GAO

September 2022

VA ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT

Actions Needed to Better Manage the Acquisition Workforce

Accessible Version

GAO-22-105031

GAO Highlights

September 2022

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Actions Needed to Better Manage the Acquisition Workforce

Why GAO Did This Study

VA's acquisition workforce acquires goods and services to support VA's mission. VA has faced challenges in acquisition management, such as in the areas of acquisition training and contracting officer workload. In 2019, GAO added VA acquisition management to its High-Risk List.

GAO was asked to examine VA's acquisition workforce. This report assesses (1) the extent to which VA has comprehensive data on its acquisition workforce, (2) VA's acquisition workforce's perspectives on performing its responsibilities, and (3) the extent to which VA leadership manages issues facing its acquisition workforce.

To conduct this work, GAO collected, reconciled, and analyzed data on the workforce for fiscal year 2021. GAO surveyed a statistical sample of contracting officers, their representatives, and program/project managers to identify issues reported by this workforce. The results of this survey are generalizable. GAO conducted follow-up discussions and interviews with VA's acquisition workforce staff and senior leadership.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making two recommendations: that VA (1) take steps to ensure accurate and up-to-date workforce data, and (2) document the HCAs' roles and responsibilities for managing the acquisition workforce. VA agreed with GAO's recommendations.

What GAO Found

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) acquisition workforce plans, manages, and oversees a high volume of contracting to support its mission. However, VA does not have comprehensive data on this workforce. It does not have accurate counts of contracting officers, contracting officer representatives, and program/project managers; where they are located; and certifications. VA's insight into its workforce is hindered by inaccurate, outdated data that are manually updated. Taking steps to ensure the accuracy of its workforce data would better enable VA to make data-driven human capital decisions and address workforce issues.

VA's acquisition workforce provided perspectives on several aspects of their work experience as part of GAO's survey, including performance management, retention, telework, and workload. For example, a majority of respondents said they were generally satisfied with their ability to telework. However, a majority also reported that their roles and responsibilities are not clearly established.

Examples of Survey Results from GAO Survey of VA Acquisition Workforce
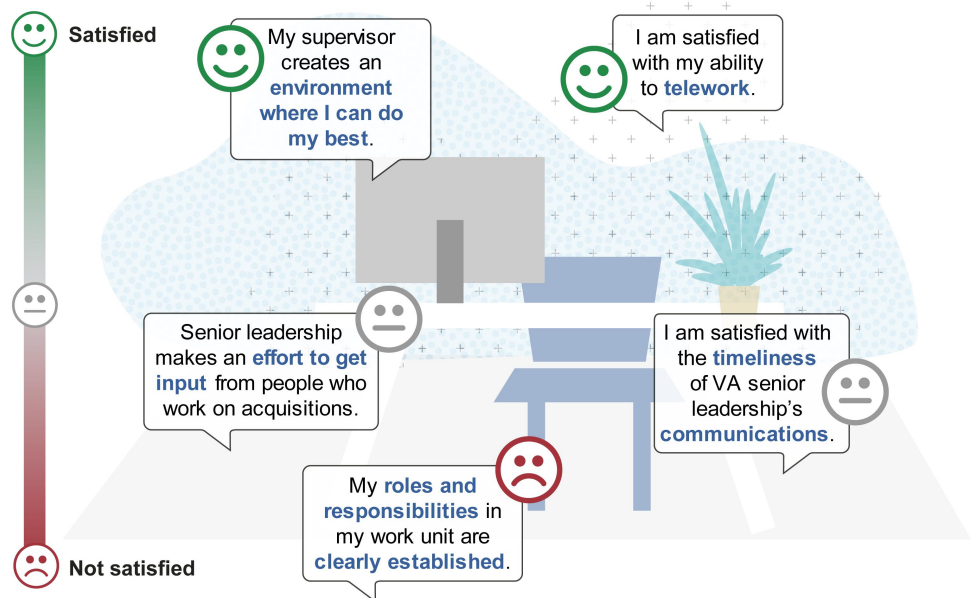
Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs acquisition workforce survey data. | GAO-22-105031

VA acquisition leadership acknowledged issues raised by the acquisition workforce, and has taken some steps to address them. For example, some Heads of Contracting Activity (HCA), who oversee individual contracting organizations, have asked managers to meet with their staff more frequently to discuss performance. VA acquisition leadership has delegated certain acquisition responsibilities to HCAs, but has not clearly defined their responsibilities in managing the workforce. The lack of documented roles and responsibilities for HCAs in managing the acquisition workforce poses an obstacle to effectively managing this workforce. Documenting these roles would better position VA to address the issues facing its acquisition workforce.

United States Government Accountability Office

Contents

Figures

Abbreviations

AHCMS	Acquisition Human Capital Management Service
AKP	Acquisition Knowledge Portal
CFM	Office of Construction and Facilities Management
COR	contracting officer's representative
DOD	Department of Defense
eCMS	Electronic Contract Management System
FAC-C	Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting
FAC-COR	Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representatives
FAC-P/PM	Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers
FAI	Federal Acquisition Institute
FAITAS	Federal Acquisition Institute Training Application System
HCA	Head of Contracting Activity
iFAMS	Integrated Financial and Acquisition Management System
IFCAP	Integrated Funds Distribution Control Point Activity Accounting & Procurement
NAC	National Acquisition Center
OAL	Office of Acquisition and Logistics
OALC	Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction
OFPP	Office of Federal Procurement Policy
OPAL	Office of Procurement, Acquisition and Logistics
RPO	regional procurement office
SAC	Strategic Acquisition Center
TAC	Technology Acquisition Center
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
VAAA	Veterans Affairs Acquisition Academy

| VHA | Veterans Health Administration |

GAO U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

441 G St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

September 29, 2022

Congressional Requesters

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has among the highest obligations and number of contract actions in the federal government. This large volume of contracting is managed by thousands of people in VA's acquisition workforce including contracting officers, contracting officer's representatives (COR), and program/project managers.[1] From fiscal years 2017 through 2021, VA's acquisition workforce obligated about $158 billion in contracts across approximately 28 million contract actions to procure a range of products and services to provide for the nation's veterans.

Over the past several years, GAO has reported on issues faced by this workforce. In 2019, GAO added VA Acquisition Management to its High-Risk List in part because of VA's challenges in this area, including inadequate acquisition training and contracting officer workload. You requested that we examine VA's acquisition workforce.

This report examines the (1) extent to which VA has comprehensive data on its acquisition workforce, (2) VA's acquisition workforce's perspectives on performing its responsibilities, and (3) the extent to which VA leadership manages challenges facing the acquisition workforce.

To address the first objective, we collected available data on VA's acquisition workforce for fiscal year 2021. We used the definition of acquisition workforce established by the Office of Management and Budget's Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP), which includes contracting officers, CORs, and program/project managers. We obtained data elements including the total number of acquisition workforce employees enterprise-wide, individual totals by VA organization and occupation, associated certification levels, and contact information. We used information VA components provided from HR Smart, the Federal

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[1]In this report, we refer to employees classified in the 1102 series as contracting officers. The 1102 series includes positions that manage, supervise, perform, or develop policies and procedures related to the evaluation, administration, termination, and close out of contracts.

Acquisition Institute Training Application System (FAITAS), and Cornerstone OnDemand and assessed the reliability of these systems.[2]

To address the second objective, we sent a web-based survey to a statistical sample of VA's acquisition workforce, including contracting officers, CORs, and program/project managers. This generalizable survey of 879 employees had a 48 percent response rate. The survey included topics such as workload, performance management, training, and employee retention. We used the survey responses to analyze and identify key themes related to acquisition workforce issues. We used these themes as the basis of discussions in follow-up discussions with selected acquisition workforce members.[3]

To address the third objective, we spoke with VA's leadership, including VA's Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (OALC) and the Heads of Contracting Activity (HCA). We provided information to VA leadership about areas of concern identified in the survey, and we asked officials about the extent to which they were aware of these concerns and had plans to address them. For a more detailed scope and methodology, see appendix I. For further information on our survey, see appendix II.

We conducted this performance audit from February 2021 to September 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.

Background

VA is responsible for providing benefits to veterans, including health care, disability compensation, and various types of financial assistance. In fiscal year 2022, VA reported receiving a total budget of $270.7 billion,

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[2]While data in these systems were not fully up-to-date, we determined these systems were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of our review.

[3]We selected acquisition workforce employees to participate in follow-up discussions by asking VA leadership to distribute emails to all VA acquisition workforce employees, including employees who were not in our original survey sample, to ask if they would like to participate in discussion groups. A total of 24 employees across VA participated in the discussion groups.

about $25 billion higher than in fiscal year 2021. VA operates one of the largest health care delivery systems in the nation through the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), with 172 medical centers and more than 1,000 outpatient facilities. Since fiscal year 2006, VA has faced growing demand for its health care services, with the total number of veterans enrolled in VA's health care system increasing from 7.9 million to more than 9 million. To carry out its mission and support its operations, VA spends tens of billions of dollars annually to procure a wide range of goods and services, including medical supplies, construction services, and information technology.

VA's Major Operational Administrations and Offices with Department-wide Acquisition Roles

At VA, the following senior leadership officials play key roles in managing the acquisition workforce:

- **Chief Acquisition Officer:** VA's Chief Acquisition Officer is responsible for developing and maintaining an acquisition career management program to ensure the development of a competent, professional acquisition workforce.

- **Senior Procurement Executive:** VA's Senior Procurement Executive is responsible for ensuring that procurement goals align with agencies' missions, establishing procurement policies, and managing agency procurement activities.

- **Acquisition Career Manager:** VA's Acquisition Career Manager is responsible for managing compliance with federal certification requirements from OFPP and the Federal Acquisition Institute for members of VA's acquisition workforce. At VA, the Acquisition Career Manager is also the Acting Director, Acquisition Human Capital Management Service.

Many VA acquisition programs are administered by its three major operational administrations: VHA, Veterans Benefits Administration, and National Cemetery Administration. These operate largely independently from one another, and each has its own contracting authority.

In addition to the three operational administrations, VA has a department-wide acquisition function, which is housed within OALC. The Principal Executive Director of OALC is VA's Chief Acquisition Officer. OALC is further broken down into (1) the Office of Acquisition and Logistics (OAL); (2) the Office of Procurement, Acquisition and Logistics; and (3) the Office

of Construction and Facilities Management. The Executive Director of OAL is VA's Senior Procurement Executive. Figure 1 illustrates VA's major operational administrations and offices with department-wide acquisition roles.

Figure 1: Heads of Contracting Activity Organizations at the Department of Veterans Affairs

- Organizations with a Head of Contracting Activity
- Organizations without a Head of Contracting Activity
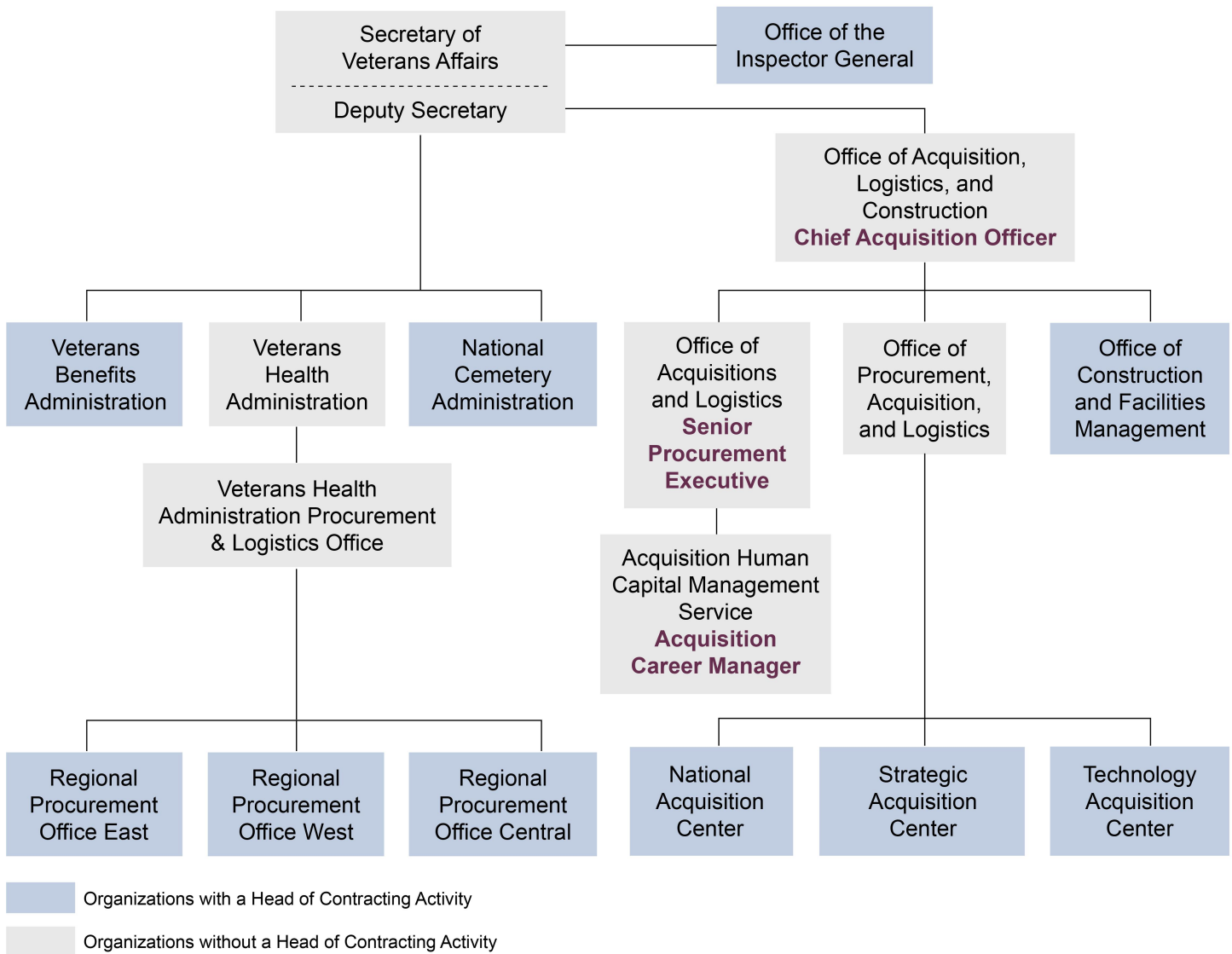
Bold = Key officials with roles in managing the acquisition workforce

Source: GAO presentation of the Department of Veterans Affairs information. | GAO-22-105031

The roles and responsibilities of key VA offices involved in managing the acquisition workforce are outlined in table 1.

Table 1: Acquisition Workforce Management Roles and Responsibilities across the Department of Veterans Affairs

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) acquisition offices	Roles and responsibilities
Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (OALC)	• Provides direct operational support to VA's administrations and staff offices through its three major organizational components: Office of Acquisitions and Logistics; Office of Procurement, Acquisition and Logistics; and Office of Construction and Facilities Management. • Maintains oversight responsibility on behalf of the Secretary to ensure VA complies with laws, policies, and directions from executive branch partners. • The Principal Executive Director of OALC is VA's Chief Acquisition Officer. The Chief Acquisition Officer is responsible for developing and maintaining an acquisition career management program to ensure an adequate professional workforce.
Office of Acquisition and Logistics (OAL)	• Comprised of four major organizational components: Office of Acquisition Program Support; Office of Procurement Policy, Systems and Oversight; Office of Logistics and Supply Chain Management; and the VA Acquisition Academy. • Provides oversight responsibility on behalf of the Secretary to ensure VA complies with laws, policies, and directions from entities, such as the Office of Management and Budget, Department of Treasury, General Services Administration, Government Accountability Office, and Congress. • The Deputy Assistant Secretary for OAL is VA's Senior Procurement Executive.
Office of Procurement, Acquisition and Logistics (OPAL)	• Comprised of three major organizational components: National Acquisition Center, Strategic Acquisition Center, and Technology Acquisition Center, and two enterprise-wide support organizations: Category Management Support Office and Logistics Support Service. • Provides comprehensive, strategic acquisition support for VA's highly complex requirements, including strategic information technology and medical systems. • OPAL is led by the Deputy Executive Director, OALC, who is responsible for directing acquisition, contracting, and contract administration and giving advice to OPAL's Executive Leadership and Heads of Contracting Activities at the national acquisition offices.
Office of Construction and Facilities Management (CFM)	• Responsible for the planning, design, and construction of all major construction projects, which are those greater than $20 million. • Acquires real property for use by VA elements through the purchase of land and buildings, as well as long-term lease acquisitions.
Heads of Contracting Activities (HCA)	• 10 offices within VA that serve contracting functions. • Responsible for implementing an effective procurement program, ensuring compliance with laws and regulations, and ensuring contracting officers meet core training requirements, among other duties.

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Veterans Affairs' information. | GAO-22-105031

In addition to VA's department-wide acquisition offices, VA also has 10 HCAs, one per major VA organizational element or major acquisition organization. Within their organizations, HCAs are responsible for implementing an effective procurement program, ensuring compliance with laws and regulations, and ensuring contracting officers meet core training requirements, among other duties.

According to HCAs, their scope of responsibility for VA's acquisition workforce is limited to contracting officers, and does not include other members of the acquisition workforce—program/project managers and CORs—as these functions fall under other management chains and may be other duties as assigned. For example, an employee's primary role may be a doctor, but they may also be a COR overseeing administration of a contract. Ultimately, while the HCAs derive their contracting authority from the Senior Procurement Executive, who is housed within OALC, the HCAs for the operational administrations report to their administration leadership, rather than OALC and the Senior Procurement Executive.[4]

Agencies That Have a Role in Providing Direction for the Federal Acquisition Workforce

OFPP provides overall direction for government-wide procurement policies, regulations, and procedures with the goal of promoting economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in acquisition processes—including how agencies manage their acquisition workforces. OFPP published Policy Letter 05-01 in 2005, which, among other things, broadly defines the acquisition workforce and establishes the government-wide framework for creating a federal acquisition workforce with the skills necessary to accomplish agency missions.[5] OFPP also published a 2013 memorandum on increasing efficiencies in the training, development, and management of the acquisition workforce.[6]

The Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI), managed by the General Services Administration, is responsible for fostering and promoting the development of a federal acquisition workforce. FAI facilitates and promotes career development and strategic human capital management for the acquisition workforce and manages agencies' use of certain government-wide acquisition workforce data systems. These systems include Cornerstone, a Defense Acquisition University system that tracks acquisition-related trainings and certifications.

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[4]VA is organized into three operational administrations—VHA, Veterans Benefits Administration, and National Cemetery Administration.

[5]Office of Federal Procurement Policy, *Developing and Managing the Acquisition Workforce*, OFPP Policy Letter 05-01 (Apr. 15, 2005).

[6]Office of Federal Procurement Policy, *Increasing Efficiencies in the Training, Development, and Management of the Acquisition Workforce*, OFPP Memorandum (Sept. 3, 2013).

GAO's Prior Work on Strategic Human Capital Management

In 2001, we designated strategic human capital management as a high-risk area because mission-critical skills gaps—both within federal agencies and across the federal workforce—pose a high risk to the nation since they impede the government from cost-effectively serving the public and achieving results.[7] Our work has emphasized that for federal agencies to meet 21st century challenges, they must develop long-term strategies for acquiring, developing, and retaining staff to achieve their missions and goals. Strategic workforce planning addresses two critical needs: (1) aligning an organization's human capital program with its current and emerging mission and programmatic goals, and (2) developing long-term strategies for acquiring, developing, and retaining staff to achieve programmatic goals.

Data System Challenges Hinder VA's Ability to Have Comprehensive Data on Its Acquisition Workforce

VA does not have comprehensive data to accurately track the totality and characteristics of its acquisition workforce using available data systems because the systems contain insufficient and out of date information. VA relies on multiple data systems, including both government-wide and VA-owned systems, to identify and track its acquisition workforce. These systems include Cornerstone—a Defense Acquisition University managed system that tracks acquisition-related trainings and certifications—and HR Smart—VA's human resources information system that supports personnel suitability, payroll, and position management. However, neither system was intended to provide comprehensive information on the acquisition workforce. According to VA officials, they must use information from Cornerstone and HR Smart to track VA's acquisition workforce. Specifically, HR Smart identifies all VA employees but does not identify which acquisition workforce roles—such as contracting officer, COR, or program/project manager—these employees hold; this certification information is contained in Cornerstone. Further, these systems are not linked, which makes it difficult to easily identify this workforce. Lastly, VA

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[7]GAO, *High Risk Series: An Update*, GAO-01-263 (Washington, D.C.: January 2001).

officials stated that in some cases the self-reported data in Cornerstone is not up-to-date or accurate.

Figure 2 outlines these and other relevant data systems that VA uses to identify and track its acquisition workforce.

Figure 2: Data Systems VA Uses to Identify and Track Its Acquisition Workforce

Systems Owned by Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

HR Smart

supports management functions such as personnel suitability, payroll, and position management. The system contains a wide range of personnel data elements including, but not limited to: occupation, position, tenure, etc.

In terms of identifying VA's acquisition workforce, HR Smart is primarily used to specifically identify VA's 1102 workforce. HR Smart does not contain information that could identify the contracting officer's representative (COR) and project or program manager portions of the acquisition workforce, as these functions are generally performed as "other duties" at VA, rather than as an employee's primary role.

The Electronic Contract Management System (eCMS)

is a comprehensive tool used by VA acquisition staff to create and manage VA acquisitions.

In terms of identifying VA's acquisition workforce, eCMS is used to identify active COR personnel.

Systems not owned by VA

The Federal Acquisition Institute Training Application System (FAITAS)

is a legacy system that was used by government acquisition officials to register for and track acquisition-related training and certification. FAITAS was phased out of use at VA in May 2021, but some reports from that system were still being used by VA management.

Cornerstone On Demand (Cornerstone)

is the information system that replaced FAITAS. Similar to its predecessor, Cornerstone allows acquisition officials to register for and track their acquisition-related trainings and certifications.

VA previously used FAITAS to identify all VA staff that held acquisition certifications. VA now uses Cornerstone to identify those staff.

Source: GAO presentation of Department of Veterans Affairs and Federal Acquisition Institute information. | GAO-22-105031

VA follows government-wide policy issued by OFPP and implementing guidance issued by FAI to manage data on its acquisition workforce. Among its other functions, OFPP issues policy that establishes how federal civilian agencies—including VA—should identify their acquisition workforces. Additionally, FAI manages the data system used by civilian agencies to identify and manage the agencies' acquisition workforces. Specifically:

- In 2005, OFPP published Policy Letter 05-01, which establishes an agency's Acquisition Career Manager's responsibility for, among other things, managing the identification and development of the acquisition workforce and maintaining and managing consistent agency-wide data on those serving in the agency's acquisition workforce.[8]

- Subsequently, in 2013, OFPP released a memo directing agencies to use FAITAS as a central repository for information on their acquisition workforce members, including contracting officers, CORs, and program/project managers.[9] As of March 2022, OFPP officials confirmed that Policy Letter 05-01 and the 2013 memo are still in effect, but noted that neither document reflects the transition in June 2021 from FAITAS to Cornerstone.

- In 2015, FAI published the Acquisition Career Manager Guidebook to serve as a resource for Acquisition Career Managers to accomplish their core responsibilities, as outlined in Policy Letter 05-01. The guidebook recommends that in order to maintain and manage consistent agency-wide data on those serving in the acquisition workforce, agencies use FAITAS in conjunction with other internal data sources, to track their acquisition workforces.[10]

However, through our review of data provided by VA and discussions held with VA officials, we found several issues with the data included in Cornerstone that hinder VA's efforts to identify its acquisition workforce. Examples of these challenges at VA include:

- miscategorized records where VA staff are labeled in Cornerstone as Department of Defense (DOD) employees—particularly for employees who previously worked for DOD or who serve as reservists,

- missing VA sub-organization information for some employee records, and

- missing or inaccurate records for staff that left or moved within VA during the transition period between FAITAS and Cornerstone.

Officials we spoke with at FAI stated they were aware of these data challenges. FAI officials stated that other agencies are experiencing similar challenges with Cornerstone, and that these issues are not unique

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[8]OFPP, *Developing and Managing the Acquisition Workforce*.

[9]OFPP, *Increasing Efficiencies in the Training, Development, and Management of the Acquisition Workforce.*

[10]Federal Acquisition Institute, *Acquisition Career Manager Guidebook* (Sept. 30, 2015).

to Cornerstone—some of the issues also existed under FAITAS. According to FAI officials, many of these issues stem from the fact that FAITAS and Cornerstone are training systems and are not explicitly designed to allow agencies to use them to track their acquisition workforce, even though policy and guidance direct them to do so. FAI officials stated FAI has taken some actions to address these challenges, including developing instructions to help agencies correct these data challenges and encouraging staff to manually change their data if they find errors. However, FAI officials stated that there is no system-wide mechanism to correct the data inaccuracies we identified, because the system relies on self-reported data from individual users. Additionally, they stated that since the information in Cornerstone is self-reported data, these challenges would continue to exist even if policy and guidance were updated to include the new system. Finally, VA officials stated that Cornerstone does not interface with HR Smart, VA's human resources system. VA officials noted, however, that tracking VA's acquisition workforce is not the primary purpose of either system.

We requested information from VA on its acquisition workforce from 2017 to 2021, including: the number of acquisition staff in the workforce; certification levels, education levels, years of experience, ages, and retirement eligibility of those staff; hiring and attrition rates; number of full-time equivalents; and vacant full-time equivalents. Some organizations within VA, including OALC and the 10 HCAs that manage VA's acquisition workforce, could not provide consistent totals for contracting officers, CORs, or program/project managers.

Ultimately, VA's Director, Acquisition Human Capital Management Services (AHCMS), who serves as the Acquisition Career Manager for VA, provided data on the total number of VA's acquisition workforce. However, we found significant discrepancies among figures VA reported for its total acquisition workforce in 2021. Specifically, based on information in the FAITAS reports, VA reported having as many as 15,742 staff in its acquisition workforce at the time FAITAS was taken offline. We subsequently requested that individual organizations within VA provide contact information for the workforce members included in the initial data. At first, the organizations could identify only 6,326 individuals. AHCMS eventually produced contact information for 16,333 individuals. However, AHCMS officials explained that due to the previously described issues with Cornerstone and FAITAS, that data set included information for staff that no longer worked for VA. AHCMS officials estimated based on historical attrition rates, that of the 16,333 individuals they could provide information for, about 5 percent had likely left VA.

Additionally, VA could not provide data on its acquisition workforce's education levels, years of experience, retirement eligibility, and hiring and attrition rates. Having this type of information for an acquisition workforce allows for better management and human capital decisions. For example, indicators such as projected retirement rates and retirement eligibility by occupation or organizational unit can be used to plan for future needs.

VA officials attempted to reconcile information in Cornerstone with information in HR Smart to provide the workforce data we requested. Unlike Cornerstone, HR Smart is regularly updated to reflect when employees leave or move within VA. However, according to VA officials, HR Smart can be used only to identify the contracting officer portion of the acquisition workforce and does not identify CORs or program/project managers. VA officials stated that these positions' acquisition roles are generally performed as "other duties" at VA, rather than as an employee's primary role, and that they rely on Cornerstone to track this information. Additionally, VA does not have a documented process to reconcile these records on a regular basis.

VA officials told us they have taken some steps to address the data deficiencies reflected in Cornerstone. Specifically, VA management told us that VA staff were required to update their records in Cornerstone by the end of July 2022, but there is no plan in place to verify this has occurred. Additionally, for updates to records beyond July 2022, VA officials stated they are conducting weekly webinars on how to update records, but did not provide any established procedures for updating records beyond these efforts. Ensuring VA has up-to-date and accurate workforce records would enable VA to make better human capital and resource decisions. Relying on individual users to regularly update their records does not provide controls to ensure the information is updated regularly and is accurate. Consequently, it may be difficult for VA to verify the completeness and accuracy of the data—key internal controls data principles.[11]

Further, VA officials cited several concerns about adding data elements to HR Smart that would help identify additional members of the acquisition workforce such as CORs and program/project managers. Officials from VA's Human Resources and Administration office and OALC told us they had no plans to make HR Smart and Cornerstone communicate, in part

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[11]GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, GAO-14-704G (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 10, 2014).

due to limited funding and resource concerns. They said that VA's Human Resources and Administration office is also not prepared to move forward with a related initiative, which would allow for the identification of acquisition positions in HR Smart. In addition, officials stated that Cornerstone has not reached its full maturation level in regard to system performance and therefore system interfaces are not being considered at this time. OALC officials stated that Cornerstone has these types of interfaces with some DOD components.

Given the OFPP policy memos, which highlight the management of acquisition workforce members and the benefit of having information on these members in order to do so, it is important that these data are accurate and up-to-date. *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* state that management should use quality information to achieve the entity's objectives.[12] Unless Cornerstone records are routinely updated by individual users and then reconciled with corresponding internal human resources data, such as information related to acquisition staff that left or moved within VA, VA will not have fully accurate or consistently up-to-date information about its workforce. Consequently, VA will continue to lack comprehensive information such as accurate and up-to-date information on its acquisition workforce.

VA Acquisition Workforce Employees Reported Generally Positive Views in Some Areas, like Training, and Also Identified Issues, like Workload and Leadership

VA acquisition workforce employees were generally satisfied with their immediate supervisor, telework opportunities, and training but did identify several key workforce issues, including performance management,

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[12]GAO-14-704G.

retention, workload, and leadership.[13] VA also conducts an All Employee Survey in which the workforce identified similar issues such as workload and leadership.

VA Acquisition Workforce Employees Are Generally Satisfied with Their Immediate Supervisor, Telework Opportunities, and Training

Among the topics we asked about in our survey, acquisition workforce employees are most satisfied with their immediate supervisor and telework opportunities.[14] For example, they were very satisfied with the environment their immediate supervisor creates, with this question receiving the highest number of satisfied responses in our survey.[15] Responses to our survey question about satisfaction with the ability to telework received a similar estimated number of satisfied responses. See figure 3.

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[13]We designed and administered a web-based survey to a statistically representative sample of VA's acquisition workforce, including contracting officers, CORs, and program/project managers. The survey covered the following topics: satisfaction with their work unit and their overall work experience; workload; training; employee retention; performance management; experience with their immediate supervisor; satisfaction with higher levels of leadership at VA; and telework. We arrived at a statistical sample of the VA acquisition workforce after data analysis work to merge multiple data sources, clean them, and assess their reliability. Our analysis enabled GAO to create this population file as part of our audit work. This population file was sufficiently reliable for the purpose of selecting a statistically representative sample. For additional information on our survey, see appendix II.

[14]Estimates based upon our survey will have a margin of error between approximately 3 and 5 percent at the 95 percent level of confidence, depending on the question.

[15]The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is (76.5, 85.4).

Figure 3: Survey Results with the Highest Positive Estimates
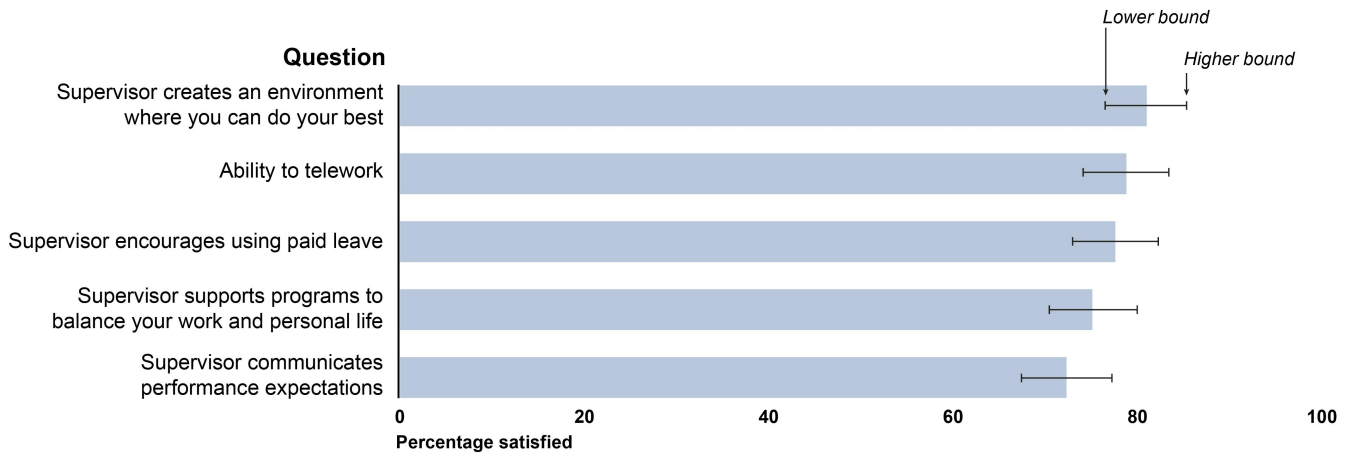
Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs acquisition workforce survey data. | GAO-22-105031

Accessible Data for Figure 3: Survey Results with the Highest Positive Estimates

Question	Estimated Percent	Lower Bound 95% CI	Upper Bound 95% CI	Margin of Error
Supervisor creates an environment where you can do your best	81.0	76.5	85.4	4.4
Ability to telework	78.8	74.2	83.4	4.6
Supervisor encourages using paid leave	77.6	73.0	82.3	4.7
Supervisor supports programs to balance your work and personal life	75.1	70.2	80.0	4.9
Communication of performance expectations from your supervisor	72.3	67.3	77.3	5.0

Note: This figure illustrates the positive range of responses to questions in our survey, including very much and somewhat, or very satisfied and satisfied. Other possible responses to these questions include very little, not at all, and don't know/no basis to judge; or neither satisfied or dissatisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, and not applicable/no basis to judge.

Employees are also generally satisfied with their individual organization, with about 65 percent of employees saying they recommend their work unit as a place to work.[16] Training questions also received positive responses. Employees are mostly satisfied with their access to training

[16]The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is (59.6, 70.2).

and the Veterans' Affairs Acquisition Academy (VAAA) training they received, with an estimated 64 percent saying they were satisfied or very satisfied.[17]

Employees Identified Issues Related to Performance Management, Employee Retention, and Workload

Based on our survey, a majority of employees identified issues related to performance management at VA. For example, we estimate that 16 percent of the VA acquisition workforce employees reported they agree that their performance expectations are reasonable. We also estimate that 18 percent agree that managers hold employees accountable for their performance, as shown in figure 4.[18]

Figure 4: Summary of Positive Ratings for Performance Management Topics
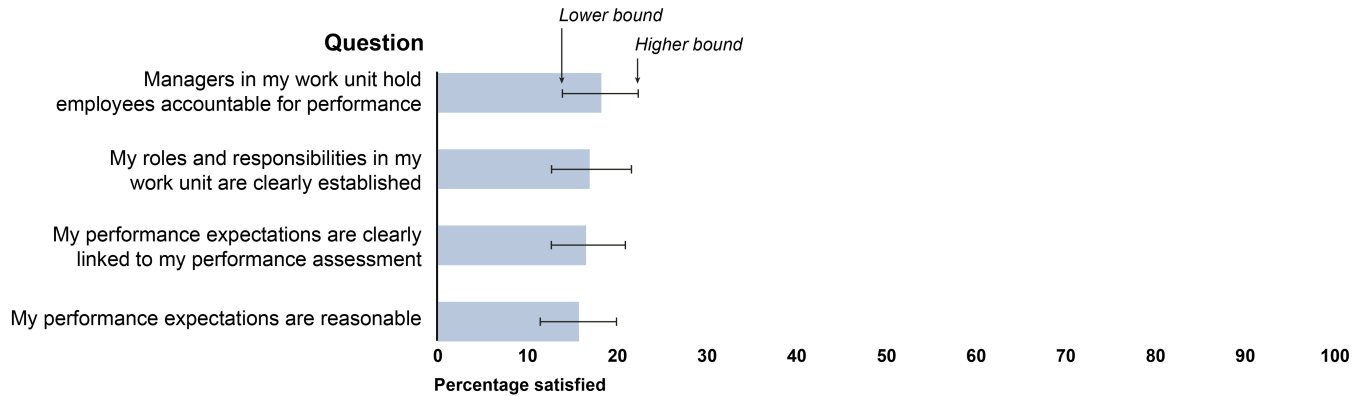
Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs acquisition workforce survey data. | GAO-22-105031

[17]The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are as follows: access to training (58.1, 68.9), VAAA courses you have attended (58.3, 69.1).

[18]The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (11.8, 20.3) and (13.9, 22.6).

Accessible Data for Figure 4: Summary of Positive Ratings for Performance Management Topics

Question	Estimated Percent	Lower Bound 95% CI	Upper Bound 95% CI	Margin of Error
Managers in my work unit hold employees accountable for performance	18.2	13.9	22.6	4.3
My roles and responsibilities in my work unit are clearly established	16.9	12.9	21.6	4.7
My performance expectations are clearly linked to my performance assessment	16.5	12.6	21.1	4.6
My performance expectations are reasonable	15.7	11.8	20.3	4.6

Note: This figure illustrates the positive range of responses to questions in our survey including agree and strongly agree. Other possible responses to these questions included disagree, strongly disagree, and not applicable/no basis to judge.

In our follow-up discussion groups with 24 VA acquisition workforce employees, some employees cited concerns with performance management at VA, which was also reflected in our survey results. For example, one contracting officer said that VA is not good at evaluating the performance of its employees and recognizing positive performance. This contracting officer and others stated that in their experience, top performers are assigned more work instead of being properly recognized. Other employees expressed that performance expectations are based on outdated position descriptions and do not take into account the complexity of contracts.

Employee retention also emerged as a key issue in our survey. We estimate that 34 percent of employees reported they are likely or very likely to leave their jobs in the next 3 years.[19] The contracting workforce is a very sought-after workforce, and these retention issues are not unique to VA. Dissatisfaction with promotion potential, retirement, and workload received the highest number of responses for reasons someone would leave VA (see figure 5).

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[19]The 95 percent confidence intervals for this estimate are (28.9, 39.7).

Figure 5: Most Common Reasons Cited for Wanting to Leave VA within 3 Years
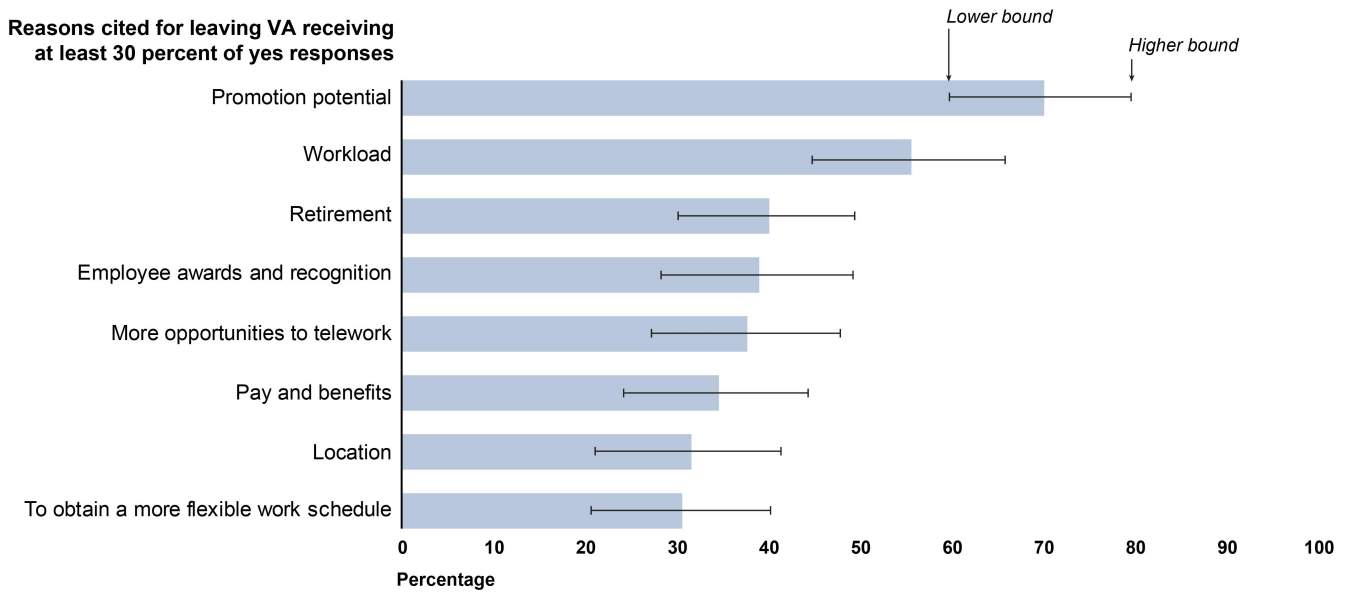
Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs acquisition workforce survey data. | GAO-22-105031

Accessible Data for Figure 5: Most Common Reasons Cited for Wanting to Leave VA within 3 Years

Reasons cited for leaving VA receiving at least 30 percent of yes responses

Category	Estimated Percent	Lower Bound 95% CI	Upper Bound 95% CI	Margin of Error
Promotion potential	70%	60	80	10
Workload	55.5	45.0	66.1	10.6
Retirement	40.0	30.2	49.9	9.9
Employee awards and recognition	38.9	28.3	49.5	10.6
More opportunities to telework	37.6	27.4	47.9	10.3
Pay and benefits	34.5	24.4	44.6	10.1
Location	31.5	21.3	41.7	10.2
To obtain a more flexible work schedule	30.5	20.5	40.5	10.0

Some employees who participated in our discussion groups identified retention as an issue for the acquisition workforce. For example, four employees from one of our discussion groups stated that VA is losing qualified contracting officers and CORs to the private sector and other

government agencies because they can get higher salaries, work at a higher position level, and work fewer hours.

Recruiting is also an issue. Based on our survey, we estimate that 36 percent of employees are satisfied with their work unit's ability to recruit employees.[20] Employees from our discussion groups stated that recruitment is an issue for VA. For example, several employees stated that, in their view, leadership does not realize how much effort it takes to hire and train contracting officers.

Based on our survey, we estimate that around 50 percent of employees reported they are satisfied with their workload and distribution.[21] As noted above, workload is cited as a key reason employees would consider leaving VA within the next 3 years. Workload concerns were raised by participants in all three of our discussion groups and in open-ended survey responses. For example, in one of our discussion groups, employees said the workload is not evenly distributed and one employee stated that workload has increased significantly in the past 2 years. Employees in all of our discussion groups stated that training new employees and taking on their workload also contributes to their already heavy workload. See figure 6.

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[20]The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (30.7, 41.3).

[21]The 95 percent confidence intervals for these estimates are (48.4, 59.5) and (45.3, 56.5).

Figure 6: Summary of Results of GAO's Survey of VA Acquisition Officials Related to Workload
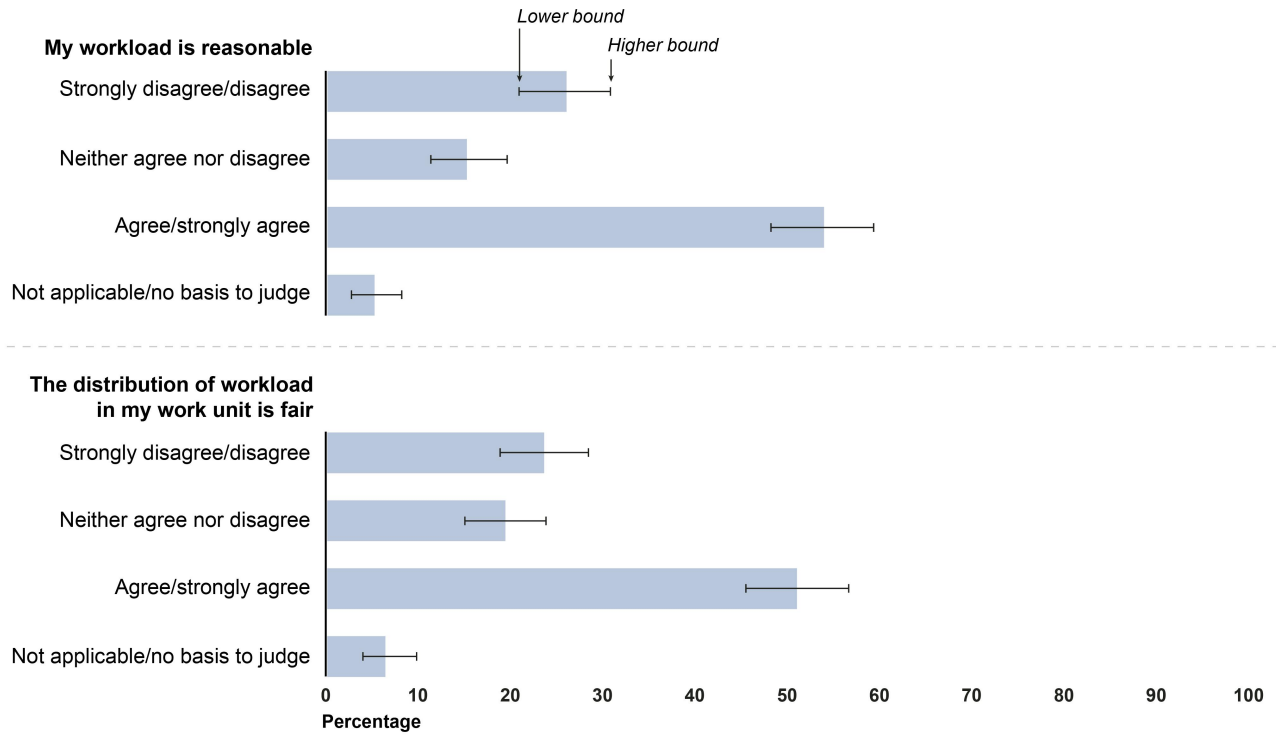
Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs acquisition workforce survey data. | GAO-22-105031

Accessible Data for Figure 6: Summary of Results of GAO's Survey of VA Acquisition Officials Related to Workload

Survey question	Response	Estimated Percent	Lower Bound 95% CI	Upper Bound 95% CI	Margin of Error
My workload is reasonable	Strongly disagree / Disagree	25.9	21.0	30.9	4.9
My workload is reasonable	Neither agree nor disagree	15.1	11.3	19.7	4.6
My workload is reasonable	Agree / Strongly agree	53.8	48.2	59.4	5.6
My workload is reasonable	Not applicable/ No basis to judge	5.1	2.9	8.3	3.1
The distribution of workload in my work unit is fair	Strongly disagree / Disagree	23.5	18.7	28.3	4.8
The distribution of workload in my work unit is fair	Neither agree nor disagree	19.3	14.8	23.7	4.5
The distribution of workload in my work unit is fair	Agree / Strongly agree	50.9	45.3	56.5	5.6
The distribution of workload in my work unit is fair	Not applicable/ No basis to judge	6.3	3.8	9.6	3.4

VA Acquisition Workforce Employees Reported Satisfaction with Immediate Supervisors, but Identified Some Issues with Higher Level Leadership

Dissatisfaction with senior leadership also emerged as an issue in our survey. We estimate that more than 70 percent of acquisition workforce employees were positive about their immediate supervisor in all acquisition workforce support categories, but the level of satisfaction with the HCAs was considerably less in all categories. See figure 7.

Figure 7: Satisfaction Ratings for Immediate Supervisors and Heads of Contracting Activity (HCA)
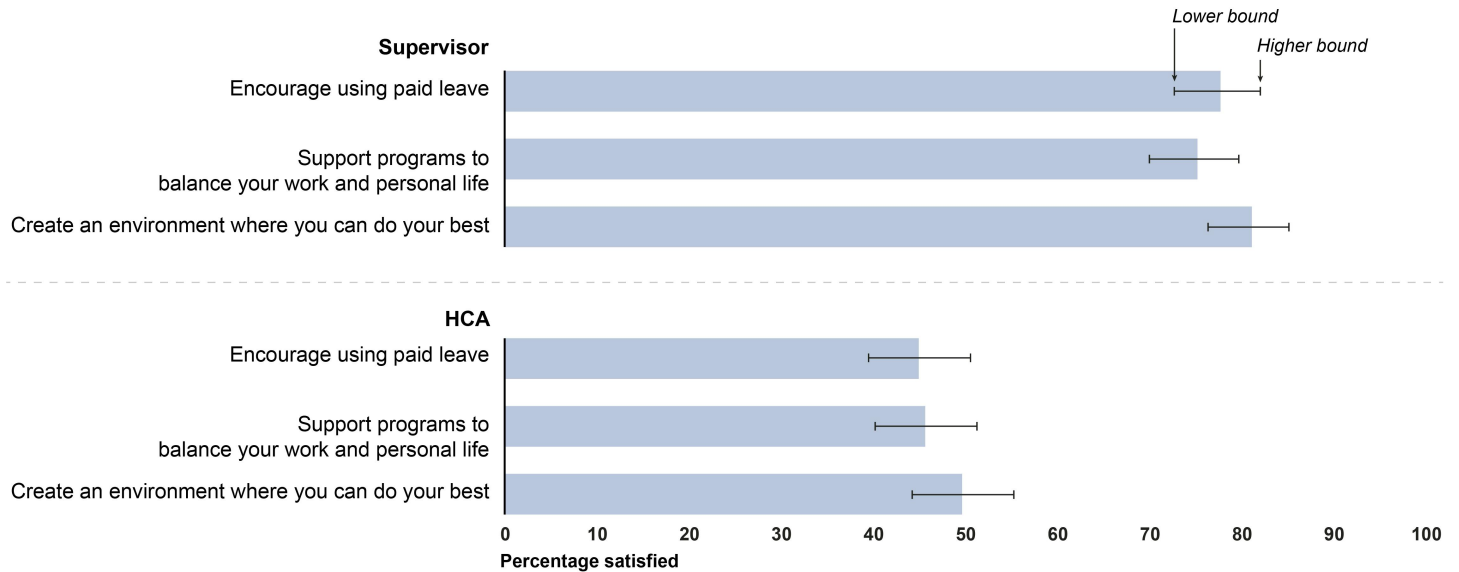
Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs acquisition workforce survey data. | GAO-22-105031

Accessible Data for Figure 7: Satisfaction Ratings for Immediate Supervisors and Heads of Contracting Activity (HCA)

Survey question	Estimated Percent	Lower Bound 95% CI	Upper Bound 95% CI	Margin of Error
Supervisor : Encourage using paid leave	77.6	73.0	82.3	4.7
Supervisor: Support programs to balance your work and personal life	75.1	70.2	80.0	4.9
Supervisor: Create an environment where you can do your best	81.0	76.5	85.4	4.4
HCA: Encourage using paid leave	45.0	39.5	50.6	5.6
HCA: Support programs to balance your work and personal life	45.7	40.2	51.3	5.6
HCA: Create an environment where you can do your best	49.7	44.1	55.3	5.6

Note: This figure illustrates the positive range of responses to questions in our survey, including very much and somewhat. Other possible responses to these questions included very little, not at all, and don't know/no basis to judge.

We also estimate that around 50 percent of the acquisition workforce employees are positive about various aspects of acquisition workforce support from the HCAs. Satisfaction with OALC support to the workforce is slightly lower than satisfaction with HCA support. See figure 8.

Figure 8: Estimates of Satisfaction Ratings for the Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (OALC) and Heads of Contracting Activity (HCA) Leadership

Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs acquisition workforce survey data. | GAO-22-105031

Accessible Data for Figure 8a: Estimates of Satisfaction Ratings for the Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (OALC) and Heads of Contracting Activity (HCA) Leadership

Category	Estimated Percent	Lower Bound 95% CI	Upper Bound 95% CI	Margin of Error
OALC: Clarity of communications aboutacquisition and contracting policies	40.5	34.5	46.4	5.9
OALC: Timeliness of VA senior leadership's communications	40.1	34.2	46.0	5.9
OALC: Answers to your questions about acquisitions and contracting policies	32.6	27.0	38.3	5.7
OALC: Communications about policy changes that affect your job	39.5	33.6	45.4	5.9
OALC: Effort to get input from people who work on acquisitions	31.7	26.1	37.4	5.6

Accessible Data for Figure 8b: Estimates of Satisfaction Ratings for the Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (OALC) and Heads of Contracting Activity (HCA) Leadership

Category	Estimated Percent	Lower Bound 95% CI	Upper Bound 95% CI	Margin of Error
HCA: Clarity of communications aboutacquisition and contracting policies	44.4	38.8	49.9	5.6
HCA: Timeliness of VA senior leadership's communications	45.5	39.9	51.1	5.6
HCA: Answers to your questions about acquisitions and contracting policies	39.7	34.3	45.2	5.5
HCA: Communications about policy changes that affect your job	44.0	38.5	49.6	5.6
HCA: Effort to get input from people who work on acquisitions	40.0	34.5	45.5	5.5

Note: This figure illustrates the positive range of responses to questions in our survey including satisfied and very satisfied. Other possible responses to these questions included dissatisfied, very dissatisfied, not applicable/no basis to judge, and neither satisfied or dissatisfied.

None of the categories for OALC support of the acquisition workforce received above a 50 percent positive rating in our survey.[22] In addition, 35 percent of employees said they had no basis to judge OALC's efforts to answer questions about key functions of this office.[23]

Furthermore, a number of survey respondents reported they were unaware of some of OALC's functions. For example, we estimate that 22 percent of the employees have heard of OALC, but are not aware of what OALC does.[24] Finally, 37 percent are not aware that within OALC, the Office of Procurement, Acquisition and Logistics (OPAL) recommends policies, plans, and strategies for VA-wide application on contract administration, acquisition planning, procurement, and contract administration.[25] Just over 50 percent of our survey respondents

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[22]One question, "timeliness of VA senior leadership's communications," had 51 percent as its upper bound 95 percent confidence interval; however, the estimated percent was 45 and the lower bound was 39 percent.

[23]The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is (28.8, 40.2).

[24]The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is (16.8, 26.7).

[25]The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is (30.7, 42.3).

answered that they had been at VA for 10 years or longer, yet almost 40 percent of them are not aware of what OALC does.[26]

Many employees are also not aware of the role of HCAs in supporting the acquisition workforce. Of the four questions we asked related to how the HCAs support the acquisition workforce, responses of "no basis to judge" to those questions ranged from an estimate of 28 percent to 44 percent.[27] In two of the four categories, more than 40 percent of employees have no basis to judge HCA leadership efforts. In addition, for each of the questions, we estimate that between 11 and 13 percent of employees are only a little or not at all satisfied with their HCA.[28] See figure 9.

[26]The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate of survey respondents aware of OALC's role is (51.7, 62.7).

[27]The 95 percent confidence intervals for these four estimates are as follows: show appreciation for the workforce (22.3, 32.1); encourage using paid leave (38.0, 49.1); create an environment where you can do your best (28.5, 39.1); and support programs to balance your work and personal life (35.7, 46.7).

[28]These questions have a sampling margin of error between 2.9 and 5.6 percent with a 95 percent confidence interval.

Figure 9: Estimates of the Satisfaction Ratings for Heads of Contracting Activity Support of the Acquisition Workforce

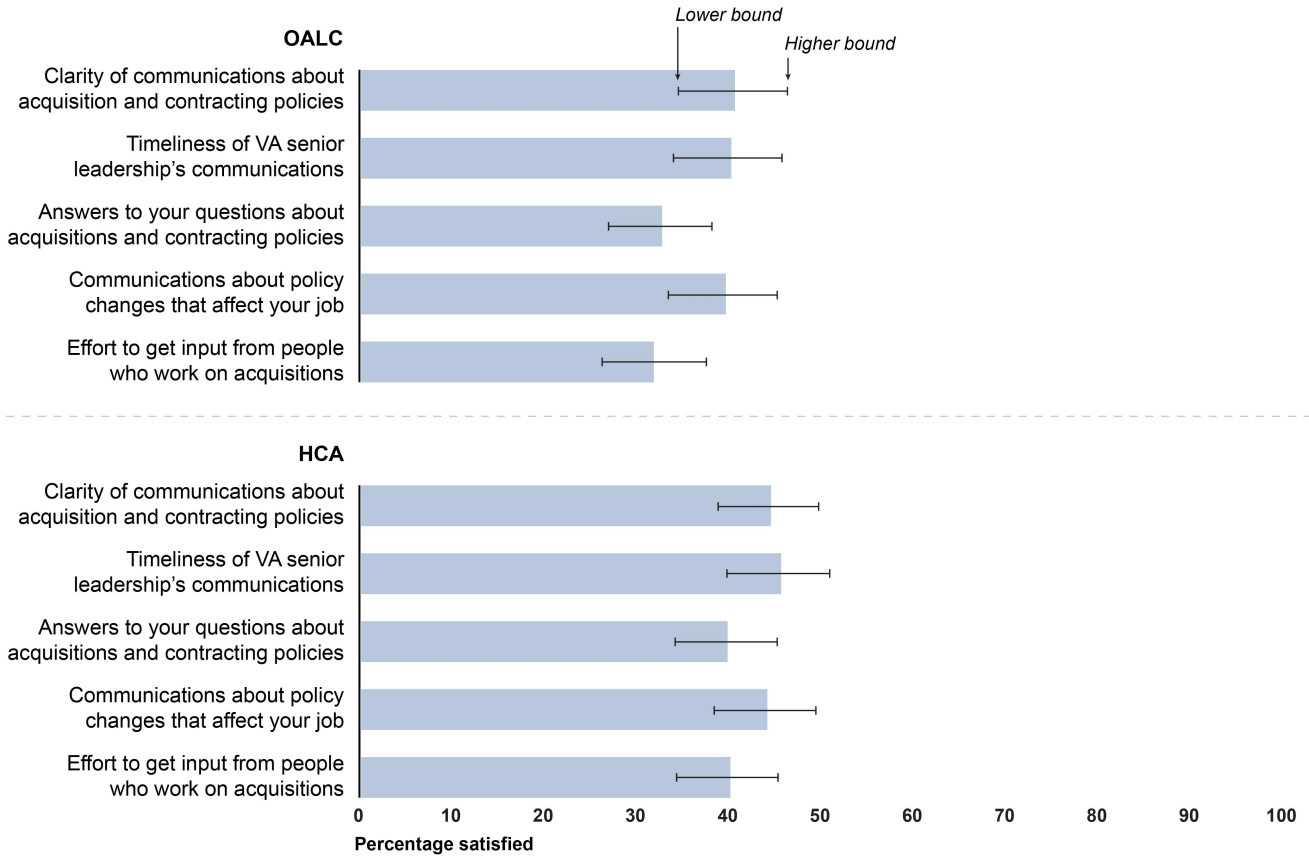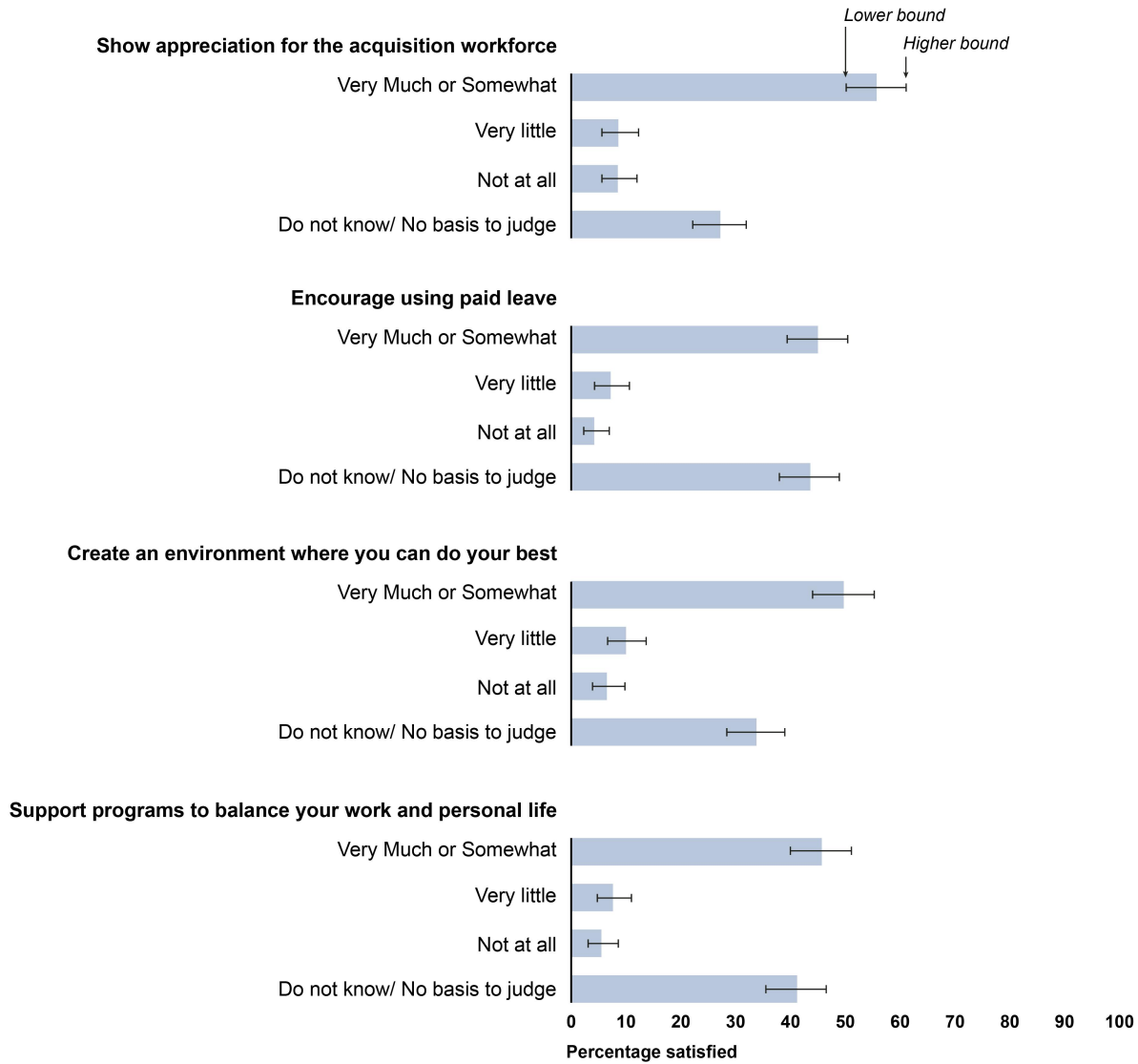Source: GAO analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs acquisition workforce survey data. | GAO-22-105031

Accessible Data for Figure 9: Estimates of the Satisfaction Ratings for Heads of Contracting Activity Support of the Acquisition Workforce

Survey question	Response	Estimated Percent	Lower Bound 95% CI	Upper Bound 95% CI	Margin of Error
Show appreciation for the acquisition workforce	Very Much or Somewhat	55.7	50.1	61.2	5.5

Survey question	Response	Estimated Percent	Lower Bound 95% CI	Upper Bound 95% CI	Margin of Error
Show appreciation for the acquisition workforce	Very Little	8.6	5.7	12.4	3.7
Show appreciation for the acquisition workforce	Not at all	8.5	5.6	12.2	3.8
Show appreciation for the acquisition workforce	Do not know/ No basis to judge	27.2	22.3	32.1	4.9
Encourage using paid leave	Very Much or Somewhat	45.0	39.5	50.6	5.6
Encourage using paid leave	Very Little	7.2	4.5	10.8	3.5
Encourage using paid leave	Not at all	4.2	2.3	7.1	2.9
Encourage using paid leave	Do not know/ No basis to judge	43.6	38.0	49.1	5.5
Create an environment where you can do your best	Very Much or Somewhat	49.7	44.1	55.3	5.6
Create an environment where you can do your best	Very Little	10.0	6.8	13.9	4.0
Create an environment where you can do your best	Not at all	6.5	4.0	9.9	3.4
Create an environment where you can do your best	Do not know/ No basis to judge	33.8	28.5	39.1	5.3
Support programs to balance your work and personal life	Very Much or Somewhat	45.7	40.2	51.3	5.6
Support programs to balance your work and personal life	Very Little	7.6	4.9	11.1	3.6
Support programs to balance your work and personal life	Not at all	5.5	3.2	8.7	3.2
Support programs to balance your work and personal life	Do not know/ No basis to judge	41.2	35.7	46.7	5.5

Leadership support of the acquisition workforce also emerged as an issue during our employee discussion groups. Several employees noted that leadership engagement with the acquisition workforce varied across contracting offices. Employees in some contracting offices said they were more connected to their leadership than other employees. For example, some employees said leadership in their organization reached out to them and sought information on their concerns; however, others did not have that experience.

The workload and leadership findings from our survey were also issues identified in VA's All Employee Survey, which is administered to all VA employees every June. The employees we met with stated that workload is consistently an issue raised in this survey. However, they said that the

survey does not identify the cause of the workload issue and they are not sure how leadership is addressing it. A couple of employees noted that the All Employee Survey asks about leadership, but it was not always clear to them which level of leadership the survey was referring to.

VA Acquisition Leadership Acknowledges Issues Identified by Its Workforce but Some Management Roles and Responsibilities Are Not Clearly Documented

VA leadership stated it was aware of the issues identified by its acquisition workforce—such as workload, performance management, and employee retention—as areas that need attention and has taken some steps to address them. However, multiple organizations across VA manage its acquisition workforce, and VA leadership has not clearly documented some management roles and responsibilities.

VA Leadership Has Taken Some Steps to Address Issues with Workload, Performance Management, and Employee Retention

Workload and Performance Management

In our discussions with VA acquisition leadership, officials agreed that workload and performance management were issues for the acquisition workforce. Nearly every HCA we spoke with noted that workload in particular has been a top employee concern in recent years in VA's All Employee Survey. The Senior Procurement Executive also acknowledged workload as an issue and stated she believes systems, processes, and procedures contribute to this issue. For example, she stated that contracting officer workload is impacted by the lack of standards around business processes and procedures in procuring certain types of goods and services. According to the Senior Procurement Executive, OALC is trying to address distribution of workload by looking at the types of things VA buys as well as the lack of standards around business processes and procedures in procuring those items. She acknowledged that one issue is how the workload is managed and stated that much of the acquisition work seems to fall on the contracting officer community, such as program/project manager work, whereas in theory that community is responsible only for contract execution. VA officials agreed that heavy

workload and uneven workload distribution negatively affect VA's overall retention.

Some VA contracting offices developed action plans to address the issues raised in VA's survey. Workload was identified as a top priority in the three survey action plans provided by VA that we reviewed. Some HCAs are studying or tracking contracting officer workload. Officials from these offices told us they utilize two workload management tools to track contracting officer workload. One tool is more broadly used to balance the workload across the regional procurement offices. According to officials, this tool is used for planning, shifting the workforce, and requesting resources annually. The second tool is more specific to individual HCAs and is used by the HCAs to manage resource allocation. According to officials, it weighs contracts in terms of complexity and contract type, tracks the volume of contracts, and the number of hours worked by acquisition personnel on the contract, as well as leave and training hours. Additionally, officials at the Technology Acquisition Center are conducting a workload study and they plan to analyze the data and provide a summary of the findings to OALC leadership.

VA officials also agreed that communication of performance expectations is an issue for their workforce. Officials told us VA evaluates individual employee performance, but the results of our survey indicated 64 percent of employees surveyed did not feel expectations were reasonable. VA uses an Office of Personnel Management-approved directive and handbook to develop standards for members of the workforce including setting performance expectations annually and holding mid-year check-ins.[29] According to HCAs, supervisors are expected to regularly meet with their contracting officers to discuss performance. One HCA told us that as a result of feedback on VA's All Employee Survey, supervisors are now required to meet with direct reports no less than once a week and that this requirement is included in the supervisor's performance standards. Officials noted that HCAs have no input into COR and program/project manager expectations or performance assessments as supervision of CORs and program/project managers does not fall under the HCA chain of command.

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[29]Department of Veterans Affairs, *Performance Management Systems*, VA Handbook 5013.

<u>Employee Retention</u>

VA leadership stated they are concerned about retention of the acquisition workforce, especially the contracting officer workforce. More than one-third of our survey respondents stated they were likely or very likely to leave their job in the next 3 years, nearly half of whom stated they would leave VA entirely. Workload, lack of promotion potential, retirement, and lack of flexible work schedules were cited as the top reasons for leaving. The Senior Procurement Executive recognized retention of the contracting officer workforce as something VA needs to examine, but said she does not have insight into why retention is an issue for the entire contracting officer community since they do not all fall under her purview.

According to VA officials, retaining highly qualified contracting officers, especially those at or above the GS-12 level, is difficult. HCAs across VA expressed concern with retaining the contracting officer workforce since being a contracting officer requires a large body of knowledge, which takes years of training and experience to master. They were especially concerned with recruitment by other agencies that could offer higher grade levels and promotions, and the retirement eligibility of many contracting officers. HCAs noted they have implemented numerous workplace flexibilities and incentives recently to increase retention including expanded telework, fully remote work, and retention bonuses. However, HCAs stated that individual organizations' implementation of these flexibilities and incentives has varied across VA. Some employees we met with also stated that VA does not consistently implement these flexibilities. For example, one employee stated that not all VA contracting organizations provide the same level of telework opportunities. This results in VA competing internally for its own workforce when different benefits are offered by different internal organizations.

Management of VA's Acquisition Workforce Occurs at Multiple Organizations across the Agency but Some Management Roles and Responsibilities Are Not Clearly Documented

According to VA officials, management of VA's acquisition workforce is shared between OALC and the HCAs. However, one obstacle to effectively managing the acquisition workforce is a lack of documented HCA roles and responsibilities for doing so, specifically what the Chief Acquisition Officer has delegated to HCAs. The Chief Acquisition Officer

has certain responsibilities for managing the workforce that can be delegated, such as strategic planning and workforce management. However, the delegation and documentation of these responsibilities beyond the role of the Chief Acquisition Officer is not clear in policy or guidance that we reviewed.

According to OFPP Policy Letter 05-01, the Chief Acquisition Officer is responsible for ensuring the development of a competent, professional workforce to support the accomplishment of the agency's mission and may delegate this responsibility and appoint functional advisors to facilitate the management of the agency's acquisition workforce.[30] This includes providing human capital information on the workforce, developing an acquisition career management program, and ensuring the workforce is adequately trained. The Chief Acquisition Officer at VA is the Principal Executive Director of OALC. According to OALC officials, OALC is focused on larger acquisition workforce policy decisions, which include acquisition reform, technology updates, and talent management models. These models identify competency gaps and design strategies for acquiring, developing, and retaining talented staff to bring workforce competencies into alignment with current and future needs.

HCAs, in turn, have an overall responsibility for managing the procurement program assigned to the activity. Delegation letters outline the HCAs' general roles and responsibilities; however, they cover only certain contracting authorities, and provide no information on the HCAs' roles and responsibilities for managing the acquisition workforce. However, HCAs we spoke with indicated that their responsibilities do include managing the acquisition workforce. Furthermore, according to VA officials, OALC and HCAs share management of VA's acquisition workforce.

The HCAs we spoke with varied substantially in their approaches to managing and communicating with their acquisition workforce staff. For example, some HCAs held regular town hall or other meetings directly with acquisition workforce staff, while others relied on subordinate management and in-line supervisors to handle direct communication with the workforce. One HCA said they almost never interacted with acquisition workforce staff in their organization. Those HCAs that noted they communicate with their acquisition workforce through all-staff type meetings said that they share information from OALC and that topics

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[30]OFPP, *Developing and Managing the Acquisition Workforce*.

discussed ranged from smaller issues the acquisition workforce faces like IT problems to bigger issues such as workload and data system transitions. Additionally, many of the HCAs noted the importance of two-way communication between themselves and the acquisition workforce. For example, one HCA reported responding directly to emails from employees who express concerns and holding one-on-one meetings with the workforce when necessary.

However, in our survey results, less than 50 percent of acquisition workforce employees were satisfied with the clarity of the HCAs' communication.[31] About one-third of the VA acquisition workforce employees had no basis to judge HCA and OALC efforts to provide support to the acquisition workforce. Further, about 35 percent of the employees said they have no basis to judge OALC's efforts to answer questions about acquisition and contracting policies.[32]

Additionally, OALC and the HCAs have different priorities and responsibilities when it comes to the acquisition workforce. The Senior Procurement Executive, as part of OALC, told us she is focused on strategic-level priorities. She stated she has a responsibility to tackle these strategic priorities, and that addressing these broader issues is essential to making progress in improving VA acquisition overall. For example, she stated that her office is developing the Acquisition Lifecycle Framework to, among other things, help improve management of VA's major acquisitions. We recently issued a report on VA's efforts to implement this new framework.[33] According to HCAs, they are focused on the day-to-day issues faced by the workforce.

Further, while the Senior Procurement Executive appoints the HCAs, neither she nor the Chief Acquisition Officer directly manage all of the HCAs. Specifically, the Deputy Executive Director, OALC directly oversees four of the 10 HCAs—the National Acquisition Center, the Strategic Acquisition Center, the Technology Acquisition Center, and the Office of Construction and Facilities Management. All HCAs derive their contracting authority from the Senior Procurement Executive, who is housed within OALC, but the other six HCAs report to their administration leadership, rather than OALC. Further, defining responsibilities for

[31]The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is (38.8, 49.9).

[32]The 95 percent confidence interval for this estimate is (28.8, 40.2).

[33]GAO, *VA Acquisition Management: Action Needed to Ensure Success of New Oversight Framework*, GAO-22-105195 (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 11, 2022).

managing the acquisition workforce at their respective levels of the organizational structure would better position the Chief Acquisition Officer to more effectively manage the acquisition workforce. Specifically, the lack of direct OALC oversight of most of VA's HCAs makes documenting their roles and responsibilities even more important to help ensure effective management of the acquisition workforce.

Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government state management should establish and document an organizational structure, assign responsibility, and delegate authority to achieve the entity's objectives.[34] Responsibilities should be assigned to discrete units to enable the organization to operate in an efficient and effective manner. Documentation provides a means to retain organizational knowledge and mitigate the risk of having that knowledge limited to a few personnel, as well as a means to communicate that knowledge as needed. This includes a shared understanding of each participant's role in acquisition activities and having acquisition managers support the agency's strategic-planning and decision-making needs at field and headquarters levels. Clearly defining and documenting the roles, responsibilities and functions HCAs are expected to fill, including those delegated by the Chief Acquisition Officer as needed, would better position VA to ensure consistent and effective management of its acquisition workforce on topics like those identified in our survey.

Conclusions

To provide VA with the goods and services it needs to accomplish its mission at the best value to taxpayers, the agency needs talented and trained individuals who can plan, manage, and oversee acquisitions. Having comprehensive data on this workforce, such as its size, location, and capabilities, is important so that VA can make data-driven human capital decisions, develop human capital approaches tailored to meet organizational needs, and manage targeted investments in people where necessary. Effectively managing this workforce is a complex task in an agency as large as VA where multiple organizations, some with differing chains of command, have acquisition oversight and management responsibilities. Without clearly documented roles and responsibilities for HCAs for managing the acquisition workforce, VA will lack reasonable

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[34]GAO-14-704G.

assurance that the workforce concerns we identified across the agency are addressed.

Recommendations for Executive Action

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs should ensure VA's Acquisition Career Manager takes steps, such as establishing procedures for staff to regularly update Cornerstone records and for reconciling Cornerstone records with HR data, to ensure that VA keeps up-to-date and accurate acquisition workforce records. (Recommendation 1)

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs should ensure VA's Chief Acquisition Officer documents the HCAs' roles and responsibilities for managing the acquisition workforce. (Recommendation 2)
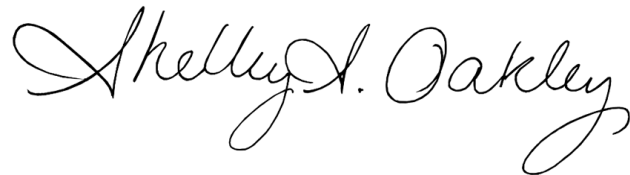
Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to the Department of Veterans Affairs, the General Services Administration, and the Office of Management and Budget for review and comment. In VA's comments, reproduced in appendix III, it concurred with our two recommendations. VA also provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate. We also modified the title of the report following agency comments, to better reflect the recommendations in the report. The General Services Administration and the Office of Management and Budget told us that they had no comments on the draft report.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Administrator of the General Services Administration, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and other interested parties. 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 concerning this report, please contact me at (202) 512-4841 or oakleys@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 IV.

Shelby S. Oakley
Director, Contracting and National Security Acquisitions

List of Requesters

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman
The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Chris Pappas
Chairman
The Honorable Tracey Mann
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
House of Representatives

The Honorable Ann McLane Kuster
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

To determine the extent to which the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has comprehensive data on its acquisition workforce, we collected data on VA's acquisition workforce for fiscal year 2021. We used the Office of Federal Procurement Policy definition of acquisition workforce that includes contracting officers, contracting officer representatives (COR), and program/project managers. We obtained data elements including the total number of acquisition workforce employees enterprise-wide, individual totals by VA organization and occupation, associated certification levels, and contact information.

We used information VA components provided from HR Smart, Federal Acquisition Institute Training Application System (FAITAS), and Cornerstone OnDemand. We assessed the reliability of VA's HR Smart and FAITAS data sources. The organizations we reached out to included VA's Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (OALC), National Cemetery Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) (to include individual data submissions from Regional Procurement Office East, Regional Procurement Office West, Regional Procurement Office Central, and Procurement and Logistics Office), National Acquisition Center, Strategic Acquisition Center, Technology Acquisition Center, and Other/Admin offices such as Inspector General. These are the organizations at VA in which acquisition workforce members are assigned.

To determine VA's acquisition workforce's perspectives on performing their responsibilities we designed and administered a web-based survey to a statistically representative sample of VA's acquisition workforce, including contracting officers, CORs, and program/project managers. We were able to do a statistical sample of the VA Acquisition Workforce after some programming work to merge multiple data sources, clean them, and assess their reliability. Our programming work enabled GAO to create this population file as part of our audit work. This population file was sufficiently reliable for the purpose of selecting a statistically representative sample. The survey covered the following topics: satisfaction with their work unit and their overall work experience; workload; training; employee retention; performance management;

experience with their immediate supervisor; satisfaction with higher levels
of leadership at VA; and telework.

We designed a survey for the VA acquisition workforce based on the
following: (1) questions in VA's All Employee Survey, (2) questions in the
Office of Personnel Management's Employee Experience survey, and (3)
prior GAO work on VA contracting and acquisition management. We
wrote 26 questions, some with multiple subparts, asking employees to
rate their satisfaction or agreement with certain aspects of their work.

The survey was designed to make generalizable estimates for the VA
acquisition workforce population. We administered the survey from
November 2021 to December 2021. The questionnaire asked participants
to consider their recent acquisition workforce experiences at the VA
between March 2020 and October 2021. In addition, we asked a subset
of eight questions to gauge satisfaction among those who had been
employed as a contracting officer, COR, program/project manager, or
other type of contracting/procurement specialist with the VA prior to
March 2020, the month when the COVID-19 national emergency
declaration occurred.

To identify the VA acquisition workforce employees, we obtained data on
VA's acquisition workforce from components within VA. We manually
reviewed the information provided by VA components for errors and
inconsistencies, and followed up with VA to verify information as needed.
We removed employees from our population survey who had left or
retired from VA between the time we received the survey and
administered a test email to our sample. After addressing these items, we
found the data to be sufficiently reliable for the purposes of using the data
to identify a random sample of VA acquisition workforce employees that
would help us arrive at a generalizable sample.

Our initial population contained 6,320 VA acquisition workforce
employees as of November 1, 2021. We stratified the population into
three sampling strata and used a stratified random sample: (1)
contracting officers; (2) contracting officers' representatives; and (3)
program or project managers. One division of OALC in VA did not provide
information on what certification their staff had, so staff from the Office of
Construction and Facilities Management (CFM) were placed in an "Other"
stratum.

Our initial sample size allocation was designed to achieve a stratum-level
margin of error no greater than plus or minus 8 percentage points for an

attribute-level measure at the 95 percent level of confidence, assuming a 50 percent response rate. This resulted in a final total sample size of 879. We first sent an email notification about the survey to these 879 individuals, and subsequently determined that 16 employees that were no longer at VA. Emails containing unique survey links were sent to the remaining sampled individuals, and five follow-up emails were sent throughout the survey administration period to encourage participation among those who had not yet responded. We also contacted nonrespondents by telephone to help encourage participation.

We used logistic regression models on our survey data to look for correlation with the propensity to respond among available administrative variables. We did not find anything and used the standard nonresponse weight adjustment for a stratified random sample. We determined that all responses where at least 50 percent of survey questions had been completed would be considered complete and included in our analysis. We obtained 416 responses for a weighted survey response rate of 48 percent.

Because we followed a probability procedure based on random selections, our sample is one of a large number of samples that we might have drawn. Since each sample could have provided different estimates, we express our confidence in the precision of our particular sample's results as a 95 percent confidence interval (for example, plus or minus 8 percentage points). This is the interval that would contain the actual population value for 95 percent of the samples we could have drawn. Confidence intervals are provided with each sample estimate in the report. All survey results presented in the body of this report are generalizable to the estimated population VA acquisition workforce employees as of November 1, 2021, except where otherwise noted.

The practical difficulties of conducting any survey may introduce errors, commonly referred to as nonsampling errors. For example, difficulties in interpreting a particular question or sources of information available to respondents can introduce unwanted variability into the survey results. We took steps in developing the questionnaire, collecting the data, and analyzing the results to minimize such nonsampling error. To inform our methodological approach and our survey development, we shared our survey with members of VHA leadership. We incorporated this feedback, as appropriate. Additionally, we conducted pretests of the survey with two contracting officers, two CORs, and two program managers who VA selected based on their knowledge and experience in acquisition spread across various VA organizations. All six pretests were conducted

remotely. The pretests of the survey were conducted to ensure that our language was clear and understandable, whether any questions or answer choices caused confusion, and to determine whether employees would be able to provide responses to questions with minimal burden. For purposes of this survey, a sample unit is one person from the list of VA acquisition staff.

In analyzing and presenting the survey results, we grouped survey responses based on the following:

- **Positive responses:** responses that were "strongly agree, "agree," "very satisfied," and "satisfied"

- **Negative responses:** responses that were "strongly disagree," "disagree," "strongly dissatisfied," and "dissatisfied."

Results for the survey are statistically weighted to reflect both the stratification by type of acquisition staff used in the sample selection and the design based adjustment for nonresponse within each stratum. All estimates shown are weighted percentages. To gain further insights into topics covered in our survey of VA acquisition workforce employees, we held three virtual discussion groups with VA contracting officers, CORs, and program/project managers. We worked with VA leadership to distribute emails to all VA acquisition workforce employees, including employees who were not in our original survey sample, asking for participation in discussion groups. A total of 24 employees across VA participated in the discussion groups. To select discussion group topics, we analyzed survey results and used the results to identify key themes. We used these themes as the basis of discussion with VA employees. Comments, information, and views obtained from these discussion groups are not generalizable to the entire VA acquisition workforce.

We also reviewed results of VA's All Employee Survey for 2021. We did not directly compare results from this survey to our survey because we were not able to obtain results specific to the acquisition workforce. We obtained sample plans that VA acquisition leadership developed to address issues raised in the All Employee Survey and compared those issues with the themes and issues in our survey.

To determine the extent to which VA leadership has assessed and addressed obstacles to effective collaboration in managing issues facing the acquisition workforce we spoke with VA's leadership including VA's OALC and the 10 Heads of Contracting Activity (HCA). We provided information about issues identified in the survey with VA leadership to

determine the extent to which they were aware of these concerns and planned to address them. We assessed the information obtained in these interviews to determine VA's approach for managing the acquisition workforce. We also reviewed VA guidance and policy documents to determine who in VA was directly responsible for managing the acquisition workforce. Specifically we reviewed OFPP Policy Letter 05-01 that outlines the role of the Chief Acquisition Officer and delegation letters for the heads of contracting activities. We assessed this letter against GAO practices for strategic workforce planning.[1]

We conducted this performance audit from February 2021 to September 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.

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[1]GAO, *Human Capital: Key Principles for Effective Strategic Workforce Planning*, GAO-04-39 (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 11, 2003).

Appendix II: Results from Survey of Department of Veterans Affairs Acquisition Workforce

We designed and administered a web-based survey to a statistically representative sample of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) acquisition workforce, including contracting officers, contracting officer representatives (COR), and program/project managers. The survey covered the following topics: satisfaction with their work unit and their overall work experience; workload; training; employee retention; performance management; experience with their immediate supervisor; satisfaction with higher levels of leadership at VA; and telework. The survey was administered from November 2021 to December 2021. The questionnaire asked participants to consider their recent acquisition workforce experiences at the VA between March 2020 and October 2021. In addition, we asked a subset of eight questions to gauge satisfaction among those who had been employed as a contracting officer, COR, program/project manager, or other type of contracting/procurement specialist with the VA prior to March 2020, the month when the COVID-19 national emergency declaration occurred. We obtained a weighted survey response rate of 48 percent and the survey is generalizable to the entire VA acquisition workforce.

Because our estimates are from a generalizable sample, we express our confidence in the precision of our particular estimates as 95 percent confidence intervals. Our survey was comprised of closed- and open-ended questions. In this appendix, we do not provide information on responses to the open-ended questions. For a more detailed discussion of our survey methodology, see appendix I.

Table 2: What Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) organization are you assigned to?

VA organization	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Veterans Benefits Administration	5.3	3.1	8.3
National Cemetery Administration	5.7	3.4	8.8
Veterans Health Administration	50.1	44.7	55.5

VA organization	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction	16.3	12.4	20.7
Veterans Affairs Central Office	14.5	10.9	18.7
Office of Information and Technology	5.6	3.4	8.5
Other	2.7	1.3	5.0

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 3: What Veterans Health Administration (VHA) organization are you assigned to?

VHA organization	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Regional procurement office (RPO) Central	30.3	23.2	37.4
RPO East	26.6	19.7	33.5
RPO West	12.8	8.1	18.9
Procurement and Logistics Office (P&LO)	3.3	1.0	7.8
Other VHA	27.0	20.3	33.8

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 4: What Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (OALC) organization are you assigned to?

OALC organization	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
National Acquisition Center (NAC)	17.9	8.8	30.7
Strategic Acquisition Center (SAC)	4.6	0.7	14.3
Technology Acquisition Center (TAC)	8.7	2.8	19.3
Office of Construction and Facilities Management (CFM)	59.6	46.4	72.7
Other OALC	9.2	3.0	20.5

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 5: What is your current position at the Department of Veterans Affairs?

Position	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Contract Specialist (1102 job series designation, including Contracting Officers)	33.3	28.2	38.4
Contracting Officer's Representative	26.0	21.2	30.7
Project/Program Manager	13.9	10.4	17.9
Other (please specify)	26.9	22.1	31.7

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 6: What level of Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) certification do you currently have?

Level	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
None	8.8	4.2	15.7
Level I	12.0	6.5	19.7
Level II	24.9	17.0	34.2
Level III	54.4	44.9	63.8

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 7: What level of Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer's Representatives (FAC-COR) certification do you currently have?

Level	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
None	1.6	0.1	7.8
Level I	25.1	16.5	35.5
Level II	68.0	58.2	77.9
Level III	5.3	1.6	12.3

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 8: What level of Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers (FAC-P/PM) certification do you currently have?

Level	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
None	6.2	1.4	16.8
Level I	18.5	8.6	32.8
Level II	25.2	13.8	39.7
Level III	50.1	35.9	64.2

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 9: At any time since January 1, 2017, have you served as a contracting officer, contracting officer's representative, project/program manager, or other type of contracting/procurement specialist for the Department of Veterans Affairs?

Category	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Yes	78.3	68.3	86.4
No	21.7	13.6	31.7

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 10: To help determine which questions are most relevant to you, were you employed as a contracting officer, contracting officer's representative, program manager, or other type of contracting/procurement specialist with the Department of Veterans Affairs prior to March 2020?

Category	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Yes	84.2	79.6	88.1
No	15.8	11.9	20.4

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 11: About how long have you been employed at the Department of Veterans Affairs?

Category	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Less than 2 years	6.0	3.6	9.2
2-5 years	16.9	12.9	21.5
6-10 years	20.0	15.5	24.4
More than 10 years	57.2	51.7	62.7

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 12: About how long have you worked in your current position at the Department of Veterans Affairs?

Category	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Less than 2 years	22.0	17.3	26.6
2-5 years	31.5	26.3	36.7
6-10 years	22.1	17.4	26.8
More than 10 years	24.4	19.6	29.3

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 13: How long have you worked as a contract specialist, including work at non-Department of Veterans Affairs agencies?

Category	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Less than 2 years	11.8	6.5	19.3
2-5 years	17.0	10.6	25.3
6-10 years	14.9	8.8	23.0
More than 10 years	56.3	46.9	65.6

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 14: How long have you worked as a contracting officer's representative or project/program manager, including work at non-Department of Veterans Affairs agencies?

Cagegory	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Less than 2 years	6.8	3.2	12.4
2-5 years	28.6	21.0	36.3
6-10 years	23.1	16.2	31.2
More than 10 years	41.5	33.1	49.8

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 15: Were you ever an intern at the Department of Veterans Affairs?

Category	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Yes	11.8	8.4	16.0
No	88.2	84.0	91.6

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 16: Do you currently supervise other acquisition workforce personnel at the Department of Veterans Affairs?

Category	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Yes	21.1	16.6	25.7
No	78.9	74.3	83.4

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 17: How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following aspects of your job during the period from March 2020 to October 2021?

Category	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Your workload	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	53.9	48.4	59.5
Your workload	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17.7	13.4	22.0
Your workload	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	26.2	21.2	31.2
Your workload	Not applicable/No basis to judge	2.2	0.8	4.7
The quality of VA's acquisition policies and procedures	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	50.6	45.0	56.2
The quality of VA's acquisition policies and procedures	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	23.3	18.5	28.0
The quality of VA's acquisition policies and procedures	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	22.3	17.6	27.0
The quality of VA's acquisition policies and procedures	Not applicable/No basis to judge	3.8	1.9	6.7
Communication of your performance expectations from your supervisor	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	Topic	67.3	77.3
Communication of your performance expectations from your supervisor	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	12.5	9.0	16.6
Communication of your performance expectations from your supervisor	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	12.8	9.2	17.1
Communication of your performance expectations from your supervisor	Not applicable/No basis to judge	2.5	1.0	4.9
VA's training for the acquisition workforce	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	55.4	49.8	60.9
VA's training for the acquisition workforce	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18.3	14.0	22.6
VA's training for the acquisition workforce	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	22.6	18.0	27.3
VA's training for the acquisition workforce	Not applicable/No basis to judge	3.8	1.9	6.6
Ability to telework	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	78.8	74.2	83.4
Ability to telework	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7.3	4.7	10.8

Category	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Ability to telework	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	6.8	4.3	10.3
Ability to telework	Not applicable/No basis to judge	7.1	4.5	10.6
Data systems and tools you were provided with to get the job done	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	67.5	62.3	72.7
Data systems and tools you were provided with to get the job done	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	16.4	12.5	21.0
Data systems and tools you were provided with to get the job done	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	12.9	9.4	17.2
Data systems and tools you were provided with to get the job done	Not applicable/No basis to judge	3.1	1.4	5.9
Timeliness of communications with subject matter experts and other contracting personnel	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	62.5	57.1	67.9
Timeliness of communications with subject matter experts and other contracting personnel	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18.0	13.7	22.3
Timeliness of communications with subject matter experts and other contracting personnel	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	14.6	10.8	19.1
Timeliness of communications with subject matter experts and other contracting personnel	Not applicable/No basis to judge	4.9	2.7	8.1
Head of contracting activity's support of the acquisition workforce	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	53.1	47.6	58.7
Head of contracting activity's support of the acquisition workforce	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20.2	15.7	24.6
Head of contracting activity's support of the acquisition workforce	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	17.8	13.5	22.1
Head of contracting activity's support of the acquisition workforce	Not applicable/No basis to judge	8.9	5.9	12.7

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 18: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? For contracting officer's representatives (COR) and program managers, your work unit is considered the unit you support in your duty as a COR or program manager.

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
I recommend my work unit as a good place to work	Strongly disagree / Disagree	14.7	10.9	19.2
I recommend my work unit as a good place to work	Neither agree nor disagree	15.0	11.2	19.5
I recommend my work unit as a good place to work	Agree / Strongly agree	64.9	59.6	70.2
I recommend my work unit as a good place to work	Not applicable/ No basis to judge	5.4	3.2	8.6
My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues	Strongly disagree / Disagree	8.9	6.0	12.8
My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues	Neither agree nor disagree	11.4	8.0	15.5
My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues	Agree / Strongly agree	73.8	68.8	78.7
My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues	Not applicable/ No basis to judge	5.9	3.5	9.2
My workload is reasonable	Strongly disagree / Disagree	25.9	21.0	30.9
My workload is reasonable	Neither agree nor disagree	15.1	11.3	19.7
My workload is reasonable	Agree / Strongly agree	53.8	48.2	59.4
My workload is reasonable	Not applicable/ No basis to judge	5.1	2.9	8.3
The distribution of workload in my work unit is fair	Strongly disagree / Disagree	23.5	18.7	28.3
The distribution of workload in my work unit is fair	Neither agree nor disagree	19.3	14.8	23.7
The distribution of workload in my work unit is fair	Agree / Strongly agree	50.9	45.3	56.5

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
The distribution of workload in my work unit is fair	Not applicable/ No basis to judge	6.3	3.8	9.6
I have sufficient resources to get my job done	Strongly disagree / Disagree	21.3	16.7	25.9
I have sufficient resources to get my job done	Neither agree nor disagree	13.5	9.8	17.8
I have sufficient resources to get my job done	Agree / Strongly agree	60.1	54.7	65.6
I have sufficient resources to get my job done	Not applicable/ No basis to judge	5.1	2.9	8.2
My work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills	Strongly disagree / Disagree	30.9	25.7	36.0
My work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills	Neither agree nor disagree	23.6	18.8	28.4
My work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills	Agree / Strongly agree	36.0	30.7	41.3
My work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills	Not applicable/ No basis to judge	9.6	6.5	13.4
VA senior leadership in my organization encourages using annual leave	Strongly disagree / Disagree	10.9	7.6	15.0
VA senior leadership in my organization encourages using annual leave	Neither agree nor disagree	21.3	16.7	25.9
VA senior leadership in my organization encourages using annual leave	Agree / Strongly agree	60.0	54.5	65.5
VA senior leadership in my organization encourages using annual leave	Not applicable/ No basis to judge	7.8	5.1	11.4

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 19: How much, if at all, does your immediate supervisor do the following? For contracting officer's representatives (COR) or program managers, please answer based on your experiences with the person who supervises your work related to being a COR or program manager.

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Encourage using paid leave	Very Much or Somewhat	77.6	73.0	82.3
Encourage using paid leave	Very Little	4.2	2.2	7.1
Encourage using paid leave	Not at all	5.7	3.4	8.9
Encourage using paid leave	Do not know/ No basis to judge	12.5	9.0	16.7
Create an environment where you can do your best	Very Much or Somewhat	81.0	76.5	85.4
Create an environment where you can do your best	Very Little	9.1	6.1	13.0
Create an environment where you can do your best	Not at all	3.2	1.5	5.9
Create an environment where you can do your best	Do not know/ No basis to judge	6.7	4.2	10.2
Support programs to balance your work and personal life	Very Much or Somewhat	75.1	70.2	80.0
Support programs to balance your work and personal life	Very Little	9.3	6.2	13.1
Support programs to balance your work and personal life	Not at all	4.9	2.7	8.0
Support programs to balance your work and personal life	Do not know/ No basis to judge	10.8	7.5	14.9

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 20: Have you heard of the Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction (OALC)?

Category	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval—lower bound	95 percent confidence interval—upper bound
Yes	80.6	76.2	85.0
No	13.9	10.3	18.3
Do not know	5.5	3.2	8.6
I have heard of the office but not aware of what they do	21.7	16.8	26.7
I am aware that the office provides acquisition support to administration and staff offices	27.9	22.5	33.3
I am aware that within OALC, the Office of Procurement, Acquisition and Logistics recommends policies, plans, and strategies for VA-wide application on contract administration, acquisition planning, procurement, and contract administration	63.5	57.7	69.3

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 21: During the period from March 2020 to October 2021, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction leadership's and senior procurement officer's support of the acquisition workforce?

Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Very Satisfied / Satisfied	51.2	44.2	58.2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	39.4	32.6	46.2
Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	9.4	5.7	14.5
Not applicable/No basis to judge	0.0	0.0	1.2

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 22: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the following aspects of OALC senior leadership/Senior Procurement Executive leadership?

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Clarity of communications about acquisition and contracting policies	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	40.5	34.5	46.4
Clarity of communications about acquisition and contracting policies	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	19.4	14.7	24.1
Clarity of communications about acquisition and contracting policies	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	17.0	12.6	22.1
Clarity of communications about acquisition and contracting policies	Not applicable/No basis to judge	23.2	18.1	28.2
Timeliness of the Department of Veterans Affairs' senior leadership's communications	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	40.1	34.2	46.0
Timeliness of the Department of Veterans Affairs' senior leadership's communications	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	25.3	20.1	30.6
Timeliness of the Department of Veterans Affairs' senior leadership's communications	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	12.2	8.5	16.8
Timeliness of the Department of Veterans Affairs' senior leadership's communications	Not applicable/No basis to judge	22.4	17.4	27.3
Answers to your questions about acquisitions and contracting policies	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	32.6	27.0	38.3
Answers to your questions about acquisitions and contracting policies	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20.5	15.7	25.4
Answers to your questions about acquisitions and contracting policies	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	12.3	8.6	16.9
Answers to your questions about acquisitions and contracting policies	Not applicable/No basis to judge	34.5	28.8	40.2
Communications about policy changes that affect your job	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	39.5	33.6	45.4
Communications about policy changes that affect your job	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18.4	13.8	22.9
Communications about policy changes that affect your job	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	16.8	12.4	21.9
Communications about policy changes that affect your job	Not applicable/No basis to judge	25.4	20.1	30.6
Effort to get input from people who work on acquisitions	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	31.7	26.1	37.4

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Effort to get input from people who work on acquisitions	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	24.5	19.3	29.6
Effort to get input from people who work on acquisitions	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	18.2	13.7	23.5
Effort to get input from people who work on acquisitions	Not applicable/No basis to judge	25.6	20.3	30.8

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 23: How much, if at all, does the Head of Contracting Activity for your organization do the following?

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Show appreciation for the acquisition workforce	Very Much or Somewhat	55.7	50.1	61.2
Show appreciation for the acquisition workforce	Very Little	8.6	5.7	12.4
Show appreciation for the acquisition workforce	Not at all	8.5	5.6	12.2
Show appreciation for the acquisition workforce	Do not know/ No basis to judge	27.2	22.3	32.1
Encourage using paid leave	Very Much or Somewhat	45.0	39.5	50.6
Encourage using paid leave	Very Little	7.2	4.5	10.8
Encourage using paid leave	Not at all	4.2	2.3	7.1
Encourage using paid leave	Do not know/ No basis to judge	43.6	38.0	49.1
Create an environment where you can do your best	Very Much or Somewhat	49.7	44.1	55.3
Create an environment where you can do your best	Very Little	10.0	6.8	13.9
Create an environment where you can do your best	Not at all	6.5	4.0	9.9
Create an environment where you can do your best	Do not know/ No basis to judge	33.8	28.5	39.1
Support programs to balance your work and personal life	Very Much or Somewhat	45.7	40.2	51.3
Support programs to balance your work and personal life	Very Little	7.6	4.9	11.1
Support programs to balance your work and personal life	Not at all	5.5	3.2	8.7
Support programs to balance your work and personal life	Do not know/ No basis to judge	41.2	35.7	46.7

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 24: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the following aspects of the Head of Contracting Activity's leadership in your organization?

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Clarity of communications about acquisition and contracting policies	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	44.4	38.8	49.9
Clarity of communications about acquisition and contracting policies	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18.9	14.6	23.3
Clarity of communications about acquisition and contracting policies	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	18.4	14.0	22.8
Clarity of communications about acquisition and contracting policies	Not applicable/No basis to judge	18.4	14.1	22.6
Timeliness of the Department of Veterans Affairs' senior leadership's communications	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	45.5	39.9	51.1
Timeliness of the Department of Veterans Affairs' senior leadership's communications	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20.0	15.5	24.4
Timeliness of the Department of Veterans Affairs' senior leadership's communications	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	16.9	12.8	21.6
Timeliness of the Department of Veterans Affairs' senior leadership's communications	Not applicable/No basis to judge	17.7	13.5	21.9
Answers to your questions about acquisitions and contracting policies	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	39.7	34.3	45.2
Answers to your questions about acquisitions and contracting policies	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	19.8	15.4	24.3
Answers to your questions about acquisitions and contracting policies	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	17.5	13.3	22.3
Answers to your questions about acquisitions and contracting policies	Not applicable/No basis to judge	22.9	18.3	27.6
Communications about policy changes that affect your job	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	44.0	38.5	49.6
Communications about policy changes that affect your job	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	19.4	15.0	23.8
Communications about policy changes that affect your job	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	17.2	13.1	22.0
Communications about policy changes that affect your job	Not applicable/No basis to judge	19.4	15.0	23.8
Effort to get input from people who work on acquisitions	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	40.0	34.5	45.5

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Effort to get input from people who work on acquisitions	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21.3	16.8	25.9
Effort to get input from people who work on acquisitions	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	19.0	14.5	23.4
Effort to get input from people who work on acquisitions	Not applicable/No basis to judge	19.7	15.3	24.1

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 25: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the program/policy information the Head of Contracting Activity in your organization provides regarding the following? This does not include training classes you receive.

Program/Policy	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor Program	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	21.8	17.1	26.4
Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor Program	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	12.3	8.9	16.4
Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor Program	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	6.1	3.6	9.4
Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor Program	Not applicable/No basis to judge	59.9	54.4	65.4
Veterans First	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	45.3	39.7	50.9
Veterans First	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17.9	13.6	22.2
Veterans First	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	7.2	4.6	10.7
Veterans First	Not applicable/No basis to judge	29.6	24.5	34.7
Buy American	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	36.1	30.7	41.5
Buy American	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21.4	16.8	26.0
Buy American	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	7.8	5.0	11.5
Buy American	Not applicable/No basis to judge	34.6	29.3	40.0
AbilityOne	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	27.1	22.0	32.1
AbilityOne	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	22.9	18.2	27.7
AbilityOne	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	6.2	3.8	9.5
AbilityOne	Not applicable/No basis to judge	43.8	38.2	49.4
Federal Supply Schedule purchases	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	34.8	29.4	40.1
Federal Supply Schedule purchases	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18.4	14.0	22.8
Federal Supply Schedule purchases	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	8.2	5.4	11.9

Program/Policy	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Federal Supply Schedule purchases	Not applicable/No basis to judge	38.6	33.1	44.0
Other	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	8.5	3.8	15.9
Other	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	11.3	6.1	18.8
Other	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	7.0	2.9	13.8
Other	Not applicable/No basis to judge	73.2	63.7	81.4

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 26: How satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the following systems?

System	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Electronic Contract Management System (eCMS)	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	43.5	38.0	49.1
Electronic Contract Management System (eCMS)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18.4	14.0	22.8
Electronic Contract Management System (eCMS)	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	16.7	12.7	21.3
Electronic Contract Management System (eCMS)	Not applicable/No basis to judge	21.4	16.8	26.0
Acquisition Knowledge Portal (AKP)	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	39.9	34.3	45.4
Acquisition Knowledge Portal (AKP)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	22.2	17.5	26.8
Acquisition Knowledge Portal (AKP)	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	7.5	4.7	11.0
Acquisition Knowledge Portal (AKP)	Not applicable/No basis to judge	30.5	25.4	35.7
Integrated Funds Distribution Control Point Activity Accounting & Procurement (IFCAP)	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	25.6	20.7	30.5
Integrated Funds Distribution Control Point Activity Accounting & Procurement (IFCAP)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20.9	16.4	25.5
Integrated Funds Distribution Control Point Activity Accounting & Procurement (IFCAP)	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	21.0	16.4	25.6
Integrated Funds Distribution Control Point Activity Accounting & Procurement (IFCAP)	Not applicable/No basis to judge	32.5	27.3	37.7
Financial Management Business Transformation or Integrated Financial and Acquisition Management System (iFAMS)	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	14.7	10.9	19.2

System	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Financial Management Business Transformation or Integrated Financial and Acquisition Management System (iFAMS)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17.8	13.6	22.1
Financial Management Business Transformation or Integrated Financial and Acquisition Management System (iFAMS)	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	10.6	7.3	14.7
Financial Management Business Transformation or Integrated Financial and Acquisition Management System (iFAMS)	Not applicable/No basis to judge	56.9	51.3	62.5

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 27: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the training you receive related to you receive related to your position as a contracting officer, contracting officer's representative, or program manager?

Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Very Satisfied / Satisfied	67.7	62.3	73.2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	19.4	14.8	24.0
Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	12.9	9.3	17.4
Not applicable/No basis to judge	0.0	0.0	0.8

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 28: How satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the amount of training you receive on the following, as applicable?

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor Program	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	15.8	11.9	20.5
Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor Program	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15.9	12.0	20.5
Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor Program	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	8.9	6.0	12.7
Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor Program	Not applicable/No basis to judge	59.3	53.8	64.8
Veterans First	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	45.0	39.4	50.6
Veterans First	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	19.6	15.2	24.1
Veterans First	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	9.0	6.1	12.6
Veterans First	Not applicable/No basis to judge	26.4	21.5	31.3
Buy American	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	36.2	30.8	41.6
Buy American	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	24.1	19.3	28.9
Buy American	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	12.1	8.6	16.3
Buy American	Not applicable/No basis to judge	27.6	22.6	32.6
AbilityOne	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	26.4	21.4	31.4
AbilityOne	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	24.8	19.9	29.6
AbilityOne	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	9.2	6.2	13.0
AbilityOne	Not applicable/No basis to judge	39.7	34.2	45.2
Federal Supply Schedule	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	30.9	25.7	36.2
Federal Supply Schedule	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21.1	16.6	25.7
Federal Supply Schedule	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	10.2	7.0	14.2

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Federal Supply Schedule	Not applicable/No basis to judge	37.7	32.3	43.2

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 29: How satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the amount of guidance you receive on the following, as applicable?

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor Program	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	16.8	12.7	21.6
Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor Program	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15.9	12.0	20.5
Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor Program	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	7.9	5.1	11.5
Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor Program	Not applicable/No basis to judge	59.4	53.9	65.0
Veterans First	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	41.1	35.6	46.7
Veterans First	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20.9	16.3	25.5
Veterans First	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	11.6	8.2	15.8
Veterans First	Not applicable/No basis to judge	26.3	21.4	31.2
Buy American	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	33.2	27.9	38.5
Buy American	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	24.8	20.0	29.7
Buy American	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	11.3	7.9	15.5
Buy American	Not applicable/No basis to judge	30.7	25.5	35.9
AbilityOne	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	23.5	18.7	28.3
AbilityOne	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	25.8	20.9	30.7
AbilityOne	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	8.9	5.9	12.7
AbilityOne	Not applicable/No basis to judge	41.8	36.2	47.3
Federal Supply Schedule Purchases	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	31.5	26.2	36.8
Federal Supply Schedule Purchases	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	22.3	17.6	27.0
Federal Supply Schedule Purchases	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	10.3	7.1	14.4

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Federal Supply Schedule Purchases	Not applicable/No basis to judge	35.8	30.5	41.2

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 30: How satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the following aspects of training you receive related to your position as a contracting officer, contracting officer's representative, or program manager at the Department of Veterans Affairs?

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Access to the training you need to do your job well	Very Satisfied /Satisfied	63.5	58.1	68.9
Access to the training you need to do your job well	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	16.0	12.1	20.6
Access to the training you need to do your job well	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	17.8	13.5	22.1
Access to the training you need to do your job well	Not applicable/No basis to judge	2.7	1.2	5.3
Formal or informal professional development opportunities	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	55.1	49.5	60.7
Formal or informal professional development opportunities	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21.8	17.2	26.5
Formal or informal professional development opportunities	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	17.8	13.5	22.1
Formal or informal professional development opportunities	Not applicable/No basis to judge	5.2	3.0	8.5
The on-the-job training you receive	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	52.2	46.6	57.8
The on-the-job training you receive	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21.2	16.6	25.8
The on-the-job training you receive	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	19.2	14.8	23.6
The on-the-job training you receive	Not applicable/No basis to judge	7.3	4.7	10.9
Veterans Affairs Acquisition Academy (VAAA) courses you've attended	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	63.7	58.3	69.1
Veterans Affairs Acquisition Academy (VAAA) courses you've attended	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	13.6	10.0	18.0
Veterans Affairs Acquisition Academy (VAAA) courses you've attended	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	11.2	7.9	15.3
Veterans Affairs Acquisition Academy (VAAA) courses you've attended	Not applicable/No basis to judge	11.5	8.1	15.7
New hire training you received	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	34.6	29.3	39.9
New hire training you received	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18.3	13.9	22.6
New hire training you received	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	19.0	14.6	23.4

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
New hire training you received	Not applicable/No basis to judge	28.1	23.1	33.2
Non-VAAA courses you've taken	Very Satisfied / Satisfied	50.1	44.5	55.7
Non-VAAA courses you've taken	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20.3	15.8	24.8
Non-VAAA courses you've taken	Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	7.3	4.7	10.7
Non-VAAA courses you've taken	Not applicable/No basis to judge	22.4	17.7	27.0

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 31: Thinking about your role as a contracting officer, contracting officer's representative, or program manager, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
My roles and responsibilities in my work unit are clearly established	Agree/Strongly Agree	16.9	12.9	21.6
My roles and responsibilities in my work unit are clearly established	Neither agree nor disagree	15.6	11.6	20.2
My roles and responsibilities in my work unit are clearly established	Strongly disagree/Disagree	64.9	59.5	70.3
My roles and responsibilities in my work unit are clearly established	Not applicable/No basis to judge	2.6	1.1	5.1
My performance expectations are clearly linked to my performance assessment	Agree/Strongly Agree	16.5	12.6	21.1
My performance expectations are clearly linked to my performance assessment	Neither agree nor disagree	15.8	11.9	20.5
My performance expectations are clearly linked to my performance assessment	Strongly disagree/Disagree	64.2	58.8	69.6
My performance expectations are clearly linked to my performance assessment	Not applicable/No basis to judge	3.5	1.7	6.2
My performance expectations are reasonable	Agree/Strongly Agree	15.7	11.8	20.3
My performance expectations are reasonable	Neither agree nor disagree	16.5	12.5	21.3
My performance expectations are reasonable	Strongly disagree/Disagree	64.2	58.8	69.6
My performance expectations are reasonable	Not applicable/No basis to judge	3.5	1.7	6.4
Managers in my work unit hold employees accountable for performance	Agree/Strongly Agree	18.2	13.9	22.6
Managers in my work unit hold employees accountable for performance	Neither agree nor disagree	18.3	14.0	22.7
Managers in my work unit hold employees accountable for performance	Strongly disagree/Disagree	57.8	52.2	63.3
Managers in my work unit hold employees accountable for performance	Not applicable/No basis to judge	5.7	3.3	9.0
When I interact with other members of the acquisition workforce, they have an understanding of acquisition policies consistent with my own	Agree/Strongly Agree	18.8	14.4	23.2

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
When I interact with other members of the acquisition workforce, they have an understanding of acquisition policies consistent with my own	Neither agree nor disagree	20.5	16.0	25.0
When I interact with other members of the acquisition workforce, they have an understanding of acquisition policies consistent with my own	Strongly disagree/Disagree	53.3	47.7	58.9
When I interact with other members of the acquisition workforce, they have an understanding of acquisition policies consistent with my own	Not applicable/No basis to judge	7.4	4.7	11.1
My agency provides me with tools that enable me to do my work, such as contract file and financial management systems	Agree/Strongly Agree	17.4	13.3	22.1
My agency provides me with tools that enable me to do my work, such as contract file and financial management systems	Neither agree nor disagree	17.5	13.3	21.7
My agency provides me with tools that enable me to do my work, such as contract file and financial management systems	Strongly disagree/Disagree	58.8	53.3	64.3
My agency provides me with tools that enable me to do my work, such as contract file and financial management systems	Not applicable/No basis to judge	6.4	3.9	9.8

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 32: Considering everything, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your job?

Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Very Satisfied / Satisfied	67.5	62.3	72.8
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	16.2	12.2	20.9
Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	15.3	11.5	19.9
Not applicable/No basis to judge	0.9	0.2	2.6

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 33: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the current telework program in your agency?

Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Very Satisfied / Satisfied	76.0	71.2	80.9
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	10.4	7.1	14.5
Dissatisfied / Very dissatisfied	5.8	3.4	9.0
Not applicable/No basis to judge	7.8	5.1	11.3

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 34: How likely or unlikely are you to leave your job in the next 3 years?

Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Very likely / Likely	34.3	28.9	39.7
Neither likely nor unlikely	21.5	16.8	26.2
Unlikely / Very unlikely	35.1	29.7	40.4
Not sure	9.1	6.2	12.9

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 35: Do you plan to move to another organization within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), or leave VA entirely?

Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Move to another organization within VA	14.9	8.5	23.6
Leave VA entirely	47.2	37.7	56.7
Not sure	29.0	20.3	37.8
Prefer not to respond	8.9	4.0	16.6

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Table 36: Which of the following are reasons you plan to leave your job in the next 3 years?

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Workload	Yes	55.5	45.0	66.1
Workload	No	44.0	33.4	54.6
Workload	Do not know	0.5	0.0	5.1
Pay and benefits	Yes	34.5	24.4	44.6
Pay and benefits	No	64.2	54.0	74.4
Pay and benefits	Do not know	1.3	0.1	5.9
Location	Yes	31.5	21.3	41.7
Location	No	68.2	58.1	78.4
Location	Do not know	0.3	0.0	5.2
Student loan repayments	Yes	11.8	5.6	21.2
Student loan repayments	No	86.6	77.2	93.2
Student loan repayments	Do not know	1.6	0.1	6.2
Employee awards and recognition	Yes	38.9	28.3	49.5
Employee awards and recognition	No	59.0	48.4	69.7
Employee awards and recognition	Do not know	2.0	0.2	7.7
To obtain a more flexible work schedule	Yes	30.5	20.5	40.5
To obtain a more flexible work schedule	No	69.4	59.3	79.4
To obtain a more flexible work schedule	Do not know	0.1	0.0	5.1
More opportunities to telework	Yes	37.6	27.4	47.9
More opportunities to telework	No	62.2	52.0	72.5
More opportunities to telework	Do not know	0.1	0.0	4.9
Promotion potential	Yes	69.5	59.9	79.0
Promotion potential	No	30.4	20.8	40.0
Promotion potential	Do not know	0.1	0.0	4.8
Supervisor	Yes	28.7	19.2	39.8
Supervisor	No	69.4	59.3	79.4
Supervisor	Do not know	2.0	0.2	8.0
Retirement	Yes	40.0	30.2	49.9

Topic	Response	Estimated percent	95 percent confidence interval lower bound	95 percent confidence interval upper bound
Retirement	No	57.0	47.0	67.0
Retirement	Do not know	3.0	0.5	9.4

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105031

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Veterans Affairs

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON**

September 16, 2022

Ms. Shelby S. Oakley
Director
Contracting and National Security Acquisitions
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Oakley:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reviewed the Government
Accountability Office (GAO) draft report: *VA ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT: Improved
Data and Collaboration Needed to Better Manage Acquisition Workforce*
(GAO-22-105031).

The enclosure contains technical comments and the action plan to implement the
draft report recommendations. VA appreciates the opportunity to comment on your draft
report.

Sincerely,

Tanya J. Bradsher
Chief of Staff

Enclosure

Enclosure

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Comments to
Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report
*VA ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT: Improved Data and
Collaboration Needed to Better Manage
Acquisition Workforce*
(GAO-22-105031)

<u>Recommendation 1:</u> **The Secretary of Veterans Affairs should ensure VA's
Acquisition Career Manager take steps, such as establishing procedures for staff to
regularly update Cornerstone records and for reconciling Cornerstone records with
HR data, to ensure that the VA keeps up-to-date and accurate acquisition workforce
records.**

<u>VA Response:</u> Concur. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) agrees with GAO's
conclusions and concurs with GAO's recommendation to the Department. VA will provide
the actions to be taken to address the recommendation in the 180-day update to the final
report.

<u>Recommendation 2:</u> **The Secretary of Veterans Affairs should ensure VA's Chief
Acquisition Officer documents the HCA's roles and responsibilities for managing the
acquisition workforce.**

<u>VA Response:</u> Concur. VA agrees with GAO's conclusions and concurs with GAO's
recommendation to the Department. VA will provide the actions to be taken to address the
recommendation in the 180-day update to the final report.

Page 1 of 3

Accessible Text for Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Veterans Affairs

September 16, 2022

Ms. Shelby S. Oakley
Director
Contracting and National Security Acquisitions
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Oakley:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reviewed the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report: VA ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT: Improved Data and Collaboration Needed to Better Manage Acquisition Workforce (GAO-22-105031).

The enclosure contains technical comments and the action plan to implement the draft report recommendations. VA appreciates the opportunity to comment on your draft report.

Sincerely,

Tanya J. Bradsher
Chief of Staff

Enclosure

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Comments to Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report
VA ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT: Improved Data and
Collaboration Needed to Better Manage
Acquisition Workforce
(GAO-22-105031)

Recommendation 1: The Secretary of Veterans Affairs should ensure VA's Acquisition Career Manager take steps, such as establishing procedures for staff to regularly update Cornerstone records and for reconciling Cornerstone records with HR data, to ensure that the VA keeps up-to-date and accurate acquisition workforce records.

VA Response: Concur. The Department of Veterans Affairs 0/A) agrees with GAO's conclusions and concurs with GAO's recommendation to the Department. VA will provide the actions to be taken to address the recommendation in the 180-day update to the final report.

Recommendation 2: The Secretary of Veterans Affairs should ensure VA's Chief Acquisition Officer documents the HCA's roles and responsibilities for managing the acquisition workforce.

VA Response: Concur. VA agrees with GAO's conclusions and concurs with GAO's recommendation to the Department. VA will provide the actions to be taken to address the recommendation in the 180-day update to the final report.

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Shelby S. Oakley at (202) 512-4841 or oakleys@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, the following staff members made key contributions to this report: Teague Lyons, Assistant Director; Lisa Gardner, Assistant Director; Julie A. Clark, Analyst-in-Charge; Pete Anderson; Carl Barden; Maria Victoria Castillo; Matt Crosby; Lori Fields; Gina Flacco; Min-Hei (Michelle) Kim; Ella Kremer; Serena Lo; Catherine Parylo; and Sarah Tempel.

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Stephen J. Sanford, Managing Director, spel@gao.gov, (202) 512-4707
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Washington, DC 20548