

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105528](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Strategic human capital management, specifically the federal government's efforts to address government-wide and agency specific skills gaps, has been on GAO's High-Risk List since 2001. These gaps impede the government from achieving desired results. A skills gap may consist of an insufficient number of individuals, individuals without the appropriate skills, abilities, or behaviors to perform the work successfully; or both. OPM has identified skills gaps in government-wide occupations in fields such as human resources, cybersecurity, and acquisition.

OPM plays an important role in closing skills gaps and ensuring agencies have the necessary tools and resources. GAO was asked to review agencies' skills gaps-related challenges and OPM's efforts to close skills gaps. This report examines (1) federal human capital officers' perspectives on workforce challenges they face, and (2) OPM's efforts to close skills gaps government-wide and within its workforce since 2020.

GAO hosted a forum to obtain federal human capital officers' perspectives. GAO also analyzed relevant documents and interviewed OPM officials responsible for implementing strategic and human capital plans and managing risks.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that OPM (1) establish an action plan to address its skills gaps, and (2) document and take other actions to address the risks its skills gaps pose to meeting its strategic objectives. OPM concurred with both recommendations.

View [GAO-23-105528](#). For more information, contact Alissa H. Czyz at (202) 512-6806 or CzyzA@gao.gov.

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FEDERAL WORKFORCE

OPM Advances Efforts to Close Government-wide Skills Gaps but Needs a Plan to Improve Its Own Capacity

What GAO Found

During a May 2022 GAO-hosted forum, federal human capital officers called 1) recruiting and hiring, and 2) workforce planning their agencies' top challenges for closing skills gaps. In addition, forum participants said that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) could help them close skills gaps by providing additional workplace flexibilities and streamlining regulations and guidance to reduce administrative burden.

Since 2011, OPM has led efforts to close government-wide skills gaps. These efforts include working on the President's Management Agenda, improving collaboration with the Chief Human Capital Officers Council, and identifying strategies for closing the gaps in its strategic plan. However, in 2022, an independent workforce assessment found that OPM had its own skills gaps in key capabilities (see figure). According to the assessment and GAO's analysis, this could compromise OPM's ability to implement its strategic objectives related to closing government-wide skills gaps.

Figure 1: Examples of Skills Gaps Identified in the Assessment of OPM's Workforce



Source: OPM workforce assessment; IconicLibrary/Stock.Adobe.com. | [GAO-23-105528](#)

OPM officials told GAO they generally agreed with the assessment's findings and were addressing its own skills gaps. However, OPM has yet to develop an action plan that includes all elements directed by OPM guidance to manage this effort. GAO also found OPM did not list its skills gaps as a risk to implementing its strategic objectives, an essential element of enterprise risk management. Doing so would better position OPM to have the near- and long-term capacity to help other agencies close skills gaps across the federal government.