

July 1, 2021

Accessible Version

The Honorable Kiran A. Ahuja
Director
Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20415-1000

Priority Open Recommendations: Office of Personnel Management

Dear Ms. Ahuja:

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.¹ In November 2020, we reported that on a government-wide basis, 77 percent of our recommendations made 4 years ago were implemented.² OPM's recommendation implementation rate was about 85 percent. As of May 2021, OPM had 56 open recommendations. Fully implementing these open recommendations could significantly improve OPM's operations.

Since our last letter of April 2020, OPM has implemented four of our 18 open priority recommendations. Specifically, OPM is using MAX.gov, a federal online system for collecting and analyzing management and budget information, to also collect and share agencies' information on mission critical occupations and hiring data. To assist agencies on performance management issues, OPM created standard operating procedures and updated information posted on its Performance Management website on a quarterly basis. OPM also updated its Employee Engagement Toolkit for Supervisors to share key practices and lessons learned, including how to address employee misconduct. In addition, to strengthen information technology (IT) security and management, OPM implemented a quality assurance review process to re-evaluate security control assessments to ensure that they comprehensively test technical controls. With these actions, OPM has provided agencies with human capital management guidance needed to cultivate and manage their workforces.

We are not adding any new priority recommendations this year. OPM has 14 priority recommendations remaining from those we identified in our 2020 letter. We ask for your attention to these remaining recommendations. 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.)

¹Priority 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.

²GAO, *Performance and Accountability Report Fiscal Year 2020*, [GAO-21-4SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 16, 2020).

The 14 priority recommendations fall into the following five areas.

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 Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council and with 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. OPM partially agreed with the recommendation.

According to OPM, it has made incremental improvements to the classification system by providing technical assistance to agencies and more efficiently completing occupational studies. However, OPM reported that, in order to more fully pursue the recommendation, it would need appropriations to establish a commission to review the General Schedule system. Regardless of the approach for doing so, to fully implement the recommendation, OPM still needs to work in conjunction with key stakeholders such as OMB and unions; complete its review of studies and lessons learned; and, if warranted, develop a legislative proposal to make the GS system's design and implementation more consistent with the attributes of a modern, effective classification system.

Making hiring and special payment 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.

Over the past year, OPM has taken actions to support agencies on various human capital management issues; for example, OPM has provided agencies with hiring flexibilities to address agency needs for responding to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. 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 taken several actions related to hiring authorities. For example, in March 2021, OPM reported that it is seeking to improve hiring by exploring changes to various flexibilities, such as improving opportunities for student and seasonal employment, and how the federal government re-employs former employees. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to complete the process of streamlining the number of hiring authorities and, as appropriate, develop legislative proposals in consultation with the CHCO Council.

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. In late May 2021, OPM provided additional information on its efforts to implement this recommendation. We are reviewing this information to determine if OPM's actions have addressed this recommendation.

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 payroll data for other agencies and researchers and (2) consistently monitor and address system-generated error and edit check reports.

OPM reported taking some steps to address these recommendations. For example, OPM told us that it had established a new office to oversee EHRI maintenance and improve the quality and scope of EHRI. This office intends to pursue a phased approach to organizational, quality edit, and technical support improvements, with anticipated completion of the first phase by the second quarter of 2022. OPM also noted actions taken with Shared Service Providers to improve EHRI data quality, such as by communicating the intent to implement and enforce payroll data edits, and noted that it intends to establish a dedicated team to review and communicate EHRI payroll data quality results. To fully implement these two recommendations, OPM needs to complete planned actions for improving the availability of EHRI payroll data and ensure timely action is taken on data quality issues.

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 recommended that OPM provide guidance on training supervisors and human resources staff on addressing federal employee misconduct. In response to our recommendation, in March 2021, OPM reported that it began taking steps to provide guidance on training supervisors and human resources staff on addressing employee misconduct. OPM stated that, going forward, it will update online training courses and classroom materials for addressing misconduct and make the training materials available to agencies. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to move forward with its plans to update training courses and make this information available to supervisors and human capital practitioners.

Our November 2018 report included two 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.

In response to our recommendations, in March 2021, OPM reported developing a repository for agencies to routinely share promising practices and lessons learned related to employee engagement, accountability, and performance management. However, OPM told us this initiative is in its early phases of development. OPM also said it has established a strategic

partnership to produce emerging research and is drafting a formal strategy to share these findings with agencies. To fully address these recommendations, OPM needs to continue engaging with agency stakeholders and evaluate the effectiveness of agencies' efforts. OPM 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.

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 six priority recommendations in this area.

Four of these recommendations relate to strengthening IT security.

- In our May 2016 report, we recommended that OPM provide and track training for individuals, including contractors, with significant security responsibilities. According to information provided in March 2021, OPM plans to pilot a cyber-training initiative for federal employees. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to complete its planned actions related to federal employees and demonstrate that it has addressed the tracking of training for federal contractors.
- In our August 2017 report, we made additional IT security-related recommendations to OPM, including to: (1) validate in a timely manner actions taken to address 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. According to OPM, the agency has taken some steps to respond to these recommendations, such as tracking actions to address the two US-CERT recommendations that remain open and planning a cyber-training initiative. However, OPM 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 had previously planned to establish such a process by August 2020. However, in March 2021, OPM told us that the project that included this assessment was on hold due to a loss of resources. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to resume its project and ensure that its assessment aggregates information from across the agency to help 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 March 2021, OPM stated that it was working to develop the plan, including conducting user research which will help inform the technology plans for the initial project phases. To fully implement the recommendation, OPM needs to complete and implement a Retirement Services 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. OPM has reported that it has implemented some of the eight workforce planning activities, such as developing competency requirements, but, as of March 2021, it had not provided supporting documentation. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to fully implement each of the eight IT workforce planning activities.

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In March 2021, we issued our biennial update to our [High-Risk List](#), which identifies government operations with vulnerabilities to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement or the need for transformation to address economy, efficiency, or effectiveness challenges.³ OPM has oversight responsibility for one of our high-risk areas, [strategic human capital management](#). In our March 2021 update, we reported that OPM’s leadership commitment under this area declined since our 2019 report. This decline was partly due to the absence of Senate-confirmed leadership at OPM, which contributed to a lack of attention from the highest levels of the federal government needed to address longstanding and emerging skills gaps.

In addition to strategic human capital management, several other government-wide high-risk areas have direct implications for OPM and its operations. These include (1) the [government-wide personnel security clearance process](#), (2) [ensuring cybersecurity of the nation](#),⁴ (3) [improving management of IT acquisitions and operations](#), and (4) [managing federal real property](#). We urge your attention to the OPM and government-wide high-risk issues as they relate to OPM. Progress on high-risk issues has been possible through the concerted actions and efforts of Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, and the leadership and staff in agencies, including OPM.

With respect to the personnel security clearance process, in March 2021, we found that executive branch agencies leading security clearance reform, including OPM, had met our high-risk criteria for leadership commitment and partially met our criteria for capacity, action plan, monitoring, and demonstrated progress. We outlined necessary actions, outcomes, and our prior recommendations that have to be addressed for this area to be removed from our High-Risk List. Prior recommendations that require coordination with OPM include developing a government-wide plan, including goals and interim milestones, to meet timeliness objectives for initial personnel security clearance investigations and adjudications.⁵

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,

³GAO, *High-Risk Series: Dedicated Leadership Needed to Address Limited Progress in Most High-Risk Areas*, [GAO-21-119SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 2, 2021).

⁴With regard to cybersecurity, we also urge you to use foundational information and communications technology supply chain risk management practices set forth in our December 2020 report: GAO, *Information Technology: Federal Agencies Need to Take Urgent Action to Manage Supply Chain Risks*, [GAO-21-171](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 15, 2020).

⁵GAO, *Personnel Security Clearances: Additional Actions Needed to Ensure Quality, Address Timeliness, and Reduce Investigation Backlog*, [GAO-18-29](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 12, 2017).

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 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 Alissa Czyz, Acting Director, Strategic Issues at 202-512-6806 or CzyzA@gao.gov.

Our teams coordinated with your staff to obtain updates on the priority recommendations in February 2021, and in some cases, your staff subsequently provided further updates. Additionally, our teams reviewed OPM's fiscal year 2022 budget justification, released in May 2021, which included updates on the status of GAO recommendations.⁶ We will continue to coordinate with your staff on all of the 56 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gene L. Dodaro". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "D" at the end.

Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
of the United States

Enclosure –1

cc: The Honorable Shalanda Young, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget
The Honorable Kenneth Zawodny Jr., Associate Director, Retirement Services, OPM

⁶The Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act (GAO-IG Act), Pub. L. No. 115-414, 132 Stat. 5430 (2019) requires certain 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 1 year prior to the submission of the budget justification.

Enclosure

Priority Open Recommendations to OPM

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 with 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, it later reported that it concurred with the recommendation. In March 2021, OPM reported it continues to respond to government-wide requests for classification technical assistance, engage with agencies on classification policy needs and challenges, and monitor the status of classification issues government-wide. However, OPM reported that to pursue the recommendation, it would need to establish a commission to review the GS system, which it reported would require additional appropriations. Regardless of the approach for doing so, to fully implement the recommendation, OPM needs to work in conjunction with key stakeholders, such as OMB and unions, to complete its review of studies and lessons learned; and if warranted, develop a legislative proposal to make the GS system's design and implementation more consistent with the attributes of a modern, effective classification system.

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

Director: Alissa Czyz, Strategic Issues

Contact information: CzyzA@gao.gov, (202) 512-6806

Making Hiring and Special Payment 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 this recommendation. In March 2021, OPM reported it is seeking to improve hiring by exploring changes to various flexibilities, such as improving

opportunities for student and seasonal employment, and how the federal government re-employs former employees. 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: Alissa Czyz, Strategic Issues

Contact information: CzyzA@gao.gov, (202) 512-6806

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 Title 5 special payment authorities are effective in improving employee recruitment and retention, and determine what potential changes may be needed to improve the 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 special payment authorities are effective, and define any changes needed to improve their effectiveness.

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

Director: Yvonne Jones, Strategic Issues

Contact information: JonesY@gao.gov, (202) 512-6806

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.

Recommendations: 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 continues to agree with both recommendations. For the first recommendation, OPM established a new office to oversee EHRI data assets and noted its

intent to take a phased approach to organizational, quality edit, and technical support improvements, with anticipated completion of the first phase by the second quarter of 2022. To fully address the recommendation, OPM needs to complete planned actions for improving the availability of payroll data. For the second recommendation, OPM officials reported communicating the intent to implement and enforce payroll data edits to Shared Service Providers. To fully address the recommendation, OPM needs to follow up with Shared Service Providers and agencies and ensure timely action is taken on data quality issues identified with the payroll data they submit to EHRI.

Director: Rebecca Shea, Forensic Audits and Investigative Service

Contact information: SheaR@gao.gov, (202) 512-6722

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 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 this recommendation. In March 2021, OPM stated it had obtained the necessary resources to update and release related training courses, which would include information related to addressing misconduct. The training courses will be made available to managers/supervisors and human capital staff. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to follow through on its plans to update and disseminate training courses to agencies. Doing so will enhance the guidance and technical assistance needed to effectively address misconduct and maximize the productivity of the workforce.

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

Director: Alissa Czyz, Strategic Issues

Contact information: CzyzA@gao.gov, (202) 512-6806

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

Recommendations: The Director of OPM, in consultation with the CHCO Council, should take the following two actions:

1. 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.
2. Develop a strategic approach for identifying and sharing emerging research and innovations in performance management.

Action needed: OPM agreed with both recommendations. In March 2021, OPM reported developing a repository for agencies to share promising practices and lessons learned related to employee engagement, accountability, and performance management. This repository is located on OPM's Successful Workforce Practices webpage on MAX.gov, which allows agencies to collaborate and publish information relating to its government-wide management activities. However, OPM told us this initiative is in its early phases of development. OPM also said it has established a strategic partnership with an educational institution that is producing emerging research and is drafting a formal strategy to share these materials with agencies. To fully address the two recommendations, OPM needs to continue engaging with agency stakeholders and evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts. OPM also needs to fully implement its mechanism for agencies to share lessons learned, and finalize its strategy for identifying and sharing emerging research and innovations in performance management with agencies.

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

Director: Alissa Czyz, Strategic Issues

Contact information: CzyzA@gao.gov, (202) 512-6806

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 provide and track specialized training for all individuals, including contractors, who have significant security responsibilities.

Action needed: OPM partially agreed with this recommendation. In March 2021, OPM stated that actions are planned as part of a forthcoming cyber-training initiative. The agency plans to pilot the initiative and use the results to identify additional training opportunities for federal employees. For contractors, OPM stated that the tracking of specialized training is best addressed through contractual requirements and oversight. OPM expects full implementation in a year or two. To fully implement the recommendation, OPM needs to complete its efforts to provide and track training for federal employees with significant security responsibilities. The agency also needs to demonstrate that it has addressed the tracking of specialized training for contractors through contractual requirements and oversight.

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

Director: Jennifer R. Franks, Information Technology and Cybersecurity

Contact information: Franksj@gao.gov or (404) 679-1831

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

Recommendations: 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 March 2021, OPM stated it is tracking the two US-CERT recommendations that remain open 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 validate the effectiveness of the actions taken to implement the remaining US-CERT recommendations.

OPM agreed with the second recommendation. In March 2021, OPM stated that actions are planned as part of its forthcoming cyber-training initiative. The agency plans to pilot the initiative and use the results to identify additional training opportunities, including role-based security training. The agency also stated that additional actions are needed, such as coordinating across OPM programs to develop further system requirements and capabilities for providing and tracking specialized training for staff using continuous diagnostics and mitigation tools. OPM expects full implementation in a year or two. To fully implement the recommendation, OPM needs to implement 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: Jennifer R. Franks, Information Technology and Cybersecurity

Contact information: FranksJ@gao.gov, (404) 679-1831

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. The agency stated that it planned to formalize its process for conducting an organization-wide cybersecurity risk assessment by August 2020 as part of an Enterprise Risk Management project. However, in March 2021, OPM informed us that due to a loss of resources, this project is currently on hold and will resume when resources are obtained. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to resume its project and ensure that the process it implements aggregates information from across the agency to help 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: Jennifer R. Franks, Information Technology and Cybersecurity

Contact information: FranksJ@gao.gov, (404) 679-1831

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 agreed with this recommendation. In March 2021, OPM stated that it was working to develop the Retirement Services IT modernization plan, including conducting research, which will help inform the technology plans for the initial project phases. OPM also said that it is planning to incorporate user research, which will be completed by the end of the second quarter of 2021, and then take further steps to finalize the plan. To fully implement the recommendation, OPM needs to finalize its IT modernization plan for initial project phases; include objectives, cost estimates, and timeframes in that plan—which could help measure progress in implementing the initiatives; and then implement the plan.

Director: Yvonne Jones, Strategic Issues

Contact information: JonesY@gao.gov, (202) 512-6806

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 this recommendation. In May 2020, OPM reported that the agency's Chief Information Officer and Human Resources office developed competency and staffing requirements for its IT staff based on findings from a workforce assessment. Further, in March 2021, OPM reported that it had hired a Human Capital Strategist to develop an IT strategic workforce plan, which addresses one of the eight key IT workforce planning activities. However, as of March 2021, the agency had not provided documentation of its competency requirements, and did not provide a timeframe for completion of the workforce plan. To fully implement this recommendation, OPM needs to develop and implement a workforce planning process that addresses each of the eight key IT workforce planning activities.

Director: Carol Harris, Information Technology and Cybersecurity

Contact information: HarrisCC@gao.gov, (202) 512-4456

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