# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

## Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Workforce Management

## Why GAO Did This Study

DOD has invested billions of dollars to integrate AI into its warfighting operations. This includes analyzing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance data, and operating lethal autonomous weapon systems. DOD identified cultivating a workforce with AI expertise as a strategic focus area in 2018. However, in 2021 the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence concluded that DOD's AI talent deficit is one of the greatest impediments to the U.S. being AI-ready by the Commission's target date of 2025.

House Report 117-118, accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, includes a provision for GAO to review DOD's AI workforce. This report evaluates the extent to which DOD has (1) defined and identified its AI workforce and (2) established plans and strategies to address AI workforce issues, among other objectives. GAO assessed DOD strategies and plans, reviewed laws and guidance that outline requirements for managing an AI workforce, and interviewed officials.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations to DOD to assign responsibility and establish a timeline for completing the additional steps to define and identify its AI workforce; and update its Human Capital Operating Plan to be consistent with key department strategic documents related to AI workforce issues. DOD partially concurred with the recommendations, offering revisions. GAO made clarifications, as described in the report.

## What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) typically establishes standard definitions of its workforces to make decisions about which personnel are to be included in that workforce, and identifies its workforces by coding them in its data systems. DOD has taken steps to begin to identify its artificial intelligence (AI) workforce, but has not assigned responsibility and does not have a timeline for completing additional steps to fully define and identify this workforce. DOD developed AI work roles—the specialized sets of tasks and functions requiring specific knowledge, skills, and abilities. DOD also identified some military and civilian occupations, such as computer scientists, that conduct AI work. However, DOD has not assigned responsibility to the organizations necessary to complete the additional steps required to define and identify its AI workforce, such as coding the work roles in various workforce data systems, developing a qualification program, and updating workforce guidance. DOD also does not have a timeline for completing these additional steps. Assigning responsibility and establishing a timeline for completion of the additional steps would enable DOD to more effectively assess the state of its AI workforce and be better prepared to forecast future workforce requirements (see figure).

**Questions DOD Cannot Answer Until It Fully Defines and Identifies Its AI Workforce**



Who is included in the AI workforce?

Who should be included in the AI workforce?

Which positions require personnel with AI skills?

What is the current state of DOD's AI workforce?

What are the future requirements of DOD's AI workforce?
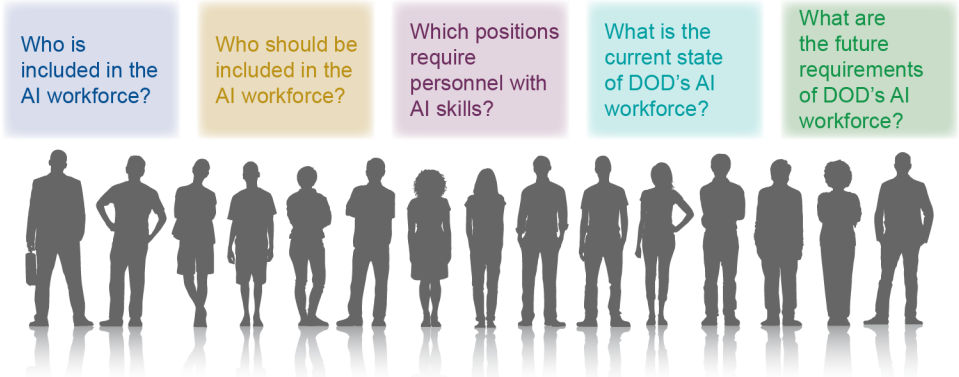
Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) and other federal workforce planning guidance.  |  GAO-24-105645

DOD's plans and strategies address some AI workforce issues, but are not fully consistent with each other. Federal regulation and guidance state that an agency's Human Capital Operating Plan should support the execution of its Strategic Plan. However, DOD's Human Capital Operating Plan does not consistently address the human capital implementation actions for AI workforce issues described in DOD's Strategic Plan. DOD also uses inconsistent terms when addressing AI workforce issues, which could hinder a shared understanding within DOD. The military services are also developing component-level human capital plans that encompass AI and will cascade from the higher-level plans. Updating DOD's Human Capital Operating Plan to be consistent with other strategic documents would better guide DOD components' planning efforts and support actions necessary for achieving the department's strategic goals and objectives related to its AI workforce.

**United States Government Accountability Office**