

# GAO@100 Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-22-104093](#), a report to congressional addressees

## Why GAO Did This Study

Personnel vetting helps protect the nation's interests by aiming to establish and maintain trust in the federal workforce. High-quality vetting processes can reduce the risk of unauthorized disclosure of classified information. In 2018 GAO placed the government-wide personnel security clearance process on its High-Risk List due to a lack of performance measures and issues with IT systems.

This report evaluates, among other things, the extent to which the PAC Principals have implemented Trusted Workforce 2.0; ODNI has formalized continuous evaluation and assessed program performance; and DOD has planned for the IT and workforce needed to support its personnel vetting mission. To conduct this work, GAO analyzed relevant documentation, interviewed officials from the agencies represented by the four PAC Principals, and collected and reviewed data on continuous evaluation. GAO also assessed information collected against GAO leading practices on performance measures and project schedules, and evaluated DOD's actions against a DOD instruction on workforce planning.

## What GAO Recommends

Congress should consider requiring the DNI to develop performance measures for CE. GAO is also making three recommendations, including that DOD revise the NBIS schedule to fully meet the characteristics of a reliable schedule and establish a milestone to complete strategic workforce planning. ODNI did not indicate whether it concurred with GAO's recommendations. DOD concurred with GAO's two recommendations to it.

View [GAO-22-104093](#). For more information, contact Brian M. Mazanec at (202) 512-5130 or [mazanecb@gao.gov](mailto:mazanecb@gao.gov).

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## PERSONNEL VETTING

### Actions Needed to Implement Reforms, Address Challenges, and Improve Planning

## What GAO Found

The Security, Suitability, and Credentialing Performance Accountability Council (PAC) Principals—comprising the Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget, the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security—have made progress in implementing Trusted Workforce 2.0, which is a reform of personnel vetting processes. The PAC Principals reduced a backlog of investigations, have begun to develop a policy framework for a new approach to personnel vetting, and have begun to develop needed information technology (IT) systems.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) has formalized requirements to enroll the eligible national security population in continuous evaluation (CE), but has not assessed program performance. CE entails enrolling employees in IT systems that conduct automated record checks on a frequent basis. As of March 2021, about three-quarters of the eligible national security population in executive branch agencies were enrolled in a CE system, according to ODNI officials. In 2017 GAO recommended that ODNI develop performance measures to evaluate CE and a plan to address its impact on agency resources. ODNI concurred with GAO's recommendation but has delayed taking actions in response and will not do so until CE is fully implemented, according to ODNI officials. This lack of progress may warrant congressional consideration, as it could limit ODNI's and congressional decision-makers' ability to assess the effectiveness and impact of continuous evaluation.

The Department of Defense (DOD) does not have a reliable schedule to help manage the National Background Investigation Services (NBIS) system. DOD has been developing NBIS since 2016, and DOD plans to replace the IT systems it currently uses to manage the background investigation process with NBIS. GAO assessed the NBIS schedule using GAO best practices and found it did not meet the characteristics of a reliable schedule (see table). By aligning the NBIS schedule with the characteristics of a reliable schedule, DOD could improve the likelihood of completing NBIS on schedule and improve decision-making during the program's development.

**Table: Extent to Which NBIS Schedule Meets Best Practices**

Characteristics of a reliable schedule	GAO assessment of the characteristic
Comprehensive	Partially met
Controlled	Partially met
Well-constructed	Minimally met
Credible	Minimally met

Source: GAO analysis of information for the National Background Investigation Services (NBIS) system. | GAO-22-104093

Further, DOD has taken limited strategic workforce planning steps for its entire personnel vetting workforce because it has not established a milestone for doing so. By establishing a milestone, DOD would create an accountability mechanism to complete its planning, which would help it determine the right mix of skills and competencies needed to effectively accomplish the personnel vetting mission.