices for IITT. GAO assessed agency documentation against 14 selected component CIO responsibilities established in DHS policy; 15 selected leading workforce planning and management practices within 5 topic areas; and two selected leading industry project monitoring practices that, among other things, were, in GAO's professional judgment, of most significance to managing IITT.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making 13 recommendations, including that the Secret Service establish a process that ensures the CIO reviews all IT contracts, as appropriate; and identify the skills needed for its IT workforce. DHS concurred with all recommendations and provided estimated dates for implementing each of them.

View GAO-19-60. For more information, contact Carol C. Harris at (202) 512-4456 or HarrisCC@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

The U.S. Secret Service (Secret Service) Chief Information Officer (CIO) fully implemented 11 of 14 selected information technology (IT) oversight responsibilities, and partially implemented the remaining 3. The CIO partially implemented the responsibilities to establish a process that ensures the Secret Service reviews IT contracts; ensure that the component's IT policies align with the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) policies; and set incremental targets to monitor program progress. Additional efforts to fully implement these 3 responsibilities will further position the CIO to effectively manage the IT portfolio.

Of the 15 selected practices within the 5 workforce planning and management areas, the Secret Service fully implemented 3 practices, partly implemented 8, and did not implement 4 (see table). Within the strategic planning area, the component partly implemented the practice to, among other things, develop IT competency needs. While the Secret Service had defined general core competencies for its workforce, the Office of the CIO (OCIO) did not identify all of the technical competencies needed to support its functions. As a result, the office was limited in its ability to address any IT competency gaps that may exist. Also, while work remains to improve morale across the component, the Secret Service substantially implemented the employee morale practices for its IT staff.

The U.S. Secret Service's Implementation of 15 Selected Leading Practices Associated with 5 Workforce Planning and Management Areas for Its Information Technology Workforce

Workforce area	Overall area rating	Number of practices fully implemented	Number of practices partly implemented	Number of practices not implemented
1. Strategic planning	Minimally implemented	0	2	1
2. Recruitment and hiring	Minimally implemented	0	1	2
3. Training and development	Minimally implemented	0	2	1
4. Employee morale	Substantially implemented	2	1	0
5. Performance management	Substantially implemented	1	2	0
Total		**3**	**8**	**4**

Source: GAO analysis of data provided by U.S. Secret Service officials. | GAO-19-60.

Secret Service officials said the gaps in implementing the workforce practices were due to, among other things, their focus on reorganizing the IT workforce within OCIO. Until the Secret Service fully implements these practices for its IT workforce, it may be limited in its ability to ensure the timely and effective acquisition and maintenance of the component's IT infrastructure and services.

Of the two selected IT project monitoring practices, DHS and the Secret Service fully implemented the first practice to monitor the performance of the Information Integration and Technology Transformation (IITT) investment. In addition, for the second practice—to monitor projects on incremental development metrics—the Secret Service fully implemented the practice on one of IITT's projects and partially implemented it on another. In particular, OCIO did not fully measure post-deployment user satisfaction with the system on one project. OCIO plans to conduct a user satisfaction survey of the system by September 2018, which should inform the office on whether the system is meeting users' needs.

_____ **United States Government Accountability Office**