



Report to the Chairman of the
Subcommittee on Oversight,
Management, and Accountability,
Committee on Homeland Security,
House of Representatives

December 2022

FEDERAL PROTECTIVE SERVICE

More Collaboration on Hiring and Additional Performance Information Needed

Accessible Version

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105361](#), a report to the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight, Management, and Accountability, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

FPS is responsible for protecting approximately 9,000 federal facilities across the country and the millions of people who visit or work in them. FPS's organizational placement has changed several times since its formation in 1971. GAO reported in [GAO-19-122](#) that any organizational placement for FPS could result in benefits and tradeoffs.

GAO was asked to review the impact FPS's 2019 placement in the Management Directorate has had on FPS's activities. This report examines (1) the benefits and challenges of FPS's placement in the Management Directorate and (2) FPS's performance measures for critical activities.

GAO focused on seven critical activities performed by FPS. These activities were selected because they had the highest cost in fiscal year 2020 and are key issues, among other reasons. GAO reviewed documentation and interviewed officials from FPS and the FPS employee union, and the Management Directorate. GAO compared actions taken to leading practices for collaboration and for measuring agency performance.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending (1) that the Management Directorate's human capital office and FPS strengthen mechanisms to facilitate collaboration on hiring processes, and (2) that FPS fully develop performance measures with targets for each of its strategic objectives. DHS agreed with the recommendations.

View [GAO-23-105361](#). For more information, contact Catina B. Latham at (202) 512-2834 or lathamc@gao.gov.

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What GAO Found

In 2019, the Federal Protective Service (FPS) moved to the Management Directorate, an office in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that oversees and supports budget, human capital, and other business functions. FPS officials cited multiple benefits of this move, including improved support from leadership and improved coordination with certain Management Directorate offices. Additionally, officials said FPS has gained credibility among DHS agencies as FPS is more involved in security operations since moving to the Management Directorate.

However, FPS's long-standing challenges in managing human capital have not yet been resolved since its placement in the Management Directorate. In particular, FPS had a staffing shortage of 21 percent at the end of fiscal year 2021. These staffing challenges persist in part because FPS and the Management Directorate's human capital office have not sufficiently collaborated on hiring processes. Mechanisms to facilitate further collaboration and agreement on hiring processes and to document the agreements reached could help the human capital office and FPS more effectively and efficiently address FPS's staffing shortages.

DHS and FPS have performance measures and targets for some of the critical activities GAO selected for review (see table). However, FPS has not established performance measures for information technology management and training for FPS officials. Instead, FPS identified initiatives that will help it achieve the related strategic objectives of modernizing the FPS infrastructure and developing the FPS workforce.

Performance Measures and Targets for Selected Federal Protective Service (FPS) Activities

Selected FPS critical activities	Performance measure(s) identified?	Target(s) established?
Facility security assessments	Yes	Yes
Contract guard management	Yes	Yes
Law enforcement response, policing and patrol	Yes	Partially
Information sharing and coordination	Yes	No
Human capital management	Yes	No
Information technology management	No	No
Training for FPS officials	No	No

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security's fiscal year 2021 Congressional Budget Justification and Federal Protective Service strategic plan for fiscal years 2022-2026. | [GAO-23-105361](#)

FPS also has not established targets for several of the performance measures it identified for other critical activities; these targets would enable FPS to compare actual results against planned performance. FPS officials said that, as of October 2022, FPS was in the process of collecting data to determine appropriate targets for these performance measures, but that this effort was taking longer than expected. Developing performance measures with targets would provide FPS with performance information that could help FPS more fully measure program performance and understand the extent to which FPS is achieving its objectives within the Management Directorate. Performance measures with targets could also facilitate the oversight of FPS by the Management Directorate.

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Abbreviations

CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
CISA	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
FPS	Federal Protective Service
GSA	General Services Administration
ICE	Immigration and Customs Enforcement
MOA	memorandum of agreement
NPPD	National Protection and Programs Directorate
OCHCO	Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer
PBS	Public Buildings Service

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December 15, 2022

The Honorable J. Luis Correa
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight, Management, and Accountability
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Federal Protective Service (FPS), within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has a critical mission to protect thousands of federal facilities and the millions of people who visit or work in them. The organizational placement of an office or agency can affect its performance and ability to meet its mission. Since its creation, FPS's organizational placement has changed several times. Most recently, in October 2019, FPS moved from DHS's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) to DHS's Management Directorate.

FPS has faced long-standing challenges in carrying out some of its activities, including overseeing Protective Security Officers (i.e., contract guards)¹ and managing human capital issues. In January 2019, as DHS considered organizational placement options for FPS, we reported on key criteria for evaluating organizational placement and noted that any of the placement options could result in both benefits and tradeoffs.² When FPS moved to the Management Directorate, the Office of the Under Secretary for Management became responsible for providing leadership to and overseeing FPS along with the other agencies in the Directorate. According to the Acting Under Secretary for Management, this oversight includes ensuring that FPS is meeting its goals and objectives and addressing challenges.

You asked us to review the impact FPS's placement in the Management Directorate has had on FPS's activities. This report examines two objectives:

¹For the purposes of this report, we call Protective Security Officers "contract guards."

²GAO, *Federal Protective Service: DHS Should Take Additional Steps to Evaluate Organizational Placement*, [GAO-19-122](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 8, 2019).

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1. the benefits and challenges of FPS's placement in the Management Directorate and
 2. FPS's performance measures for critical activities.

To examine the benefits and challenges of FPS's placement in the Management Directorate, we reviewed documentation and obtained views on the impact of the placement on FPS from Management Directorate officials, including the Acting Under Secretary for Management, and from FPS officials, including the FPS Director and managers. We also obtained views on the impact of the placement from Regional Directors at five of FPS's 11 regional offices. We selected Directors in the five largest regions, excluding FPS's National Capital Region, in terms of FPS's authorized positions in fiscal year 2021.³ We also obtained views on FPS's activities or placement from officials in the General Services Administration, the landlord of most of the facilities protected by FPS, and representatives of FPS's employee union and an association representing contract guard companies. For activities where we identified challenges of FPS's placement in the Management Directorate, we compared actions taken by FPS and Management Directorate officials against two leading practices for collaboration that we developed in our prior work: the two practices are clarifying roles and responsibilities as well as developing written guidance and agreements.⁴

To examine FPS's performance measures for critical activities, we reviewed DHS budget documentation for fiscal year 2021 and FPS's strategic plan for fiscal years 2022–2026 to identify strategic objectives and performance measures relevant to selected activities that FPS performs. We selected the following seven critical operational and

³Although the National Capital Region was FPS's region with the largest number of authorized positions in fiscal year 2021, we excluded this region from our selection to ensure we did not obtain redundant results from interviews of FPS staff in its Headquarters office.

⁴GAO, *Managing for Results: Key Considerations for Implementing Interagency Collaborative Mechanisms*, GAO-12-1022 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 27, 2012). In this report, we defined collaboration as any joint activity between organizations that is intended to produce more public value than could be produced when the organizations act alone. Further, this report identified issues to consider when collaborating--in the areas of outcomes and accountability, organizational culture, leadership, clarity of roles and responsibilities, participants, resources, and written guidance and agreements. For this report, we focused on issues to consider with respect to the clarity of roles and responsibilities as well as written guidance and agreements as they are the most relevant to the challenges we identified.

business-support activities that FPS performs: (1) facility security assessments; (2) law enforcement response, policing, and patrolling facilities; (3) contract guard management; (4) information sharing and coordination; (5) human capital management; (6) information technology management; and (7) training for FPS officials. We selected these activities because FPS identified them as having the highest fiscal year 2020 costs and because the activities are also areas that we previously reported DHS should consider when evaluating organizational placement options. In addition, we also included activities that FPS union representatives or we identified as key issues. We reviewed other documents, such as FPS's prior strategic plan, and interviewed FPS officials on how, if at all, FPS measures performance of its activities. We compared FPS's actions to leading practices we have previously identified for measuring and assessing agency performance.⁵ We also reviewed Project Management Institute guidance to identify practices for oversight, such as on monitoring performance.⁶ We interviewed the Under Secretary for Management and officials from other Management Directorate entities to understand their approach to overseeing FPS's performance.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2021 to December 2022 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

⁵GAO, *Managing for Results: Practices for Effective Agency Strategic Reviews*, [GAO-15-602](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 29, 2015) and *Tax Administration: IRS Needs to Further Refine Its Tax Filing Season Performance Measures*, [GAO-03-143](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 22, 2002).

⁶Project Management Institute, Inc., *Governance of Portfolios, Programs, and Projects: A Practice Guide*, (2016). The Project Management Institute is a not-for-profit association that provides global standards and guidance for, among other things, project and program management. The Institute's *Practice Guide* on governance provides organizations guidance on how to implement or enhance the governance of portfolios, programs, and projects. It includes practices on oversight, which the Project Management Institute identifies as one aspect of governance.

Background

FPS Activities

FPS is responsible for protecting approximately 9,000 federal facilities across the country, as well as the millions of people who work in or visit them. To carry out this responsibility, the agency performs the following activities:

- **Physical security activities.** FPS conducts facility security assessments to identify and assess threats to and vulnerabilities of specific facilities. FPS then recommends appropriate countermeasures, such as security equipment, to address those threats and vulnerabilities.
- **Law enforcement activities.** FPS's law enforcement activities include patrolling facilities, responding to incidents, conducting criminal investigations by collecting and analyzing data, and making arrests. For some incidents, FPS officers are the first responders. When local law enforcement officers are the first responders, FPS coordinates with them on any resulting investigations.
- **Contract guard oversight.** FPS manages and oversees the contracts for the guards who provide security at federal facilities. Approximately 15,000 contract guards control access to facilities across the country; conduct screening at access points to prevent the entry of prohibited items, such as weapons and explosives; respond to emergency situations involving facility safety and security; and perform other duties.

In addition to performing these activities at FPS-protected facilities, FPS also supports other agencies in protecting their facilities. For example, FPS has an agreement with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to provide security for locations near the southwest border.

FPS Budget and Staff

FPS is entirely funded by the fees it charges agencies for its services and does not receive a direct appropriation from the general fund of the Treasury. FPS charges agencies basic security fees for each building. These basic security fees cover a variety of fundamental security services such as facility security assessments and general law enforcement. The rates FPS can charge agencies for basic security services must be

approved by the Office of Management and Budget. FPS also charges agencies fees for agency- and building-specific services beyond basic security, such as for contract guards and security patrols. For fiscal year 2021, FPS had an annual budget—based on revenue collections from the fees and reimbursements—of about \$1.6 billion. FPS spent about \$1.2 billion on contract guards, which represented 74 percent of FPS's enacted budget in fiscal year 2021.

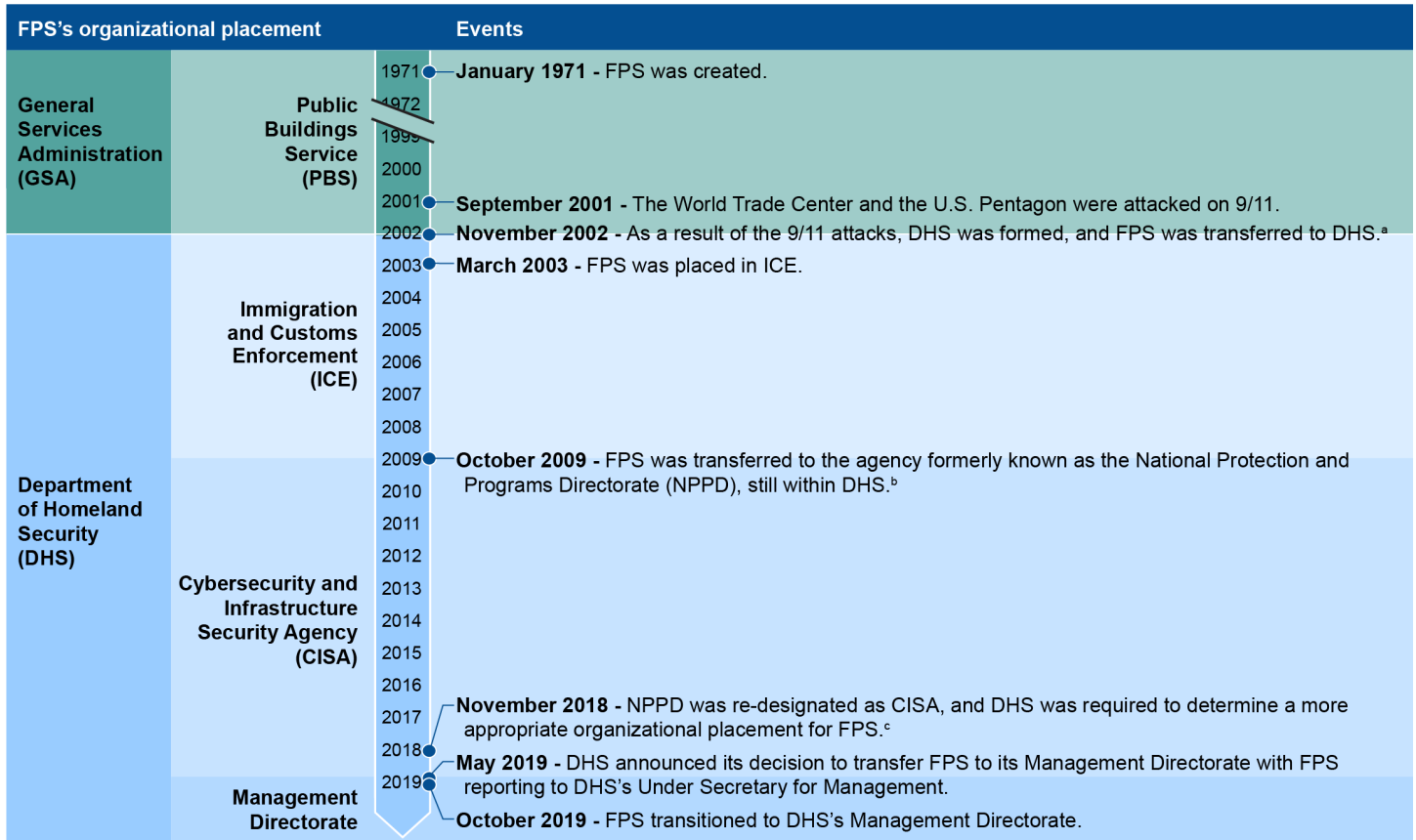
In fiscal year 2021, FPS reported that it employed roughly 1,300 staff across 11 regional offices and headquarters. This workforce consists of about 72 percent law enforcement staff and 28 percent non-law enforcement staff. Law enforcement staff include inspectors and criminal investigators. Law enforcement staff also include the Rapid Protection Force, which is a team that FPS can quickly deploy to heightened security situations. Non-law enforcement staff provide business support, including training staff, contract management, human capital services, and information technology.

FPS Organizational Placements

Since its formation in 1971, FPS has had four different organizational placements. FPS was first located within the General Services Administration's (GSA) Public Building Service. Following the attacks on September 11, 2001, the Homeland Security Act of 2002 was enacted. It created DHS and moved FPS from GSA to DHS,⁷ effective in March 2003. Within DHS, FPS has been located in three different sub-organizations (see fig. 1).

⁷Pub. L. No. 107-296, §§ 101(a), 403, 116 Stat. 2135, 2142, 2178.

Figure 1: Timeline of the Federal Protective Service’s (FPS) Organizational Placements



Source: GAO analysis of legislation and DHS documents. | GAO-23-105361

Text of Figure 1: Timeline of the Federal Protective Service’s (FPS) Organizational Placements

Events

- January 1971 - FPS was created.
- September 2001 - The World Trade Center and the U.S. Pentagon were attacked on 9/11.
- November 2002 - As a result of the 9/11 attacks, DHS was formed, and FPS was transferred to DHS. /a/
- March 2003 - FPS was placed in ICE.

- October 2009 - FPS was transferred to the agency formerly known as the National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD), still within DHS. /b/
- November 2018 - NPPD was re-designated as CISA, and DHS was required to determine a more appropriate organizational placement for FPS. /c/
- May 2019 - DHS announced its decision to transfer FPS to its Management Directorate with FPS reporting to DHS's Under Secretary for Management.
- October 2019 - FPS transitioned to DHS's Management Directorate.

Source: GAO analysis of legislation and DHS documents. | GAO-23-105361

^aThe Homeland Security Act of 2002 was enacted after the September 11, 2001, attacks, creating DHS and moving FPS to the new department, effective March 2003. See Pub. L. No. 107-296, §§ 101(a), 403, 116 Stat. 2135, 2142, 2178.

^bFPS was transferred to NPPD by the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2010. See Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2010, Pub. L. No. 111-83, 123 Stat. 2142, 2156-57 (2009).

^cThe Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Act of 2018 re-designated NPPD as CISA. See Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Act of 2018, Pub. L. No. 115-278, § 2(a), 132 Stat. 4168, 4169.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Act of 2018 was enacted in November 2018.⁸ The Act re-designated DHS's National Protection and Programs Directorate as CISA and required DHS to determine an appropriate organizational placement for FPS in the future. DHS convened a workgroup of officials from FPS, the Management Directorate, CISA, and other DHS agencies to help identify a potential location that would better support FPS's mission. The workgroup also established several goals for FPS's new placement, including better integrating FPS into DHS's mission and effectively managing human capital.⁹ In May 2019, DHS announced its decision to transfer FPS from CISA to its Management Directorate. FPS transitioned to DHS's Management Directorate in October 2019.

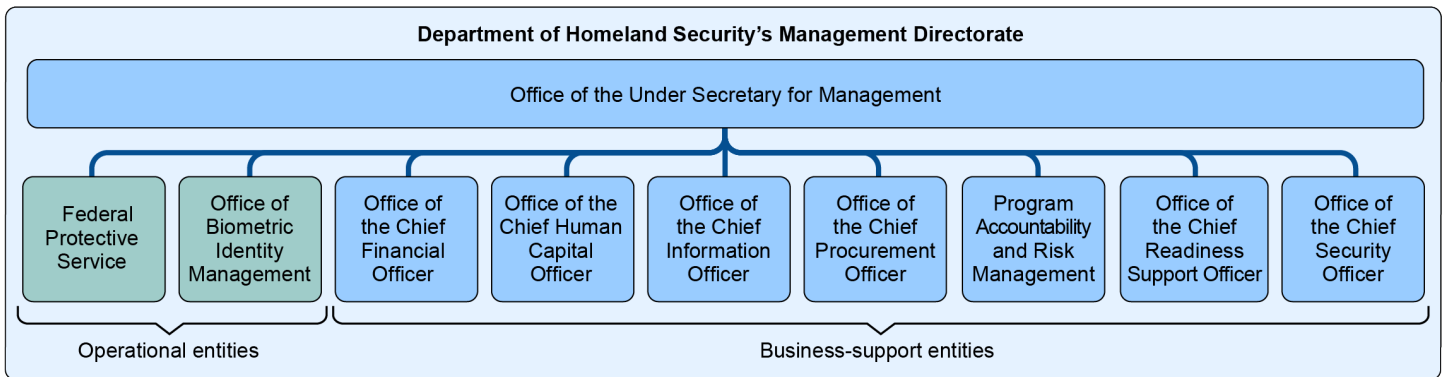
The Management Directorate comprises several entities, collectively led and overseen by the Office of the Under Secretary for Management (see fig. 2). FPS and the Office of Biometric Identity Management are the only

⁸Pub. L. No. 115-278, 132 Stat. 4168.

⁹The other goals established by the DHS workgroup for FPS's new organizational placement focused on countering changing threats, ensuring accountability of leaders, efficiently delivering and reducing potential redundancies in real property and financial management, easily implementing the transition, and considering the impact of a move on FPS's workforce and culture.

entities within the Management Directorate that focus on operations. The other entities provide department-wide policies, guidance, and operational oversight, as well as support for business functions in areas such as budget, human capital, information technology, acquisitions, and facilities management. In addition, the entity responsible for human capital, the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO), provides human capital services to several other agencies in DHS, including FPS.¹⁰ FPS pays OCHCO for the human capital services it receives.

Figure 2: Organizational Chart of the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Management Directorate



Source: DHS documentation. | GAO-23-105361

Text of Figure 2: Organizational Chart of the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Management Directorate

- 1) Department of Homeland Security’s Management Directorate
 - a) Office of the Under Secretary for Management
 - i) Operational entities
 - (1) Federal Protective Service
 - (2) Office of Biometric Identity Management
 - ii) Business-support entities
 - (1) Office of the Chief Financial Officer

¹⁰OCHCO began to provide human capital services directly to FPS when FPS moved to the Management Directorate.

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- (2) Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer
 - (3) Office of the Chief Information Officer
 - (4) Office of the Chief Procurement Officer
 - (5) Program Accountability and Risk Management
 - (6) Office of the Chief Readiness Support Officer
 - (7) Office of the Chief Security Officer

Source: DHS documentation. | GAO-23-105361

Officials Described Multiple Benefits of FPS's New Organizational Placement but Cited Human Capital Challenges

Officials Said FPS Has Benefited from Improved Support, Credibility, and Coordination in the Management Directorate

FPS and Management Directorate officials said that FPS has experienced positive outcomes in its new placement in the Management Directorate. Specifically, these officials said that FPS has benefited from improved support, credibility, and coordination in the Directorate.

Improved support. FPS officials said they are more supported in the Management Directorate. Three FPS Regional Directors said that the Acting Under Secretary for Management, who has expertise in law enforcement, has a stronger understanding of FPS's mission than do officials in FPS's previous placement. As a result, the Acting Under Secretary for Management advocates for FPS with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, as well as with other DHS law enforcement agencies. This advocacy has led to more engagement with other DHS agencies on homeland security operations, as we discuss below. Further, four FPS Regional Directors said the Acting Under Secretary has shown his support for the work the regions perform by visiting their offices or by meeting with regional officials when FPS was responding to events, such as protests or high-profile court cases, at facilities FPS is responsible for protecting.

Improved credibility. FPS officials said that the agency has gained credibility among DHS agencies since FPS moved to the Management Directorate because FPS is more involved in DHS operations. FPS officials said the agency's involvement in these operations has enabled FPS to better integrate into DHS's mission, which was one of the goals DHS had established for FPS's new organizational placement. One way FPS has become more involved in DHS's operations is through the deployment of law enforcement officers to support DHS operations. For example, FPS deploys law enforcement officers to augment security at FPS-protected facilities during heightened security situations or to support other DHS components' homeland security operations, such as securing facilities at the nation's borders or disaster locations.¹¹ In fiscal year 2021, FPS deployed law enforcement officers to augment security at FPS-protected facilities during protests, including a courthouse in Portland, Oregon. As another example, in June 2022, FPS and DHS's U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) signed an agreement to enable FPS to detail law enforcement officers to, among other things, provide security at CBP facilities, such as at migrant housing units, in the southwest border region.¹² FPS has increased its deployment of law enforcement officers since fiscal year 2020—FPS's first fiscal year in the Management Directorate. FPS data shows that the number of days it deployed law enforcement officers more than doubled from about 9,000 deployment days in fiscal year 2020 to about 20,300 days in fiscal year 2021.¹³

Another way FPS has become more involved in DHS's operations is through participation in DHS's Operations Deputies Board meetings. FPS began to participate in these meetings after it moved to the Management

¹¹According to FPS officials, FPS conducts legal reviews of requests from other DHS components to deploy FPS law enforcement officers to confirm that the work performed by the deployed officers will be within the scope of the statutory authority applicable to FPS.

¹²The law enforcement support FPS provides other federal agencies, and the fees FPS charges for this support, are governed by agreements between FPS and the other agencies.

¹³FPS's deployments in fiscal years 2020 and 2021 involved law enforcement officers from its Rapid Protection Force and other FPS law enforcement officers, most of whom are assigned to FPS regional offices and headquarters. The Rapid Protection Force, which is a team of law enforcement officers that FPS can quickly deploy to heightened security situations. An FPS official involved in planning for deploying FPS law enforcement officers said that FPS sometimes uses contract guards to support homeland security operations. Contract guards check identification cards, perform basic patrol, and monitor camera systems.

Directorate. The Board is a DHS forum for FPS and other DHS agencies to identify homeland security issues, share information, and coordinate operations.¹⁴ FPS officials stated that their agency's participation in the Board meetings provides an opportunity for FPS to offer support and to be supported by the other DHS agencies. According to FPS officials, including a Regional Director, FPS's involvement in these meetings has enabled FPS to become more integrated into DHS's mission and to be seen as a more credible player in DHS.

Improved coordination. FPS's placement in the Management Directorate has improved coordination between FPS and certain Management Directorate offices. As previously discussed, Management Directorate offices are responsible for providing policies, guidance, oversight, and support to all agencies across DHS. When FPS was in CISA, Management Directorate offices coordinated with CISA regarding matters concerning FPS, according to FPS officials. In its new placement, FPS directly coordinates with Management Directorate offices. For example, Management Directorate and FPS officials said FPS participates in meetings with the Office of the Chief Information Officer on issues related to developing FPS's information technology systems, and with the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer on guard contract issues, instead of being represented by CISA. We have previously reported that having the right participants or agencies involved in a collaborative effort can help resolve challenges.¹⁵

According to FPS and Management Directorate officials, FPS's participation in meetings with Management Directorate offices has improved information sharing and enabled the offices to better understand and find solutions to the challenges FPS is facing. For example, Management Directorate officials said FPS's participation in procurement meetings enabled the Management Directorate to quickly help FPS adapt its contracts to reflect changes to guard services during COVID-19. Officials said they would have previously heard about these types of challenges through CISA, but the discussion of solutions flowed more smoothly and quickly with FPS's direct participation in the meetings.

¹⁴The Board consists of 12 operational agencies and other entities, including FPS, as well as 15 support agencies that focus on, for example, civil rights, training, intelligence, and public affairs.

¹⁵[GAO-12-1022](#).

FPS and Management Directorate Have Not Sufficiently Collaborated on Hiring Issues to Address Ongoing Human Capital Challenges

FPS has faced long-standing challenges in managing human capital, and these challenges have not yet been fully resolved since its placement in the Management Directorate. In June 2010, when FPS was in the agency that was later re-designated as CISA, we reported that FPS had difficulty obtaining the staffing needed to adequately protect federal facilities.¹⁶ FPS's staffing difficulties have continued. According to FPS data, at the end of fiscal year 2021, FPS had not filled 21 percent of its positions, including about 200 law enforcement positions. Two FPS Regional Directors we interviewed said the current pandemic environment of limited occupancy in federal facilities has resulted in fewer incidents at facilities needing FPS's attention. However, the Directors cautioned that as facilities return to pre-COVID operations, FPS's staffing shortages could affect its ability to carry out its responsibilities.

When FPS moved to the Management Directorate, the Directorate's Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) became responsible for providing human capital services to FPS, such as those related to hiring, recruiting, and providing employee benefits.¹⁷ One of the goals DHS had established for FPS's new placement was to effectively manage human capital. To that end, OCHCO and FPS have taken some actions to address FPS's hiring challenges. For example, according to OCHCO officials, they have worked with FPS to determine how to meet hiring goals and which positions and locations to prioritize for hiring. Further, in December 2021, FPS began developing a new staffing model in conjunction with the Management Directorate to help identify resource requirements necessary for mission accomplishment. FPS officials said this staffing model, which is expected to be completed by the end of

¹⁶GAO, *Homeland Security: Preliminary Observations on the Federal Protective Service's Workforce Analysis and Planning Efforts*, [GAO-10-802R](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 14, 2010).

¹⁷When FPS was in CISA, CISA was responsible for providing human capital services to FPS. Within the Management Directorate, an office within OCHCO—known as Human Resources Management and Services—provides human capital services to FPS. OCHCO has been delegated authority from OPM to perform human capital actions. See 5 U.S.C. § 1104. This authority also allows OCHCO to fill competitive civil service jobs by performing activities such as recruiting and hiring. See 5 U.S.C. § 1104(a)(2). FPS performs some human capital activities, but it does not have delegated examining authority.

December 2022, will help FPS determine where to focus recruiting efforts to address staffing shortages.

However, FPS and OCHCO have not sufficiently collaborated regarding aspects of the hiring process; this insufficient collaboration has contributed to FPS's continued staffing challenges. For example, OCHCO uses standard processes to provide hiring and other human capital services to the DHS agencies they serve, including FPS. FPS officials said OCHCO's standard processes do not enable OCHCO to address FPS's needs for filling staff vacancies. In some instances, OCHCO uses a single vacancy announcement with a 100-applicant limit as a means to efficiently fill multiple, nationwide vacancies. However, FPS officials told us this approach may not produce a sufficient number of qualified applicants to fill vacancies in less popular, remote locations before the applicant limit for the announcement is reached.

On the other hand, OCHCO officials identified delays in getting agreement from FPS on the language for vacancy announcements and in scheduling interviews. OCHCO officials said the average time to hire FPS employees in fiscal year 2022 was 190 days as of August 2022—significantly longer than OCHCO's goal of hiring personnel within 125 calendar days from the time a request is made of its office. OCHCO officials also said that while some delays in hiring are unavoidable because some parts of the process (e.g., background checks, drug-testing) take time, other delays could be avoided. For example, OCHCO officials said if FPS managers had agreed on the language for vacancy announcements earlier, the announcements could have been posted more quickly.

Three documents guide FPS's and OCHCO's relationship—a document that delegates department-wide human capital responsibilities to OCHCO, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between FPS and OCHCO, and a document that establishes OCHCO's expectations for the services it provides to DHS agencies. As discussed below, these documents do not include a mutually agreed-upon human capital process for both FPS and OCHCO—in particular, for hiring actions.

- **Delegation to OCHCO.** The Under Secretary for Management has delegated authority to OCHCO to provide department-wide human

capital services.¹⁸ This document outlines OCHCO's human capital responsibilities for DHS. For example, the delegation gives OCHCO the authority to manage department-wide human capital efforts, such as recruiting and the appointment individuals to the civil service. However, it does not detail OCHCO's specific steps or timeframes for completing these tasks.

- **Memorandum of agreement (MOA).** OCHCO and FPS signed an MOA in November 2019 that outlines the types of human capital services OCHCO is to provide FPS and the agreement for FPS to pay OCHCO for those services. These services include recruiting, retirement and employee benefits, and payroll services. The MOA was established to define the financial relationship between FPS and OCHCO. The MOA does not describe the human capital processes OCHCO and FPS are to use, including respective roles and responsibilities, steps for decision-making, or timeframes for OCHCO to complete human capital actions.
- **OCHCO expectations.** OCHCO issued a document in 2017 that establishes expectations and goals for the human capital services it provides to the DHS agencies it services, including FPS.¹⁹ The document describes the standard processes OCHCO uses to provide human capital services. For example, the document describes OCHCO's responsibilities, steps for decision-making and timeframes for completing human capital actions, and OCHCO's expectations for human capital actions to be performed by DHS agencies. In October 2022, OCHCO officials said they were in the process of updating the expectations document and do not yet have timeframes for finalizing it. FPS officials cited concerns with the processes in the expectations document, stating that it does not take FPS's needs into consideration. OCHCO officials said that this document applies to all of the agencies it provides services to and that they are updating the document independently; in other words, they are not working with FPS or any of the other DHS agencies to update it.

In prior work, we identified working together to clarify roles and responsibilities as a leading practice for collaboration. Clarity can come from organizations working together to define and agree on their

¹⁸The Office of Personnel Management delegated examining authority to DHS, and DHS re-delegated the authority to certain components within the Department, including OCHCO.

¹⁹OCHCO updated the document in August 2018.

processes, including their respective roles and responsibilities, as well as steps for decision-making and timeframes for completing actions. We also identified developing written guidance and agreements as another leading practice for collaboration. Written documents on the agreements reached by two agencies can strengthen collaboration and help overcome differences.²⁰ Without establishing such mechanisms to facilitate collaboration and agreement regarding hiring processes and documenting their agreements, OCHCO and FPS may be unable to effectively and efficiently address FPS's staffing shortages and overcome its long-standing human capital challenges.

FPS Lacks Performance Information for Some Critical Activities

We found that DHS and FPS have performance measures for some of the seven critical operational and business-support activities we selected—either in DHS budget documentation or in FPS's strategic plan.²¹ However, FPS has not developed performance measures for two critical activities we selected that align with 2 of FPS's 12 strategic objectives.²² According to our prior work, performance measures provide useful evidence for assessing the performance in activities.²³ We have also reported that targets are necessary for successful performance measures because they enable agencies to compare actual results against planned performance.²⁴ We found that DHS established targets for those critical activities it included in its budget documentation, and DHS reported that FPS had met or exceeded the targets in fiscal year

²⁰[GAO-12-1022](#).

²¹Department of Homeland Security's fiscal year 2021 Congressional Budget Justification and Federal Protective Service strategic plan for fiscal years 2022-2026.

²²FPS's strategic plan includes 12 strategic objectives that describe the specific outcomes FPS is seeking to achieve. FPS reported that the objectives reflected recent developments affecting its work, such as cybersecurity challenges and an increased need for FPS to support national homeland security priorities. FPS developed the measures in its strategic plan to help the agency assess performance of some strategic objectives.

²³[GAO-15-602](#).

²⁴Our past work identified the nine key characteristics of successful performance measures. One of these characteristics is that performance measures have measurable targets. Measurable targets are quantifiable, numerical targets or other measurable values that allow for easier comparison with actual performance. For the other key characteristics of successful performance measures, see [GAO-03-143](#).

2021. FPS did not establish any targets for the critical activities included in its strategic plan (see table 1).

Table 1: Performance Measures, Strategic Objectives, and Targets for Selected Federal Protective Service (FPS) Critical Activities

Selected FPS critical activities	Location of performance measures	Performance measure(s)	Target(s)
Facility security assessments	DHS Budget Documentation	Percentage of high-risk facilities for which FPS conducts a facility security assessment in compliance with the schedule established by the Interagency Security Committee	100 percent
Contract guard management	DHS Budget Documentation	Percentage of guard posts at federal facilities that FPS officials visit	99 percent
Law enforcement response, policing and patrol	DHS Budget Documentation	Total number of days FPS law enforcement personnel are deployed on planned or unplanned operational events (such as special events).	512 days or more
	FPS strategic plan <i>Strategic objective: Deter crime in FPS-protected facilities</i>	Crime deterrence index ^a	None identified
	FPS strategic plan <i>Strategic objective: Improve post-incident response</i>	Average time to close an investigation	None identified
Information sharing and coordination	FPS strategic plan <i>Strategic objective: Increase FPS's presence in the government facilities sector</i>	External engagement activities and customer satisfaction	None identified
Human capital management	FPS strategic plan <i>Strategic objective: Design and shape the FPS workforce of the future</i>	Workforce diversity profile, attrition rate, and vacancy rate	None identified
Information technology management	FPS strategic plan <i>Strategic objective: Modernize the FPS infrastructure</i>	None identified	None identified
Training for FPS officials	FPS strategic plan <i>Strategic objective: Develop the FPS workforce</i>	None identified	None identified

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security's fiscal year 2021 Congressional Budget Justification and Federal Protective Service strategic plan for fiscal years 2022-2026. | GAO-23-105361

^aAs of August 2022, FPS was in the process of defining the crime deterrence index, according to officials.

In FPS's strategic plan, FPS did not identify performance measures for its strategic objectives of modernizing the FPS infrastructure and developing the FPS workforce (which align with the critical activities of information technology management and training, respectively) because the

objectives are long-range and because FPS has identified related initiatives. The strategic plan describes some of these initiatives, such as developing an infrastructure plan and expanding training opportunities. FPS officials told us that as of October 2022, they have completed some initiatives described in the strategic plan, including developing new training for FPS employees. While tracking the status of actions completed is a useful practice to manage programs, FPS is not using this information to assess its progress toward these two strategic objectives. Having measures could help FPS determine its progress towards meeting these objectives.

In regard to the lack of targets for the performance measures in its strategic plan, FPS officials said that, as of October 2022, FPS was in the process of collecting or reviewing data to determine appropriate targets. Specifically, officials said they were reviewing data from different systems to establish a baseline and future targets. For example, for the performance measure related to deterring crime in FPS-protected facilities, FPS officials said in August 2022 that they are reviewing data such as the percentage of facilities that passed covert security tests and the percentage of facilities with no criminal incidents reported. We have previously reported that collecting baseline and trend data can help agencies determine realistic performance goals, given past performance.²⁵

FPS officials said it is taking FPS longer than anticipated to develop performance measures, including targets, in part because it has not dedicated staff for this purpose. Additionally, FPS officials said they are in the process of assessing data systems to determine which data can be used to develop targets, a process that has slowed target development. Developing performance measures with targets for each strategic objective in the strategic plan could help FPS fully measure program performance and identify gaps and areas in need of improvement, and understand the extent to which FPS is achieving its objectives within the Management Directorate.

In addition, performance measures with associated targets could also strengthen the Management Directorate's oversight of FPS. The Under Secretary for Management is responsible for overseeing entities within the Management Directorate, including FPS. The Acting Under Secretary

²⁵GAO, *GPR Performance Reports*, [GAO/IGD-96-66R](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 14, 1996).

for Management told us the Directorate is still learning about FPS as an agency, but acknowledged that FPS performance measures could be improved. Project Management Institute guidance states that reviewing an organization's performance results against its strategic objectives can support oversight.²⁶ If FPS had performance measures with targets, the Under Secretary for Management and the Directorate could better ensure FPS makes sufficient progress towards its strategic objectives and monitors and assesses risk. The Under Secretary for Management may also be better able to understand the challenges FPS continues to face, such as those related to human capital, and determine the support FPS needs to address these challenges.

Conclusions

FPS is responsible for protecting federal facilities and the millions of people who work in or visit them around the country. Given this critical mission as well as the challenges FPS faced in previous organizational placements, it is important that FPS is set up to succeed in its current placement in the Management Directorate and has the ability to assess performance in activities. Further collaboration and agreement between OCHCO and FPS on hiring processes—including mutually clarifying roles, responsibilities, steps for decision-making, and timeframes for completing actions—and documenting their agreements could help FPS effectively address its staffing shortages and overcome its long-standing human capital challenges.

Further, while FPS measures the performance of some of its critical activities, FPS does not yet have sufficient information to fully do so. Developing performance measures with targets for each strategic objective in FPS's strategic plan could help FPS fully measure program performance and identify gaps and areas in need of improvement, and help FPS understand the extent to which it is achieving its objectives within Management Directorate. Such performance measures could also help the Management Directorate oversee FPS.

²⁶Project Management Institute, Inc., *Governance of Portfolios, Programs, and Projects: A Practice Guide*, (2016).

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making the following two recommendations—one to the Under Secretary for Management and the other to the Director of FPS:

The Under Secretary for Management should direct OCHCO and FPS to strengthen mechanisms to facilitate collaboration and agreement on hiring processes and document their agreements accordingly. (Recommendation 1)

The Director of FPS should fully develop performance measures for each strategic objective in its strategic plan and ensure that each of these measures has a related performance target. (Recommendation 2)

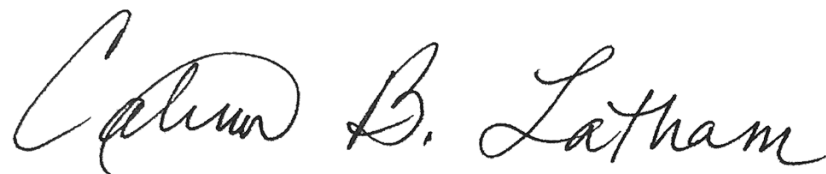
Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to DHS for review and comment. In its comments reproduced in appendix I, DHS agreed with the recommendations. DHS also provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees and the Secretary of Homeland Security. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <https://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-2834 or LathamC@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix II.

Sincerely yours,



Catina B. Latham

Letter

Acting Director, Physical Infrastructure

Appendix I: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528



December 6, 2022

Catina B. Latham
Acting Director, Physical Infrastructure Issues
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Management Response to Draft Report GAO-23-105361, "FEDERAL
PROTECTIVE SERVICE: More Collaboration on Hiring and Additional
Performance Information Needed"

Dear Ms. Latham,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS or the Department) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

DHS leadership is pleased to note GAO's acknowledgement of benefits the Department believes resulted from the transition of the Federal Protective Service (FPS) to DHS's Management Directorate (MGMT) in 2019, including: (1) improved support from agency leadership; (2) improved coordination with MGMT offices; and (3) increased credibility among DHS agencies because FPS is more involved in security operations. DHS remains committed to FPS leveraging its organizational placement within MGMT to further the Department's security operations, including by strengthening its organizational capabilities in process areas such as human capital operations, risk management, and performance management.


The draft report contained two recommendations with which the Department concurs. Enclosed find our detailed response to each recommendation. DHS previously submitted technical comments addressing several accuracy, contextual, and other issues under a separate cover for GAO's consideration.

**Appendix I: Comments from the Department of
Homeland Security**

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

Sincerely,

JIM H
CRUMPACKER

 Digitally signed by JIM H
CRUMPACKER
Date: 2022.12.06 13:26:38 -05'00'

JIM H. CRUMPACKER, CIA, CFE
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Enclosure

**Enclosure: Management Response to Recommendations
Contained in GAO-23-105361**

GAO Recommended that the Under Secretary for MGMT direct the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) and FPS to:

Recommendation 1: Strengthen mechanisms to facilitate collaboration and agreement on hiring processes and document their agreements accordingly.

Response: Concur. Although FPS and OCHCO currently have mechanisms in place to facilitate collaboration, the Department agrees that strengthening these mechanisms and documenting agreements can help improve FPS’ ability to hire. Accordingly, FPS—in coordination with OCHCO—is in the process of streamlining internal recruitment and staffing processes, which should reduce overall time to hire rates. Efforts to reduce these rates include:

Actions	Estimated Completion Date (ECD)
Initiate efforts to: (1) establish additional documented agreements to more fully define the human capital operations processes that exist between FPS and OCHCO; (2) identify areas where opportunities exist for additional written guidance; and (3) identify opportunities to leverage FPS’s in-house capabilities to improve service delivery.	January 31, 2023
Implement quarterly assessments to ensure FPS and OCHCO remain on-target to meet other activities described in this response.	January 31, 2023
Hire a Senior Executive Human Capital Professional.	March 31, 2023
Establish specific Service Level Agreements on hiring processes, which will further reduce time to hire rates.	December 29, 2023
Implement prioritization of vacancies for DHS’s FY 2023 hiring strategies, as appropriate.	December 29, 2023

Overall ECD: December 29, 2023.

GAO Recommended that the Director of FPS:

Recommendation 2: Fully develop performance measures for each strategic objective in its strategic plan and ensure that each of these measures has a related performance target.

Response: Concur. FPS has made progress to establish performance measures for most of the objectives included in the agency’s Strategic Plan. FPS’s Office of the Chief of Staff is overseeing data collection efforts that are currently underway to review this progress and identify appropriate targets for each strategic objective. ECD: September 29, 2023.

Text of Appendix I: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

December 6, 2022

Catina B. Latham

Acting Director, Physical Infrastructure Issues

U.S. Government Accountability Office 441 G Street, NW

Washington, DC 20548

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The draft report contained two recommendations with which the Department concurs. Enclosed find our detailed response to each recommendation. DHS previously submitted technical comments addressing several accuracy, contextual, and other issues under a separate cover for GAO's consideration.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

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JIM H. CRUMPACKER, CIA, CFE

Director

Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

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Response: Concur. FPS has made progress to establish performance measures for most of the objectives included in the agency's Strategic Plan. FPS's Office of the Chief of Staff is overseeing data collection efforts that are currently underway to review this progress and identify appropriate targets for each strategic objective. ECD:

September 29, 2023.

Appendix II: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Catina B. Latham, (202) 512-2834 or LathamC@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, the following individuals made important contributions to this report: Maria Edelstein, Assistant Director; Amelia Shachoy, Assistant Director; Roshni Davé, Analyst-In-Charge; Sam Facas; Alana Finley; Geoff Hamilton; Shirley Hwang; Ben Licht; Josh Ormond; Steven Putansu; Anna Beth Smith; Sarah Veale; and Laurel Voloder.

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