

Why GAO Did This Study

In fiscal year 2010, more than half of the \$367 billion dollars the Department of Defense (DOD) spent on contracts was spent on services. Buying services is fundamentally different than buying weapon systems, yet most acquisition regulations, policies, processes, and training remain structured for acquiring weapon systems. Over the last decade, reports from GAO, DOD, and Congress have raised issues about services acquisitions and have also highlighted the importance of acquisition training.

GAO previously reported on the training provided to the acquisition workforce as defined by the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA). This report addresses personnel working on services acquisitions who were outside the DAWIA acquisition workforce—termed non-DAWIA personnel with acquisition-related responsibilities—and the extent to which (1) DOD knows the composition of this population, (2) this population is taking acquisition training, and (3) DOD has implemented past recommendations related to this population.

To complete this work, GAO reviewed a nongeneralizable sample of 29 service contracts, relevant policies, and recommendations from previous reports and met with key DOD officials.

What GAO Recommends

Among other things, GAO recommends that DOD establish criteria for identifying non-DAWIA personnel with acquisition-related responsibilities and assess the critical skills needed to perform their role in the acquisition process. DOD concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-11-892](#) or key components. For more information, contact Belva Martin at (202) 512-4841 or martinb@gao.gov.

DEFENSE ACQUISITION WORKFORCE

Better Identification, Development, and Oversight Needed for Personnel Involved in Acquiring Services

What GAO Found

Non-DAWIA personnel with acquisition-related responsibilities represented more than half of the 430 personnel involved in the 29 services acquisition contracts in this review. Several organizations have been tracking and managing the DAWIA workforce, but no DOD organization has systematically identified non-DAWIA personnel with acquisition-related responsibilities, the competencies they need to conduct their acquisition duties, or been designated responsibility for overseeing this group. DOD is not required to identify these personnel and has not established a process to do so. Identifying this population is challenging, partly because, as DOD officials noted, it is a transient one that is dispersed across many DOD organizations. Additionally, these people come from a variety of career fields and are often involved in acquisitions as a secondary duty. DOD has taken action to identify part of this population and provide them training—requirements personnel for major weapon systems—but has not done this for all non-DAWIA personnel with acquisition-related responsibilities.

Most non-DAWIA personnel with acquisition-related responsibilities in GAO's sample received some acquisition training. The required training was varied and limited and applied largely to contracting officer's representatives (CORs) and not to other non-DAWIA personnel such as requirements officials, technical assistants, or multifunctional team members. For example, the Air Force required two Air Force-specific phases of training, while the Navy and Marine Corps policy did not specify what training was required. Demand for acquisition training courses by non-DAWIA personnel with acquisition-related responsibilities has been increasing in the past few years at the Defense Acquisition University, but DOD has limited information to gauge the current and future demand for training this population in the long term or the effectiveness of the current training that is available. DOD has taken short-term actions to require training and provide resources for some non-DAWIA personnel with acquisition-related responsibilities. For example, DOD recognized the importance of CORs in several memoranda requiring that they be properly trained and appointed before contract performance begins on services acquisitions.

DOD has made some progress in implementing the recommendations of reports from the Panel on Contracting Integrity and GAO that related to management and training of the COR—a portion of non-DAWIA personnel with acquisition-related responsibilities. For example, for the four relevant GAO recommendations—which are related to training, assignment, and oversight of the CORs—DOD fully concurred with all of them, has fully implemented three, and is implementing a COR tracking system to address the remaining recommendation. The House Armed Services Committee and the Defense Science Board issued reports since 2009 that made recommendations that were relevant to this population but were made too recently for GAO to assess their implementation. For example, the House Armed Services Committee Panel on Defense Acquisition Reform report recommended DOD reform the services requirements process in order to address the different set of challenges services acquisitions pose compared to the procurement of goods.