

# FederalComputerWeek

## DOD Needs Better Workforce Data

### Lack of information hampers efforts to balance contractor and in-house workforce

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The Defense Department has, at best, a blurry picture of its government acquisition workforce's makeup and skills, a hindrance to assessing its needs, the Government Accountability Office said last week.

The lack of information "limits DOD's ability to make informed workforce allocation decisions and determine whether the total acquisition workforce — in-house and contractor personnel — is sufficient to accomplish its mission," John Needham, director of acquisition and sourcing issues at GAO, told the House Armed Services Committee's Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.

As Congress pays more attention to contract management, defense officials know the least about the contracting officer's representative, he said. The COR's role is important to measure the contractor's work, keep costs under control and identify problems early on. But officials know so little about CORs because the work is often an added task for employees who have primary responsibilities.

However, Shay Assad, DOD's director of Defense procurement acquisition policy and strategic sourcing, said the department recently concluded an extensive review of the acquisition workforces for DOD and the military services.

"So we have the information that we need to look at that part of the workforce in a very detailed way," Assad said. The review took 18 months to finish and included more than 18,000 participants. He said it's the most comprehensive competency assessment ever of that workforce. DOD officials are using the information to map their needs as spending increases.

As part of a department-wide strategy, officials would increase the size of the acquisition workforce by 15 percent, reaching a total of 20,000 people through fiscal 2015, he said. As a major element of the plan, DOD intends to convert approximately 11,000 contractor support positions to full-time government employees.

At the end of fiscal 2008, the number of civilian and military personnel in DOD's acquisition workforce totaled nearly 126,000, of which civilian employees comprised 88 percent, GAO said.

The goal is to restore the workforce to the 1998 levels of approximately 147,000 people, Assad said. DOD is bringing in interns as the new generation of contracting employees and hiring highly qualified experts, using the hiring authorities that Congress granted DOD in recent laws.

Needham said DOD's efforts are good, but it's too early to see the extent to which they can help DOD's management and oversight of its acquisition employees and contractors.

"These efforts may not provide the comprehensive information DOD needs to manage and oversee its acquisition workforce," he said.

