

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-19-343](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

AOC is organized into 10 jurisdictions that operate and maintain the buildings and grounds of the U.S. Capitol complex. For projects such as renovations and repairs, the jurisdictions can use their own employees, a contractor, or AOC's Construction Division, which is staffed with trade workers such as electricians and plumbers. Most of the Division's staff are employed on a temporary basis and paid with funds the Division receives from the jurisdictions for projects it executes on their behalf. In March 2017, AOC laid off 30 of the Division's approximately 190 temporary employees, citing a lack of work from the jurisdictions.

GAO was asked to review the Division's operations. This report examines the jurisdictions' use of the Division and the Division's management of its workforce, among other issues. GAO analyzed information on projects the Division completed during fiscal years 2014 through 2018, reviewed AOC policies, visited the sites of six projects that are illustrative of the work the Division performs for the jurisdictions, and interviewed AOC staff, including officials from AOC's 10 jurisdictions and five of the employees AOC laid off in 2017.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that AOC formalize the process the Division uses for collecting information on the jurisdictions' construction priorities each month, such as through developing written procedures. AOC concurred with GAO's recommendation.

View [GAO-19-343](#). For more information, contact Lori Rectanus at (202) 512-2834 or rectanusl@gao.gov or Chelsa Gurkin at (202) 512-7215 or gurkinc@gao.gov.

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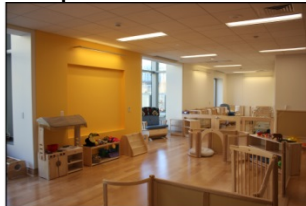
ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

A Formalized Process Could Improve Management of the Construction Division's Workforce and Workload

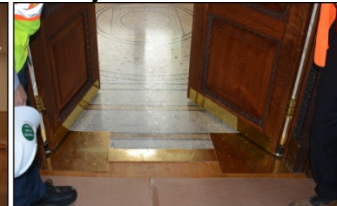
What GAO Found

The Architect of the Capitol's (AOC) Construction Division (hereafter the Division) is designed to serve as a flexible option that the 10 operational jurisdictions that comprise AOC can use to meet their facility needs. In their efforts to manage the buildings and grounds of the U.S. Capitol complex, AOC's jurisdictions have used the Division for projects that vary widely in cost, complexity, and duration (see figure). For example, over the last 5 fiscal years, the jurisdictions have used the Division for projects ranging in cost from about \$1,000 to about \$10 million and in scope from hazardous material testing to multiyear lighting-system upgrades. Jurisdiction officials cited the Division's flexibility in adjusting to scope and other changes to keep a project on schedule as one of the reasons they may decide to use the Division instead of an outside contractor. While jurisdiction officials said they were generally satisfied with the Division's services, officials from two jurisdictions suggested that the Division consider changing how it operates—for example, by transferring some positions to its parent organization in an effort to lower what it charges the jurisdictions. According to AOC officials, making changes such as this one to the Division's operations could have varying effects, such as increasing how much funding AOC would require from other sources beyond the jurisdictions.

Examples of Construction Division Projects



Work on a new child care center for the House of Representatives.



Work at the Library of Congress to reverse the swing of doors to allow for the more orderly evacuation of occupants in the event of an emergency.



Repairs to the steps of a Senate office building.

Source: GAO. | GAO-19-343

The Division has taken steps to strategically manage its workforce to help ensure that it has the right number and composition of staff to meet the jurisdictions' needs but has not formalized the process it uses for collecting information on the jurisdictions' construction priorities each month. Because the Division's workload is driven by projects the jurisdictions hire it to perform, such things as changes in projects' priorities and work to be performed make determining future workforce needs challenging. The Division's approach to managing its workforce generally aligns with practices that GAO has previously identified that help agencies strategically manage their human capital. This approach includes having strategies to address gaps if the size and composition of an agency's workforce are not aligned with its workload requirements. However, because the Division has not formalized the process it uses to collect information each month on the jurisdictions' construction priorities it may miss opportunities to obtain information that is critical to making informed decisions. The Division also cannot provide reasonable assurance to AOC management and Congress that it is taking the steps necessary to manage its workload and that it is basing its workforce projections on the most current information available.