

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-80](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

GAO and others have found that DOD needs to take steps to ensure DOD has an adequately sized and capable acquisition workforce to acquire about \$300 billion in goods and services annually. DOD is required by statute to develop an acquisition workforce plan every 2 years. DOD issued a plan in 2010, in which it called for the department to increase the size of the acquisition workforce by 20,000 positions by fiscal year 2015, but has not yet updated the plan.

Congress included a provision in statute for GAO to review DOD's acquisition workforce plans. In the absence of an updated plan, this report examines DOD's efforts to (1) increase the size of its acquisition workforce, (2) identify workforce competencies and mitigate any skill gaps, and (3) plan for future workforce needs. GAO analyzed current and projected DOD workforce, budget, and career field data; reviewed completed competency assessments; and obtained insights on workforce challenges from the largest acquisition commands within the Army, Navy and Air Force.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD complete the remaining competency assessment, establish time frames for conducting follow-up assessments, issue an updated acquisition workforce plan, and issue guidance to prioritize the use of funding. DOD concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-16-80](#). For more information, contact Timothy J. DiNapoli at (202) 512-4841 or [DiNapoliT@gao.gov](mailto:DiNapoliT@gao.gov).

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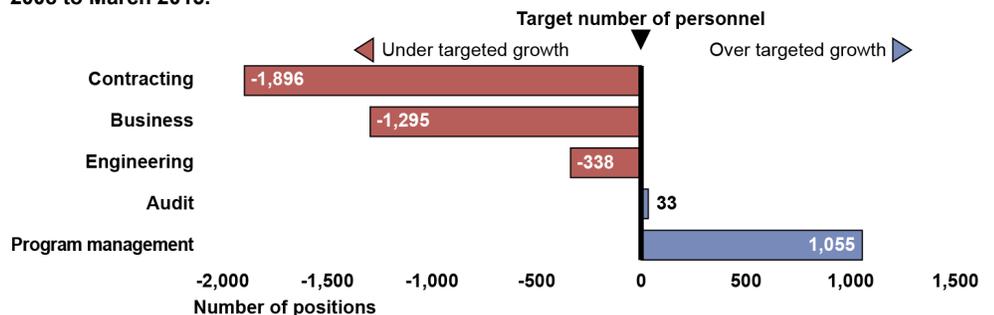
## DEFENSE ACQUISITION WORKFORCE

### Actions Needed to Guide Planning Efforts and Improve Workforce Capability

## What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) has increased the size of its acquisition workforce from about 126,000 in September 2008 to about 153,000 in March 2015. The growth was accomplished by hiring additional civilian personnel, insourcing work previously performed by contractors, adding more military personnel, and re-categorizing existing positions. However, 6 of the 13 acquisition career fields, including 3 priority career fields—contracting, business and engineering—did not meet growth goals.

**Difference in Planned and Actual Growth in Five DOD Priority Career Fields from September 2008 to March 2015.**



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense's (DOD) April 2010 Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Strategy and DOD DataMart data. | [GAO-16-80](#)

DOD has completed workforce competency assessments for 12 of the 13 acquisition career fields and added training classes to address some skill gaps. It is unclear the extent to which skill gaps remain, in part because 10 of the career fields have not conducted follow-up competency assessments to gauge progress. DOD has not established time frames for doing so. Office of Personnel Management standards state that identifying skill gaps and monitoring progress towards addressing gaps are essential steps for effective human capital management.

DOD has not updated its acquisition workforce plan, which would allow it to be better positioned to meet future needs. GAO's analysis of DOD budget information indicates that many career fields will continue to be significantly over or under the growth goals DOD established in 2010, especially in priority career fields such as contracting and engineering. In the past, some hiring decisions made by DOD components using the Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Fund exceeded initial 2010 career field targets. In addition, over the past 7 years, about 2,700 personnel, or 26 percent of those hired with these funds, were in career fields that were not considered high priority in the 2010 acquisition workforce plan. An updated plan that includes revised career field goals, coupled with guidance on how to use the Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Fund, could help DOD components focus future hiring efforts on priority career fields. Without an integrated approach, the department is at risk of using the funds to hire personnel in career fields that currently exceed their targets or are not considered a priority.