

April 2012

**FEDERAL
EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT
AGENCY**

**Workforce Planning
and Training Could Be
Enhanced by
Incorporating
Strategic Management
Principles**



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Why GAO Did This Study

FEMA, within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), employs a workforce of over 18,000 people, who are responsible for leading and supporting the nation in preparing for, protecting against, responding to, recovering from, and mitigating all hazards. GAO reported in 2007 and 2011 that changes in FEMA's workforce, workload, and composition have created challenges in FEMA's ability to meet the agency's varied responsibilities and train its staff appropriately. GAO was asked to review FEMA's workforce planning and training efforts. This report addresses: the extent to which FEMA has (1) integrated its workforce planning and training efforts, (2) incorporated strategic management principles into these efforts, and (3) systematically gathered workforce and training data to inform its human capital decisions. GAO reviewed relevant documentation that describes FEMA's agencywide workforce planning and training efforts, such as the agency's strategic plan, reviewed and assessed FEMA's strategic planning documents, and interviewed DHS and FEMA program and regional office officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that FEMA: identify long-term quantifiable mission-critical goals; establish a time frame for completing the development of quantifiable performance measures; establish lines of authority for agencywide workforce planning and training efforts; and develop systematic processes to collect and analyze workforce and training data. DHS concurred with all recommendations.

View [GAO-12-487](#). For more information, contact David C. Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov.

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Workforce Planning and Training Could Be Enhanced by Incorporating Strategic Management Principles

What GAO Found

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is taking steps to integrate its workforce planning and training efforts across the agency consistent with critical success factors for strategic human capital management such as initiating working groups to coordinate related activities, but its efforts are in the early stages. Until recently FEMA's efforts related to workforce planning have been independently conducted by various offices across the agency. In January 2012, FEMA human capital officials reported that they began integrating agencywide workforce planning initiatives underway by other program offices, such as FEMA's Qualification System, which was developed to establish qualification requirements for FEMA's workforce for deployment purposes, among other things. Additionally, FEMA's Human Capital Office plans to release a directive that, according to officials, will address the need for integrating the agency's training efforts consistent with critical success factors for strategic human capital management. Having integrated workforce planning and training could help FEMA ensure that it has the properly sized and skilled workforce to effectively meet its mission. However, the effectiveness of these integration efforts is dependent upon FEMA following through with its plans and it is, therefore, too early to assess their impact.

FEMA has taken steps to incorporate some strategic management principles into its workforce planning and training efforts but could incorporate additional principles to ensure a more strategic approach is used to address longstanding management challenges. Specifically, FEMA's leadership has demonstrated commitment to effectively plan for and train its workforce, but has not established specific long-term goals, such as integrating agencywide training efforts, or quantifiable annual performance measures for these efforts. Such goals and metrics could help ensure accountability for FEMA's workforce planning and training. Further, FEMA's workforce planning and training could be enhanced by establishing lines of authority for these efforts. For example, FEMA's Human Capital Office is responsible for providing leadership and direction for the agency's human capital programs, but officials said that they have little authority over workforce planning efforts across the agency. Identifying lines of authority could help provide a strategic focus to FEMA's workforce planning and training and ensure the agency is held accountable for the success of these efforts.

FEMA has not developed processes to systematically collect and analyze agencywide workforce and training data that could be used to better inform its decision making. Specifically, the contractor who conducted a March 2010 baseline assessment of FEMA's workforce reported that they gathered workforce data from three different databases to conduct their analysis, noting that conflicting data from these databases had to be resolved to make the information useable for their analysis. Additionally, FEMA has taken steps to track training information, but its tracking processes do not provide a reliable account of all training activities of FEMA employees. Developing systematic processes to collect and analyze its agencywide workforce and training data could help FEMA make more informed decisions.

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Abbreviations

CORE	Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees
DAE	Disaster Assistance Employees
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FQS	FEMA Qualification System
Homeland Security Institute	Homeland Security Studies and Analysis Institute
Human Capital Office	Office of Chief Component Human Capital Officer
Post-Katrina Act	Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

April 26, 2012

Congressional Requesters

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), employs a workforce of over 18,000 people, who are responsible for leading and supporting the nation in a risk-based, comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards. FEMA's workforce includes permanent staff as well as short-term and long-term temporary staff who require a variety of specialized skills. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Congress passed the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (Post-Katrina Act), expanding FEMA's mission and responsibilities.¹ Among other things, the Post-Katrina Act required FEMA to develop a strategic human capital plan that includes an assessment of the critical skills and competencies of FEMA's workforce and provide an action plan that includes workforce planning strategies and program objectives to train employees.²

As we have previously reported, changes in FEMA's workforce, workload, and composition have created challenges in the agency's ability to meet its changing responsibilities and train its staff appropriately even as FEMA's ability to successfully meet its mission of preparing for, responding to, and recovering from all hazards has been tested as never before.³ In 2011, FEMA responded to more disasters than any other year in its history. Specifically, during fiscal year 2011, FEMA responded to 124 declared major disasters and emergencies, helping thousands of individuals and communities reduce the economic loss and human suffering associated with disasters. For example, tornadoes devastated

¹The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 was enacted as Title VI of the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2007, Pub. L. No. 109-295, 120 Stat. 1355 (2006).

²5 U.S.C. § 10102.

³See GAO, *Budget Issues: FEMA Needs Adequate Data, Plans, and Systems to Effectively Manage Resources for Day-to-Day Operations*, [GAO-07-139](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 19, 2007); GAO, *FEMA: Action Needed to Improve Administration of the National Flood Insurance Program*, [GAO-11-297](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 9, 2011).

the town of Joplin, Missouri, and severely impacted the Southeast region, while Hurricane Irene affected 14 states and more than 35 million people along the East Coast. This environment increases the importance of FEMA effectively identifying the appropriate size and skills of its workforce. Recognizing these challenges, FEMA's administrator identified workforce planning and training as one of the agency's five priorities for fiscal years 2012 through 2016 in its strategic plan. A key component of the agency's continuing evolution is the Administrator's goal of ensuring that, in addition to their day-to-day responsibilities, every FEMA employee is fully prepared to be deployed as a part of the national disaster workforce to more fully embrace the agency's core mission and meet FEMA's goal to address the needs of survivors within 72 hours, and restore basic services and community functionality within 60 days.

We have previously reported on the challenges FEMA faces in conducting strategic workforce planning and training activities. For example, in 2007 we reported that FEMA needed adequate data, plans, and systems to effectively manage resources for its day-to-day operations.⁴ Specifically, we reported that FEMA was conducting its workforce planning from the bottom up, office by office, and this approach was likely to result in workforce plans that meet the immediate needs of individual offices rather than produce an integrated, long-term strategy for the entire agency. We also noted that FEMA lacked human capital strategies, such as succession planning and a coordinated training effort, which are integral to managing resources. We recommended that FEMA apply attributes of effective workforce planning, including establishing strategic direction, assessing the number and skill sets of its workforce, conducting succession planning, and developing training requirements.⁵ To address this recommendation, in 2008 FEMA issued its Strategic Human Capital Plan. More recently, in June 2011 we reported that FEMA faced challenges, including the lack of effective collaboration between program and support offices, and strategic human capital planning related to Post-Katrina Act requirements.⁶ As a result, we recommended that FEMA develop a comprehensive workforce plan according to the Post-Katrina Act that identifies agency staffing and skills requirements,

⁴[GAO-07-139](#).

⁵DHS did not comment on this recommendation.

⁶[GAO-11-297](#).

addresses turnover and staff vacancies, and analyzes FEMA's use of contractors. FEMA concurred, and in responding to this recommendation, reported that it had acquired a contractor to conduct a baseline assessment of its workforce to inform the agency's future workforce planning efforts. We discuss this baseline assessment later in this report.

In addition, our prior work on strategic human capital management across the federal government has identified long-standing concerns in this area. For example, in 2001 we designated strategic human capital management as a high-risk issue and reported that the government's management of people—its human capital—was the critical missing link in reforming and modernizing the federal government's management practices.⁷ Since that time, the federal government has made progress in addressing its human capital challenges and we have, therefore, narrowed the scope of this high-risk area to focus on the most significant challenges that remain to close current and emerging critical skills gaps in vital areas such as acquisition, foreign language capabilities, and oil and gas management.⁸ In June and December 2011, DHS provided us with letters documenting actions taken and planned to address its human capital challenges, including a lack of integrated strategies, requirements, capabilities, and resources as well as a lack of integrated functional policies, procedures and internal controls. Specifically, DHS described its strategy to transform the department and address the root causes that contributed to our initial high-risk designation of implementing and transforming DHS. However, we believe that the strategy could be strengthened by, for example, DHS more consistently reporting on available resources and corrective actions as well as establishing measures and report on progress made for all initiatives. These changes, if implemented and sustained, provide a path for DHS to address this high-risk area. Nevertheless, in March 2012 we reported that in many instances, DHS had more work ahead to fully implement the department's strategy and address its human capital challenges.⁹

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

⁸GAO, *High Risk Series: An Update*, [GAO-11-278](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 2011).

⁹GAO, *Department of Homeland Security: Continued Progress Made Improving and Integrating Management Areas, but More Work Remains*, [GAO-12-365T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 1, 2012).

As a tool for addressing human capital challenges governmentwide, we have previously identified a model of strategic human capital management, which describes strategic human capital planning as a cornerstone and identifies critical success factors, including the need for the integration of human capital approaches and data-driven human capital decisions.¹⁰ We have also identified strategic management principles that incorporate elements of results and accountability to facilitate long-term strategic management.

Due to FEMA's ongoing strategic workforce planning challenges, you asked us to review FEMA's workforce planning and training efforts. This report assesses the extent to which FEMA has: (1) integrated its workforce planning and training efforts consistent with strategic human capital planning critical success factors; (2) incorporated strategic management principles into these efforts; and (3) systematically gathered workforce and training data to inform its human capital decisions.

To assess the extent to which FEMA has integrated its workforce planning and training efforts, we reviewed relevant documentation that describes FEMA's agencywide and regional workforce planning efforts, such as the Homeland Security Studies and Analysis Institute's (Homeland Security Institute) FEMA Workforce Baseline Assessment issued in March 2010.¹¹ We also reviewed documentation on FEMA's current and planned training efforts, including a report issued by FEMA's Leadership Training and Development Working Group that documents training limitations and planned efforts to address these limitations. We compared FEMA's workforce planning and training efforts against our previously identified critical success factors for strategic human capital management.¹² We also reviewed relevant documentation on DHS's workforce planning and training guidance to its components, including the *DHS Workforce Planning Guide*, and assessed the extent to which

¹⁰GAO, *A Model of Strategic Human Capital Management*, [GAO-02-373SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 15, 2002).

¹¹The Homeland Security Institute is a federally funded research and development center that provides independent analysis of homeland security issues. Specifically, the Homeland Security Institute provides government the expertise to conduct cross-cutting mission analysis, strategic studies and assessments, development of models that baseline current capabilities, among other efforts.

¹²[GAO-02-373SP](#).

FEMA's workforce planning and training efforts are in alignment with this departmental guidance. We interviewed officials from various FEMA program offices, including those from the Office of the Chief Component Human Capital Officer (Human Capital Office), the Incident Workforce Management Office, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, the Office of Policy and Program Analysis, the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer, the Emergency Management Institute, and the Training, Exercise, and Doctrine Office to discuss their roles in workforce planning and training efforts and how their efforts were integrated on an agencywide level. Further, we interviewed and obtained documentation on workforce planning and training efforts from FEMA officials in Region IV—selected because it is one of the agency's largest regions—to obtain a regional perspective on the integration of these efforts.¹³ While we cannot generalize the information we obtained from FEMA officials in Region IV, it provides important insights. In addition, we interviewed analysts from the Homeland Security Institute assisting FEMA with its workforce planning efforts, to obtain information on the integration of this contractor's work with other efforts under way across the agency. We also interviewed officials from the DHS Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, including the Chief Learning Officer, to discuss its oversight and guidance to its component agencies related to workforce planning and training to ensure alignment with the department.

To assess the extent to which FEMA has incorporated strategic management principles, we reviewed and assessed FEMA's strategic planning documents, including its *Strategic Human Capital Plan, 2008-2012*, and its fiscal years 2009 and 2010 Human Capital Operational Plans to determine FEMA's approach for its workforce planning and training efforts. We compared FEMA's ongoing and planned workforce planning and training efforts against strategic management principles we have previously identified. We also interviewed officials from FEMA program offices, including those from the Human Capital Office, the Incident Workforce Management Office, and the Office of Policy and Program Analysis to determine the extent to which these officials were taking steps to incorporate such principles, including clearly identifying lines of authority for the agency's workforce planning and training efforts.

¹³Obtaining comprehensive information on the workforce planning and training efforts under way at FEMA's regional offices would have required site visits to each of the 10 regions.

To assess the extent to which FEMA has systematically gathered workforce and training data to inform its human capital decisions, we reviewed relevant documentation related to the agency's historical efforts to gather such data, including our previous reports and FEMA documentation such as the *FEMA Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2011-2014*. We reviewed the methodology and findings of the Homeland Security Institute's FEMA Workforce Baseline Assessment and a report by the National Academy of Public Administration, and interviewed analysts from the Homeland Security Institute regarding the scope, methodology, and findings of their assessment.¹⁴ We determined that the scope and methodology of the Homeland Security Institute assessment and the National Academy of Public Administration audit were sufficient for us to rely on the results. We also interviewed officials from the FEMA program offices that play a role in tracking workforce and training data, including the Human Capital Office, the Incident Workforce Management Office, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, and the Emergency Management Institute. We also interviewed Region IV FEMA officials to obtain information on the regions' role in gathering workforce and training data. We compared FEMA's efforts to systematically gather workforce and training data against our previously identified critical success factors for strategic human capital management.¹⁵

We conducted this performance audit from August 2011 through April 2012 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.

¹⁴National Academy of Public Administration, *FEMA's Integration of Preparedness and Development of Robust Regional Offices: An Independent Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 2009).

¹⁵[GAO-02-373SP](#).

Background

Overview of FEMA's Workforce

FEMA's workforce is comprised of a combination of permanent full-time employees (permanent employees) and temporary employees. Permanent employees conduct a wide variety of specialized functions including mitigation activities, such as flood mapping and managing the National Flood Insurance Program; preparedness activities, such as national capabilities assessments; and managing nationwide grant programs, among other things. According to FEMA, the agency obligated \$630,649,000 to fund the salaries and benefits of its permanent employees for fiscal year 2012.¹⁶ FEMA's temporary employees are primarily dedicated to disaster assistance. Disaster-related temporary employees with 2- to 4-year appointments are referred to as Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees (CORE), and Disaster Assistance Employees (DAE), who perform disaster-related work for 2-year intermittent appointments.¹⁷ While permanent employees are hired under provisions of Title V of the U.S. Code that govern competitive service, disaster relief employees are hired and funded under the authority of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.¹⁸ Funding for DAEs and COREs varies on an annual basis based on the number of declared disasters.

As of March 2012, FEMA reported that it had a workforce of over 18,000 employees, of which approximately 26 percent—or over 4,700—are permanent. The remaining 74 percent are comprised of COREs, DAEs,

¹⁶According to FEMA, the agency obligated \$558,097,000 to fund the salaries and benefits of its permanent employees in fiscal year 2011.

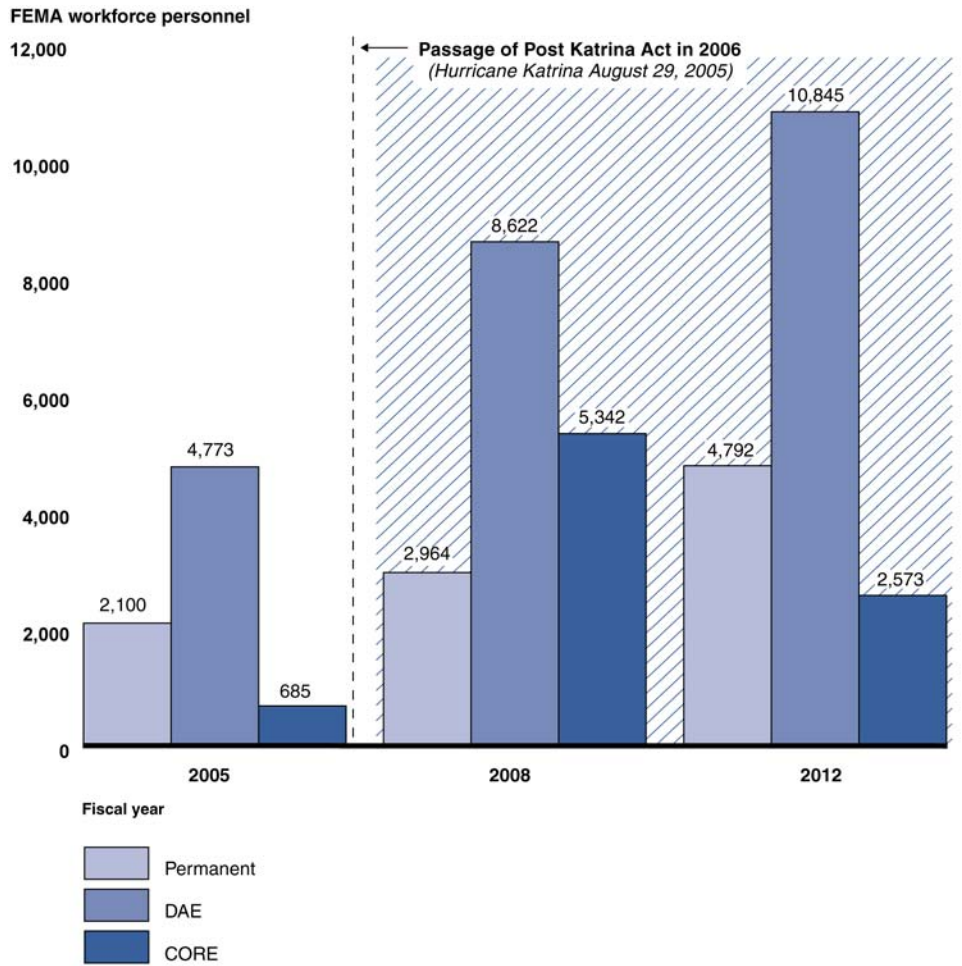
¹⁷CORE positions are temporary, excepted service appointments with specific "Not to Exceed" dates. The appointments are two and four-year terms and are typically renewed if there is ongoing disaster work and funding is available. DAEs are activated in direct response to a disaster declaration to support the work of FEMA at the disaster site. FEMA hires DAEs as 2-year, intermittent employees who are deployed as needed for emergencies and/or disasters.

¹⁸See 42 U.S.C. § 5149(b)(1). The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended, known as the Stafford Act, constitutes the statutory authority for most federal disaster response activities, especially as they pertain to FEMA and FEMA programs. This act authorizes the President to issue a "major disaster" declaration to provide a wide range of federal aid to states determined to be overwhelmed by hurricanes or other disasters. 42 U.S.C. § 5170. FEMA is tasked with coordinating the response under the Stafford Act.

and other employees.¹⁹ From fiscal years 2005 through March 2012, FEMA's permanent workforce has increased by approximately 128 percent (from 2,100 to 4,792) and its disaster-related temporary employees (COREs and DAEs) have increased by approximately 146 percent (from 5,458 to 13,418 employees). Figure 1 illustrates the changes in FEMA's permanent, DAE, and CORE workforce during fiscal years 2005, 2008, and 2012.

¹⁹As of February 2011, FEMA employed approximately 991 other employees, including other government employees on assignment to FEMA and full-time and part-time FEMA staff with a set end date of employment. FEMA also employed approximately 7,892 contractors.

Figure 1: Overview of FEMA's Workforce, Fiscal Years 2005, 2008, 2012



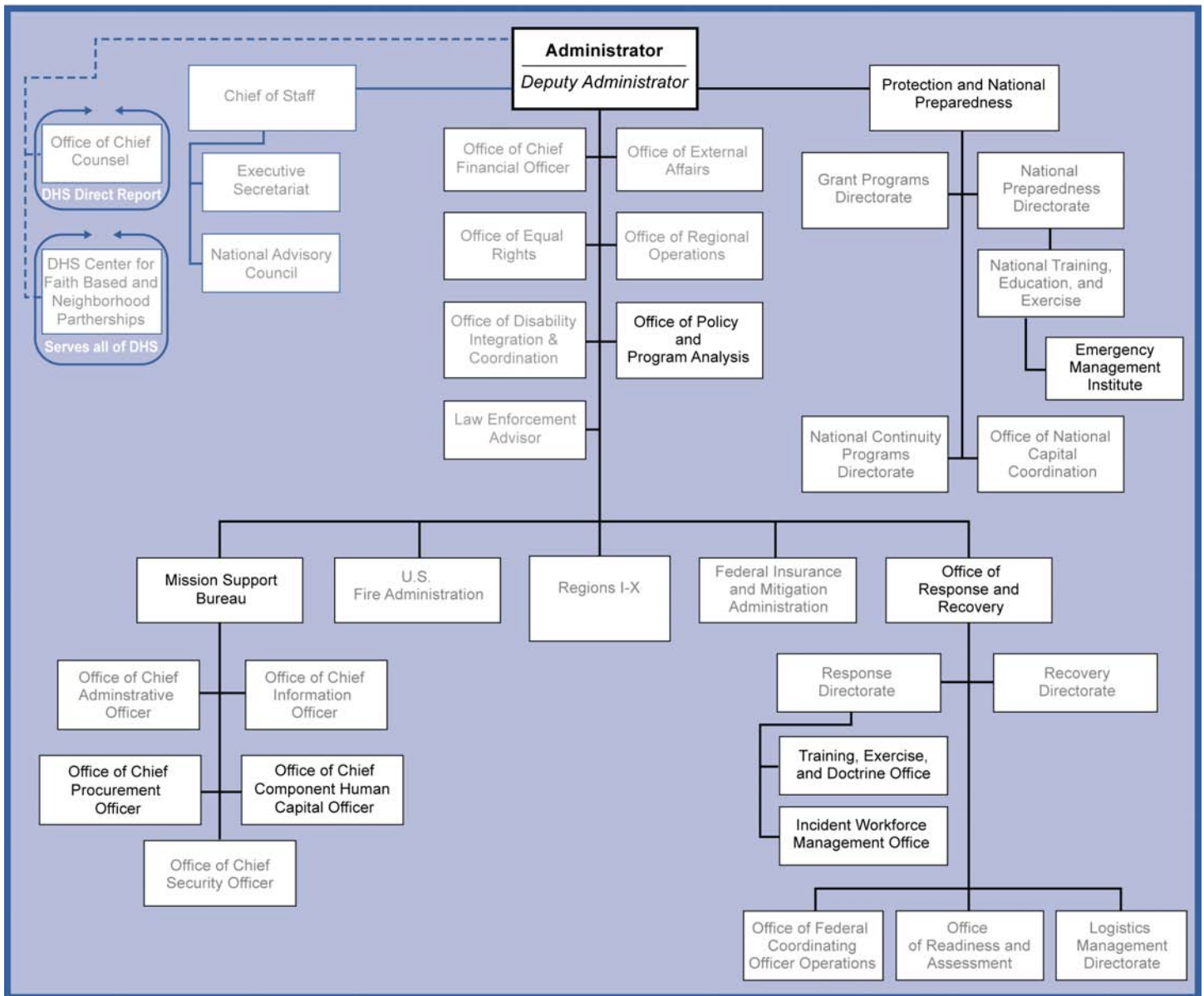
Source: GAO analysis of FEMA data.

Approximately 70 percent of FEMA's permanent workforce is located at its headquarters and the remaining 30 percent are assigned to FEMA's 10 regional offices.²⁰ FEMA disaster response employees also work at

²⁰Approximately 60 percent of those working for headquarter components are located outside of the immediate Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. FEMA's 10 regional offices are located in Atlanta, Georgia; Boston, Massachusetts; Denton, Texas; Denver, Colorado; Chicago, Illinois; Kansas City, Missouri; New York, New York; Oakland, California; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Seattle, Washington.

temporary disaster response/recovery sites established across the country. FEMA consists of six primary components: Response and Recovery, Federal Insurance and Mitigation, Protection and National Preparedness, United States Fire Administration, Regional Operations, and Mission Support. See figure 2 for FEMA's organizational chart, as of January 2012.

Figure 2: FEMA Organizational Chart



Source: GAO analysis of FEMA information.

Note: The bolded program offices above indicate those organizations that play a role in FEMA's workforce planning and training efforts.

Several program offices within FEMA play a role in the agency's workforce planning and training efforts:

-
- Within FEMA’s Mission Support Bureau in headquarters, the Human Capital Office is responsible for providing leadership and direction to all stakeholders, including FEMA headquarters and regional offices on human capital programs, products, and services.
 - Also within the Mission Support Bureau, the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer is responsible for overseeing FEMA’s acquisition of services.
 - Within the Office of the Administrator, the Office of Policy and Program Analysis is responsible for reviewing proposed policies and programs for agencywide consistency and compliance with Departmental guidance.
 - Under the Office of Response and Recovery, the Incident Workforce Management Office is responsible for the deployment of personnel, the management of the surge capacity forces, disaster response cadre management, and the implementation of the FEMA Qualification System (FQS).²¹
 - The Training, Exercise, and Doctrine office, also within the Office of Response and Recovery, develops training requirements and agencywide disaster-related doctrine, and funds the development and revision of FQS related disaster workforce training, among other functions.
 - The Emergency Management Institute, under Protection and National Preparedness, serves as the agency’s principle component in developing and delivering emergency management training—including courses for employees to certify under FQS—and creates and manages courses using an accredited curriculum management system.

FEMA Workforce Strategies

The Post-Katrina Act required FEMA to develop, and update annually through 2012, a strategic human capital plan that includes an assessment of the critical skills and competencies required for its workforce.²² In May 2008, FEMA issued its *Strategic Human Capital Plan, 2008-2012*, which presented, among other things, the agency’s plans for a restructured workforce and improvements to its training programs. For example, under the initiative to train and professionally develop its workforce, the plan

²¹Prior to June 2011, the Incident Workforce Management Office was named the Disaster Workforce Division under the Office of the Chief Component Human Capital Officer. FQS is a FEMA initiative intended to credential its workforce. FQS is discussed in further detail later in this report.

²²5 U.S.C. § 10102.

states that FEMA will build a professional leadership program that identifies and prepares future leaders to fill projected vacancies. The agency is currently drafting an updated strategic human capital plan and expects to issue it by the end of fiscal year 2012. FEMA also issued human capital operational plans for fiscal years 2009 and 2010 (and issued final reports to Congress on these plans), which FEMA is using to meet the Post-Katrina Act requirement for annual updates to the strategic plan, but did not issue an operational plan for fiscal year 2011. According to FEMA officials, the plan is under review by DHS and the agency will submit a report to Congress on the plan. However, FEMA did not provide a time frame for when the fiscal year 2011 operational plan will be submitted.

Critical Success Factors for Effective Workforce Planning and Training Programs

Our model of strategic human capital management identifies critical success factors, including the need for the integration and alignment of human capital approaches and data-driven human capital decisions, for effective agency planning.²³ We designed this model based on the human capital practices of leading public and private organizations to help agency leaders manage their people and integrate human capital considerations into daily decision making to help achieve program results. See appendix I for additional details on the cornerstones and critical success factors identified in our model.

High-performing organizations identify their current and future human capital needs, including the appropriate number of employees, the key competencies and skills mix for mission accomplishment, and the appropriate deployment of staff across the organization, and then create strategies for identifying and filling gaps. Our work has shown that attributes of effective workforce planning include coordinating and integrating efforts across the organization to develop, communicate, and implement a workforce plan that is tailored to address workforce gaps and improve the contribution of critical skills and competencies needed for mission success.²⁴ Effective organizations identify and invest in the needs

²³GAO-02-373SP. While our model includes aligning agencies' human capital approaches with current and emerging needs, this attribute is associated with higher levels of strategic human capital planning. Reflective of FEMA's actions in this area, we focused our review on FEMA's efforts to integrate their workforce planning and training efforts.

²⁴GAO, *Human Capital: Key Principles for Effective Workforce Planning*, GAO-04-39 (Washington, D.C.: Dec.11, 2003).

of its workforce through its strategic and annual planning and ensure that these strategies are fully integrated. Attributes of effective training programs also include developing training goals and related performance measures that are consistent with an agency's overall mission, goals, and culture.²⁵ Similarly, DHS has issued guidance calling for its component agencies to develop workforce plans that identify anticipated workforce needs including action plans with strategies, performance measures, and targets to meet those needs.

In addition, we have previously reported that maximizing the value of human capital is a function not just of specific actions, but of cultural transformation.²⁶ To achieve such transformation, the development and integration of strategic management principles as part of an overall management and accountability framework can provide an agency with tools to shape not only long-term strategic management, but also management infrastructure and controls needed to support organization transformation initiatives in the day-to-day business of an agency.²⁷ Specifically, these strategic management principles are

- demonstrating top leadership commitment to change;
- identifying long-term, mission-critical goals through a re-invigorated strategic planning process tied to serving Congress;
- developing annual goals and a system for measuring progress; and
- establishing individual accountability and commensurate authority for achieving results.

FEMA Is Working to Integrate Its Workforce Planning and Training Efforts, but Its Efforts Are in the Early Stages

FEMA is taking steps to integrate its workforce planning efforts to help ensure the agency has the properly sized and skilled workforce to effectively meet its mission, but until recently, its efforts related to workforce planning have been independently conducted by various offices across the agency. FEMA also has efforts under way to meet the different types of training needs of its workforce; however, the agency has taken limited steps to integrate its training efforts. As FEMA is in the early

²⁵GAO, *Human Capital: A Guide for Assessing Strategic Training and Development Efforts in the Federal Government*, [GAO-04-546G](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 2004).

²⁶[GAO-02-373SP](#).

²⁷GAO, *Architect of the Capitol: Management and Accountability Framework Needed to Lead and Execute Change*, [GAO-02-632T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 17, 2002) and *Architect Of The Capitol: Management and Accountability Framework Needed for Organizational Transformation*, [GAO-03-231](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 17, 2003).

stages of its integration efforts, it will be important for the agency to follow through with these efforts to help ensure they address long-standing management challenges associated with workforce planning and training.

Workforce Planning Efforts

FEMA has begun to integrate its workforce planning efforts across the agency. Integrating workforce planning efforts is an important step for helping to ensure that the agency has the appropriate number of staff to effectively meet FEMA's mission of preparing for, responding to, and recovering from all hazards. However, as we have previously reported, and found during the course of our review, until recently FEMA's efforts related to workforce planning have been independently conducted by various offices across the agency with little coordination. For example, in 2007 we reported that FEMA had not set a strategic vision for its workforce planning efforts and therefore these efforts were not being conducted in accordance with attributes of effective workforce planning.²⁸ Specifically, we found that FEMA was conducting its workforce planning from the bottom up, office by office, and this approach was likely to result in workforce plans that meet the immediate needs of individual offices rather than produce an integrated, long-term strategy for the entire agency. As a result, we recommended that FEMA apply the key principles of strategic workforce planning, including establishing a strategic direction and assessing the number of employees and critical skills FEMA needs, among other things. DHS did not comment on this recommendation.

Since this review, FEMA has reported actions to address our finding. For example, the conference report accompanying the DHS appropriations act for fiscal year 2010 provided that a total of \$2 million was for FEMA to partner with the Homeland Security Institute to conduct a study of its human capital resources.²⁹ FEMA's Human Capital Office is overseeing the institute's efforts to conduct a baseline assessment of the number, responsibilities, and locations of FEMA's workforce. According to FEMA officials, as of January 2012, the agency expended approximately \$1.4 million for this effort, and the results of the baseline assessment will be used to compare FEMA's current workforce to its desired workforce and assess the gaps in workforce skills and competencies. FEMA human capital officials reported that this assessment and resulting analysis,

²⁸[GAO-07-139](#).

²⁹H.R. Rep. No. 111-298, at 101-02 (2009) (Conf. Rep.).

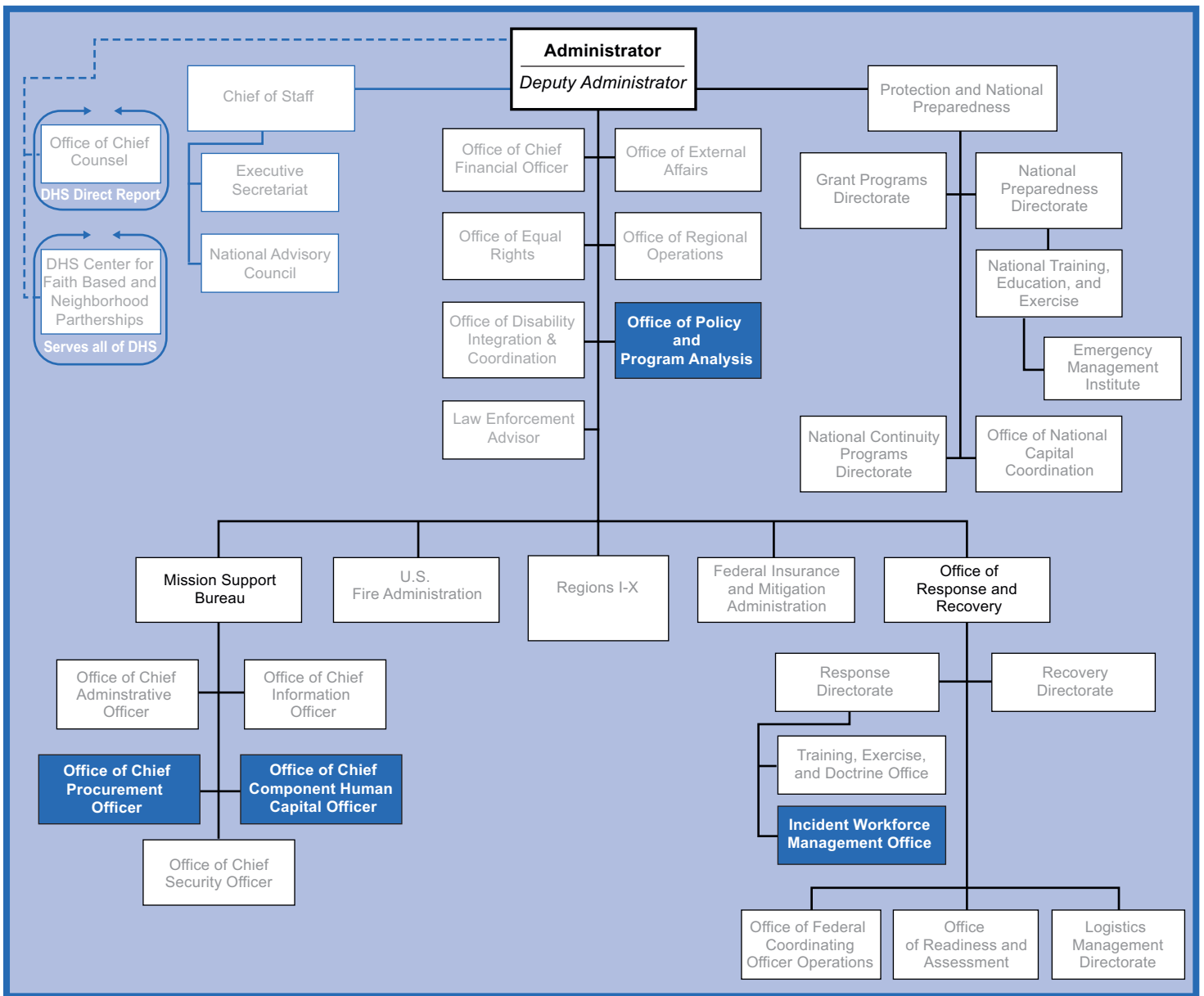
referred to as the Strategic Workforce Planning Initiative, will provide a basis for developing an agencywide workforce plan to address the agency's future workforce needs for disaster-related and day-to-day operations. According to FEMA officials, this initiative will ultimately result in a workforce plan for the agency, but they could not provide time frames for when such a plan would be issued.

Also, the Office of Policy and Program Analysis has developed a Force Planning Model, which is designed to provide an estimate of the number of temporary and permanent employees needed to respond to a variety of potential disaster scenarios. Although the data behind the Force Planning Model was not initially considered or used by the contractor assessing FEMA's current workforce, FEMA's Human Capital Office and its Office of Policy and Program Analysis are working to more closely coordinate their efforts. Specifically, when we initially met with FEMA's Human Capital Office in September 2011, they said they had limited awareness of the model and its potential usefulness for their workforce planning efforts. Since then, human capital officials reported that they have been coordinating more closely with the Office of Policy and Program Analysis in further developing the Force Planning Model. In January 2012, FEMA human capital officials also noted that the results of the Force Planning Model will define the size of the future workforce. See figure 3 and appendix II for a description of FEMA program office responsibilities and initiatives related to workforce planning.

Interactive graphic

Figure 3: FEMA Program Offices' Responsibilities and Workforce Planning Initiatives

Instructions: Roll over blue highlighted organizations below to see individual program office's responsibilities and workforce planning initiatives.



Source: GAO analysis of FEMA information.

FEMA Qualification System (FQS)

The FEMA Qualification System (FQS) is the latest initiative in FEMA's ongoing efforts to credential its workforce. According to agency officials, FQS is intended to standardize and streamline the certification process for all FEMA employees, in comparison to prior credentialing efforts which focused on temporary Disaster Assistance Employees. As a part of FQS, FEMA officials reported that they will establish performance and training standards for each FEMA disaster-related position. Once FQS is implemented, the system will certify an employee's status based on the employee's recognized performance and knowledge, as well as the training the employee has completed, measured against established standards. FEMA officials stated that they are working with the agency's employee unions in order to finalize the implementation of this initiative.

Source: FEMA.

For disaster response operations, the Incident Workforce Management Office, under the Office of Response and Recovery, is taking steps to integrate FQS with other workforce planning efforts under way across the agency. According to FEMA, the agency developed FQS to: (1) document the disaster response functions and capabilities of its permanent and temporary employees; (2) establish consistent and fair qualification requirements for all FEMA disaster workforce positions; and (3) ensure a qualified disaster workforce based on performance standards, among other things.³⁰ While FEMA human capital officials said in September 2011 that they had little involvement with the implementation of FQS, in January 2012 they reported that they had begun participating in an agency wide working group dedicated to the FQS to help ensure its integration with other agency wide workforce planning efforts. Further, in January 2012 FEMA also reported on the relationship between FQS and the Force Structure effort, led by the Office of Recovery and Response, which is based on the Force Planning Model. According to FEMA, the Force Structure effort will use the data provided by the Force Planning Model to set target disaster staffing levels by position, based on historical data, to ensure that the agency has enough trained and experienced disaster personnel to accomplish its mission.

Further, FEMA's Human Capital Office and the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer within the Mission Support Bureau are coordinating to integrate their efforts related to the agency's implementation of DHS's Balanced Workforce Strategy, which is aimed at determining the proper balance of contractors and federal employees needed to support daily operations.³¹ Specifically, FEMA human capital officials said in September 2011 that they were not involved with the agency's implementation of the Balanced Workforce Strategy and in November 2011, they stated that data gathered by the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer were not used for their workforce planning efforts. In January 2012 human capital officials stated that they did not have policies or procedures in place to ensure integration of agency wide workforce planning initiatives, but they were working with the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer to determine how to integrate the Balanced

³⁰ The Incident Workforce Management Office assumed responsibility in June 2011 for FEMA's longstanding efforts to implement an agencywide credentialing program for its disaster workforce, now referred to as FQS.

³¹ DHS announced its Balanced Workforce Strategy in July 2010.

Workforce Strategy and Strategic Workforce Planning Initiative efforts.³² These actions, if implemented effectively, could help ensure an integrated approach for FEMA's workforce planning efforts; however, it is too early to assess the extent to which these efforts are effective in meeting overall agency workforce needs as they have been recently initiated and are dependent upon FEMA following through with its plans.

Training Efforts

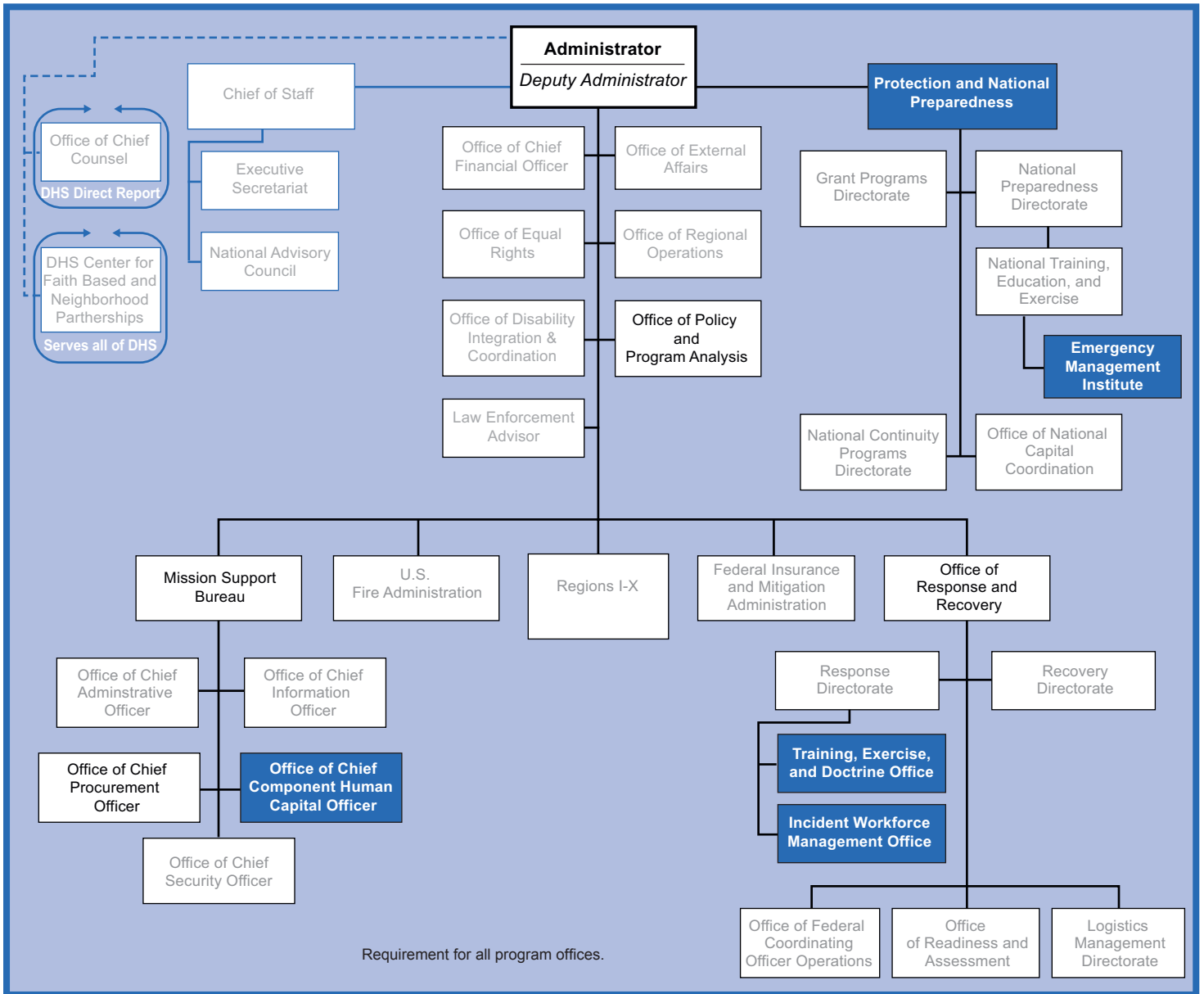
FEMA has efforts under way to meet the different types of training needs of its workforce; however, the agency has taken limited steps to integrate its training efforts. We identified four broad categories of training FEMA conducts: (1) disaster response-related training, (2) Human Capital Office required training, (3) leadership development training, and (4) professional development training. See figure 4 and appendix III for a description of the various program offices with training responsibilities throughout FEMA.

³² We discuss the authority of the Human Capital Office in more detail later in this report.

Interactive graphic

Figure 4: FEMA Program Offices' Workforce Training Responsibilities

Instructions: Roll over blue highlighted organizations below to see individual program office's workforce training responsibilities.



Source: GAO analysis of FEMA information.

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- **Disaster Response-Related Training:** The Incident Workforce Management Office coordinates disaster response-related training within FEMA, including developing the budget and recommending allocations of training funds from the disaster relief fund.³³ Specifically, the Incident Workforce Management Office leads the coordination of disaster response-related training efforts and the Training, Exercise, and Doctrine office, another office in the Office of Response and Recovery, creates and validates training requirements for disaster response occupations developed under FQS.³⁴ In implementing this system, FEMA identified 322 separate position task books for responding to disasters.³⁵ According to FEMA officials, for each of these task books FEMA developed qualifications sheets that list the requirements to become qualified in each of the 322 positions. For instance, through the FQS process, FEMA developed the position task book for a hazardous materials specialist. Skills required to qualify for this position include demonstrating proper use of personal protective equipment, knowledge of decontamination procedures, and operation of monitoring and detection equipment, among other things. The Administrator's new Disaster Workforce Transformation, initiated in December 2011, is intended to focus on training and certifying the entire workforce for incident management and incident support positions in the field. However, during a February 2012 meeting with FEMA officials overseeing the implementation of the Disaster Workforce Transformation, they stated that the agency had not yet decided how disaster response-related training would be revised to reflect the workforce transformation because it was too soon in the process to make such decisions.

³³The disaster relief fund is appropriated funding separate from FEMA's salaries and expenses account, through which most of FEMA's other training efforts are funded. For fiscal year 2012, the Incident Workforce Management Office provided \$6 million for disaster response training courses conducted by the Emergency Management Institute for all FEMA employees. Prior to fiscal year 2012, FEMA's Emergency Management Institute was responsible for coordinating disaster response training.

³⁴According to FEMA, the Training, Exercise, and Doctrine office is responsible for funding the development and revision of FQS-related courses. Also, FEMA officials stated that disaster response-related training will consist mainly of FQS-related training once FQS is fully implemented.

³⁵Position task books are issued to employees in training for disaster-related occupations and describe all activities, minimal skill sets, and tasks that are necessary for successful performance in a given position.

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- **Human Capital Office Required Training:** The Human Capital Office is responsible for ensuring that all permanent employees and COREs complete training required by statute, DHS, and FEMA.³⁶ In March 2012, FEMA's Human Capital Office announced the mandatory courses required of its permanent employees and COREs for calendar year 2012. These courses are required to be taken on a schedule established by the agency. Specifically, FEMA has developed a series of more than 20 training courses covering topics such as ethics, safety orientation, and information security.³⁷ According to human capital officials, the Human Capital Office must report this training information to DHS throughout the year. The Human Capital Office collects training records from various sources, including training management information systems and data calls from individual program offices.
 - **Leadership Development Training:** FEMA has not yet identified the office responsible for leadership development training, but in November 2011, the agency designated an individual within the Protection and National Preparedness Directorate to create a leadership development training program.³⁸ Specifically, this individual is using the findings gathered during an internal review conducted by a FEMA working group on the current leadership development activities, limitations, and suggestions to develop this program. This individual is coordinating with other FEMA officials to develop time frames for completing development of the program and fully implementing it. A key component of FEMA's leadership developing training is to be the Future Leaders Program, creating an annual cohort of nonsupervisory employees who are participating in a year-long pilot program. According to FEMA officials, the Future Leaders

³⁶In January 2012 DHS released its *Orientation Facilitation Guide* to its components, containing the core topics that must be included in every new employee orientation effort. These topics include, among other things, an orientation of the department and ethics training.

³⁷FEMA has also developed a list of 15 mandatory courses that all employees must take in order to deploy to a disaster. Several mandatory deployment courses overlap with required training for all permanent employees and COREs, such as basic records management, diversity awareness, and disaster-related training including disaster management training. However, required training must be taken by permanent employees and COREs regardless of whether they deploy. Further, the Human Capital Office is not responsible for ensuring that employees are deployable, which is the responsibility of disaster occupation managers and field office training officials.

³⁸According to FEMA, the agency has committed \$2 million through the end of fiscal year 2013 to fund leadership development efforts.

Program will be one mechanism to provide development training for employees at different levels of experience and pay grades in the agency. FEMA also established a Leadership Development Council in February 2011 to, among other things, prepare potential candidates to fill leadership positions. Until a comprehensive leadership development program is fully developed, FEMA plans to continue to use courses and offerings already in place to provide some leadership tools to prospective and current managers.

- **Professional Development Training:** FEMA also offers training opportunities to permanent employees through opportunities provided by or approved by their respective offices. According to FEMA officials, professional development training is independently defined by each program office and the training may be offered from several sources. For instance, FEMA training officials stated that an individual employee may identify a need for training on a particular topic through his or her individual development plan. In addition to individuals requesting training, a program office may sponsor training. For example, a program office with budgeting responsibilities may sponsor a class on federal appropriations law. Such training may be conducted either within FEMA—for example at the Emergency Management Institute—or from an external source, such as another federal agency, a conference, or a private sector organization.

FEMA has efforts under way to meet the different types of training needs of its workforce, but the integration of these efforts has been limited, although the Human Capital Office reported that it plans to implement a policy to address the need for integration. Currently, different program offices throughout FEMA are responsible for planning training activities. For instance, two offices within the Office of Response and Recovery—the Incident Workforce Management Office and the Training, Exercise, and Doctrine Office—are responsible for the planning, development, and implementation of disaster-response training. Moreover, the Emergency Management Institute is responsible for, among other things, ensuring that all disaster-response training meets the qualifications needed for classes to be accredited, while the Human Capital Office ensures that permanent employees and COREs take required training courses. Further, every program office is separately responsible for managing professional development training, and FEMA has not assigned planning responsibilities for leadership development training to any program office. In general, there is no one office or individual overseeing training activities to ensure they are integrated throughout the agency.

According to human capital officials, the offices responsible for the different types of training will need to integrate their planning and development of training programs to respond to a new policy they plan to implement. Doing so could help FEMA prioritize training funding and ensure that the most important needs for developing mission-critical skills and competencies are addressed first. Human capital officials said they are drafting a new agencywide directive on employee training and development to help standardize training employee efforts across the agency. According to human capital officials, this directive will provide a basis for prioritizing training management decisions for mission-critical positions, and increase their oversight of agencywide training programs. However, as of March 2012, this directive was still in draft form. This new directive, if it appropriately addresses the need to integrate training efforts across the agency, could help FEMA enhance the effectiveness of its training. However, this outcome is contingent upon FEMA following through with its plans to enhance its workforce training, and it is, therefore, too early to assess the effectiveness of FEMA's planned actions.

Incorporating Strategic Management Principles Could Enhance FEMA's Workforce Planning and Training Efforts

FEMA efforts to integrate its workforce planning and training are positive steps, but FEMA has not used a strategic approach to identify and mitigate longstanding management challenges in workforce planning and training that impact the agency as a whole. Our work has shown that incorporating strategic management principles can help provide accountability for producing results. We have previously reported that to build the capability to lead and execute change, an agency should (1) demonstrate top leadership commitment to change; (2) identify long-term, mission-critical goals through its strategic planning process; (3) develop annual goals and a system for measuring progress; and (4) establish accountability and commensurate authority for achieving results. These principles are also reflected in the *Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework* issued by the Office of Personnel Management in March 2006 that calls for human capital planning that includes leadership, goals, objectives and strategies; a workforce plan; and performance measures and milestones for annual assessments of

agencies' human capital management for accountability in achieving results.³⁹

Demonstrating Top Leadership Commitment

FEMA leadership's continued commitment to effectively plan for and train its workforce is in alignment with attributes of effective workforce planning and training and critical to the agency's success in executing the agency's efforts in these areas. Our assessment of leading organizations' success in management reforms found successful leaders create processes and systems within which to operate, but give managers the authority to pursue their organizational goals while using those processes and systems. They also integrate the implementation of separate organizational improvement efforts into a coherent unified effort. The commitment of FEMA's leadership to enhancing and integrating agencywide strategic workforce planning and training reflects these principles in the agency's strategic planning documents. For example, the *FEMA Administrator's Intent for Building the FY 2012-2016 Future Year Homeland Security Program*, issued in February 2010, lays out the agency's priorities that include improving FEMA's workforce capabilities and notes that the integration between mission support activities, such as human capital and procurement, must be improved, simplified, and streamlined to better enable FEMA to execute the programs and policies used to achieve its mission. The document calls for a unity of effort within the agency to build, sustain, and improve its capabilities by ensuring that responsibility and authority for its mission support programs is placed appropriately. Similarly, the *FEMA Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2011-2014* states that FEMA must build, sustain, and improve its workforce and develop its current and future leadership. The plan also identifies FEMA's ability to develop its workforce as the single most important driver of the agency's future success. Finally, FEMA's Human Capital Office has drafted a directive establishing a FEMA Human Capital Accountability System intended to provide a systematic approach to overseeing human capital operations agencywide, assess accountability results, and improve performance on all aspects of human capital management policies, programs, and activities. According to human capital officials, this directive was expected to be finalized at the end of February 2012, but as of March 2012, it was still in draft form.

³⁹Office of Personnel Management, *Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework* (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 2006).

Identifying Long-Term, Specific Mission-Critical Goals

As discussed above, FEMA has developed initiatives and defined related outcomes for the management of its workforce, but neither the current Strategic Human Capital Plan nor the current FEMA strategic plan identify long-term, specific mission critical goals related to the agency's on-going workforce planning and training efforts. Specifically, the current Strategic Human Capital Plan, issued in May 2008, has not yet been updated to align with the *FEMA Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2011-2014*, issued in February 2011. Rather, the Strategic Human Capital Plan is aligned with the former version of the agency's Strategic Plan, issued in January 2008. In addition, the Strategic Human Capital Plan does not contain specific quantifiable goals for its workforce planning and training efforts that reflect the end result FEMA wishes to achieve. Further, the current FEMA strategic plan does not provide mission critical goals specific to the agency's ongoing workforce planning and training efforts. In particular, the *FEMA Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2011-2014* documents four initiatives for the agency—(1) foster a whole community approach to emergency management nationally; (2) build the nation's capacity to stabilize and recover from a catastrophic event; (3) build unity of effort and common strategic understanding among the emergency management team; and (4) enhance FEMA's ability to learn and innovate as an organization. Related to each of these initiatives, FEMA outlines the key outcomes it would like to achieve. For example, under its second initiative FEMA reports that it will implement a performance-based qualification requirements system for all FEMA personnel participating in disaster response and recovery activities and a dynamic readiness measurement system for FEMA teams and deployable assets. Under its fourth initiative, FEMA states that it will create a collaborative infrastructure to support learning and innovation across the emergency management enterprise. However, the *FEMA Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2011-2014* does not discuss how these initiatives will incorporate agencywide workforce planning and training efforts under way, such as the Strategic Workforce Planning Initiative or the development of a leadership development program. In addition, the initiatives describe broad goals that lack specificity to link their achievement to actual performance. Such initiatives are related to the agency's priorities of improving workforce capabilities and human capital activities, as documented in the *FEMA Administrator's Intent for Building the FY 2012-2016 Future Year Homeland Security Program*. According to FEMA human capital officials, the agency is updating its Strategic Human Capital Plan that will be in alignment with the agency's broader Strategic Plan, and may consider developing long-term, specific mission-critical goals related to ongoing workforce planning and training efforts as part of this updated Strategic Human Capital Plan. FEMA human capital officials

stated that they plan to issue the updated Strategic Human Capital Plan by the end of fiscal year 2012.

We have previously reported that agencies can encourage greater use of performance information by aligning agencywide goals and objectives.⁴⁰ We have also reported that agencies should develop associated performance goals that are objective and quantifiable to allow a comparison of programs' actual results with the desired results.⁴¹ Developing long-term mission critical goals is also one strategic management principle. For example, FEMA's strategic mission-critical goals could include integrating agencywide training efforts or the effective implementation of FQS within established time frames. The agency's efforts to update its Strategic Human Capital Plan provide FEMA with an opportunity to identify and document long-term and specific mission critical goals that reflect the agency's current priorities for workforce planning and training over the next four fiscal years and provide a road map for meeting those goals. Until FEMA determines what it would like to accomplish through its workforce planning and training efforts and develops related goals, the agency will be limited in its ability to gauge its success in these two areas.

Developing a System for Measuring Annual Progress

FEMA's workforce planning and training efforts could also benefit from the development of specific and quantifiable performance measures aligned with annual performance goals. *FEMA's Fiscal Year 2010 Human Capital Operational Plan* documents the agency's strategic initiatives, priorities, related deliverables, and target deadlines, but does not identify outcome-oriented measures to assess the agency's progress in meeting its workforce planning and training goals.⁴² For example, under its Rightsizing the Agency Strategic Initiative, FEMA notes that it will conduct

⁴⁰GAO, *Managing for Results: Enhancing Agency Use of Performance Information for Management Decision Making*, [GAO-05-927](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 9, 2005).

⁴¹GAO, *Department of Energy: Further Actions Are Needed to Improve DOE's Ability to Evaluate and Implement the Loan Guarantee Program*, [GAO-10-627](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 12, 2010).

⁴²Performance measures can be classified as output, process/input, or outcome oriented. Output measures focus on the quantity of direct products and services a program delivers. Process/input measures address the type or level of program activity an organization conducts and the resources used by the program. Outcome measures offer information on the results of the direct products and services a program has delivered.

a bottom-up rightsizing analysis and discusses its Strategic Workforce Planning Initiative as a related effort. However, the human capital operational plan does not include measures for assessing the agency's progress in addressing this initiative. Similarly, under its training and professional development of the workforce initiative, reported in its fiscal year 2010 human capital operational plan, the agency states that building a comprehensive leadership development program and integrating it with agency succession planning is a priority for the agency. However, metrics to gauge the agency's progress in addressing this initiative were not established in this plan. Further, more recent annual operational plans have not been completed in a timely manner. For example, according to FEMA human capital officials, as of March 2012, its annual human capital operational plan for fiscal year 2011 was still in draft form and they could not provide time frames for when the agency would issue an operational plan for fiscal year 2012. Because the fiscal year 2011 human capital operational plan was not issued in a timely manner, any measures developed in association with this plan could not be used to gauge the impact of their ongoing workforce planning and training efforts.

Developing quantifiable performance measures aligned with annual performance goals could also help ensure that FEMA is held accountable for addressing long-standing workforce challenges. For example, in 2007 we reported that FEMA lacked a business continuity plan for its day-to-day operations, did not have guidelines on what constitutes a mission-critical position, and had not conducted an assessment of what minimum level of support is necessary.⁴³ As a result, we recommended that FEMA develop business continuity plans for the day-to-day operations to ensure that critical program functions are maintained at a sufficient level when permanent employees are called to respond to a disaster.⁴⁴ We specified that these plans should include clear guidelines on who holds a mission-critical position at headquarters and, therefore, either cannot be deployed for disaster-relief efforts or needs to have alternates designated to provide backup in their absence. FEMA's *Strategic Human Capital Plan, 2008-2012* identified the development of continuity programs as one of the agency's core competencies to support the vision of FEMA, but the agency's annual operational plans did not establish related milestones or measures, or identify which office(s) in FEMA were responsible for

⁴³[GAO-07-139](#).

⁴⁴DHS did not comment on this recommendation.

managing these programs. According to FEMA officials, the Office of Policy and Program Analysis' Force Planning Model calculates the number of non-deployed employees needed to maintain agency operations during a disaster and has developed guidelines on who holds a mission-critical position at headquarters. However, FEMA has not developed quantifiable performance measures that would hold the agency responsible for accomplishing this task and has therefore not yet identified those positions that either cannot be deployed for disaster-relief efforts or needs to have alternates designated to provide backup in their absence. Although FEMA's *Strategic Human Capital Plan, 2008-2012* specifically states that FEMA will analyze its occupational series to better identify its mission critical positions, agency officials stated that organizational and staffing changes have limited their ability to ensure continued management focus on identifying these positions and developing a business continuity plan. Without measures and milestones for developing business continuity plans needed to effectively implement the Administrator's vision that every FEMA employee can be deployed, the agency may face difficulties in achieving its fundamental strategic goals.

As we have previously reported, leading organizations we have studied that were successful in measuring their performance generally had applied two practices.⁴⁵ First, they developed measures that were (1) tied to program goals and demonstrated the degree to which the desired results were achieved, (2) limited to the vital few that were considered essential to producing data for decision making, (3) responsive to multiple priorities, and (4) responsibility-linked to establish accountability for results. Second, the agencies recognized the cost and effort involved in gathering and analyzing data and made sure that the data they collected were sufficiently complete, accurate, and consistent to be useful in decision making. In its report on the results of its audit of FEMA's human resources operations, DHS's Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer recognized the need for FEMA to develop performance measures to gauge the effectiveness of its human capital efforts, including those related to its workforce planning and training efforts. In FEMA's response to this audit, the agency indicated that it has efforts under way to develop performance measures. However, as of March 2012, the agency has yet to complete this effort. According to standard program management

⁴⁵[GAO-02-632T](#).

principles, time frames or milestones should typically be incorporated as part of a road map to achieve a specific desired outcome or result.⁴⁶ As FEMA continues its efforts to provide annual updates on its implementation of the Strategic Human Capital Plan through its operational plans, establishing a time frame for developing quantifiable performance measures could ensure that the agency is held accountable for following through with this important effort. The development of these metrics could help FEMA obtain more meaningful information from which to gauge the effectiveness of its workforce planning and training efforts and take corrective action, if needed.

Establishing Accountability and Commensurate Authority

Workforce Planning Efforts

According to its mission statement, FEMA's Human Capital Office is responsible for providing leadership and direction on human capital programs and developing and managing policies, programs, and activities designed to ensure the strategic management of FEMA's workforce, among other things. However, officials from the Human Capital Office told us that their office has little authority over workforce planning efforts across the agency because the agency does not require program and regional offices to report on such efforts. Specifically, their office does not have operational authority over program and regional offices to require that they report on such efforts. As a result, despite FEMA's efforts to integrate its workforce planning, as discussed earlier, accountability and commensurate authority have not been established to oversee the implementation of these efforts.

In January 2012 the FEMA Deputy Administrator released a memo to agency personnel documenting the Human Capital Office's role and responsibilities related to assigning many FEMA employees, including its permanent staff, to either a disaster response or a disaster support position within FQS. The Human Capital Office, in coordination with other FEMA program offices, was delegated responsibility for, among other things, issuing an interim directive requiring employees conducting hiring

⁴⁶The Project Management Institute, *The Standard for Program Management*© (Newton Square, PA.: 2006).

interviews to explain and reiterate the agency's vision using a set of standard questions and briefing points. However, this memo does not establish the authority of the Human Capital Office related to the implementation and oversight of FQS or the extent to which FQS will impact this office's implementation of the Strategic Workforce Planning Initiative. Rather, the memo documents tasks that the Human Capital Office is required to complete, such as conducting an agencywide inventory of all currently filled and vacant positions and identify those positions and employees for which the office does not have a position description.

In addition, during initial meetings with Human Capital Office officials in September 2011, they stated that they were not overseeing the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer's implementation of the Balanced Workforce Strategy or assessing its impact on agencywide workforce planning efforts. During a follow-up meeting in January 2012, human capital officials stated that their office planned to play a more active role in the implementation of this strategy by overseeing the determination of the agency's contractor positions. However, according to FEMA human capital officials, the agency has not established the authority of the Human Capital Office related to FEMA's on-going implementation of the Balanced Workforce Strategy because the two offices have not historically conducted their efforts in an integrated manner. Establishing authority for agencywide workforce planning efforts could help ensure that the agency is held accountable for addressing long-standing management challenges, such as credentialing its disaster workforce and developing a process to systematically track workforce data.

Training Efforts

Similarly, while FEMA's Strategic Human Capital Plan identifies the need for effective leadership, lines of authority for overseeing agencywide training efforts have not been established. Specifically, while the Human Capital Office oversees mandatory training for permanent employees and CORE, human capital officials play a limited role in the development or management of disaster-related training through their involvement in an agencywide FQS working group. For instance, FEMA officials stated that the Human Capital Office does not have any authority or oversight of the FQS or the disaster-related training that will be required under this system. Instead, the Incident Workforce Management Office and the Training, Exercise, and Doctrine office under the Response Directorate develop and manage disaster response-related training programs, including leading the development and implementation of the FQS. Further, individual program offices are responsible for managing their own office-related professional development training activities, and human

capital officials said they have limited visibility over what training activities individual program offices have implemented and, therefore, cannot ensure that these training activities are effectively prioritized to meet agencywide training objectives. In addition, FEMA has not yet identified an organization to lead the implementation of leadership development training. Clearly establishing lines of authority from a central body to those program offices involved in workforce training could help ensure that the agency takes steps to address long-standing challenges, such as tracking the training of its workforce to help prioritize resources.

Strategic management principles include establishing individual accountability and commensurate authority for achieving results. We have also previously identified establishing a leadership position as being in alignment with attributes of effective training programs.⁴⁷ For instance, a chief learning officer has an important role in maximizing an agency's investments in workforce development programs by conducting activities such as developing training based on strategic initiatives, among other things. According to FEMA human capital officials, the integration of workforce training management functions into a centralized office is complicated by FEMA's mission to provide external training to state and local first responders. In addition, human capital officials expressed concern regarding their limited role in agencywide workforce training activities. To address this concern, human capital officials stated that they planned to issue a directive in January 2012 that would, among other things, clarify roles and responsibilities with respect to employee training. However, as of March 2012, this directive was not yet issued. Human capital officials also said they have proposed that the agency establish a chief learning officer or a similar position to oversee training efforts across the agency, but FEMA management has not determined whether to create such a position or identified the responsibilities for this position. FEMA officials could not provide a time frame for when this position would be created.

Clearly identifying lines of authority, through its Strategic Human Capital Plan or other strategic planning documents, could provide a strategic focus to FEMA's workforce planning and training efforts and could help ensure the agency is held accountable for the success of these efforts. Until such action takes place, it will be difficult for FEMA to provide

⁴⁷ [GAO-04-546G](#).

reasonable assurance that it is managing its workforce and training programs in an integrated manner to help fulfill the mission of the agency.

FEMA Could Benefit from More Systematically Collecting and Analyzing Workforce and Training Data

FEMA has not developed an integrated process to systematically collect and analyze agencywide workforce and training data that could be used to better inform FEMA's decision making.

Workforce-Related Data

In June 2011, we reported that FEMA lacked accurate data on its current staffing levels, largely because of technology issues, exacerbating the difficulties of workforce planning.⁴⁸ Similarly, analysts from the Homeland Security Institute responsible for conducting FEMA's baseline assessment said that to obtain a complete picture of FEMA's workforce they requested data from three different databases, which are characterized in table 1, and developed a separate database to conduct their analysis.

⁴⁸[GAO-11-297](#).

Table 1: Databases that Maintain FEMA Workforce Information

Name	Description
Automated Deployment Database	Maintained by the Incident Workforce Management Office, this database tracks all FEMA deployable employees, permanent and temporary. This database includes information such as employee name, contact information, job title, and specialty such as foreign language skills. Tracking also includes an employee's cadre readiness, initial disaster site location (duty station), and training. According to FEMA officials, the Automated Deployment Database receives data feeds from the National Finance Center every two weeks.
Manpower	Maintained by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, this database contains data on the number of authorized FEMA positions, including permanent and CORE positions. It also compiles each position's associated data, such as program office, level, and staffing status. Data are entered manually into Manpower and are not integrated with any other database.
National Finance Center	FEMA's workforce information within this database is maintained by the Human Capital Office. The National Finance Center provides employee-focused systems and services to federal organizations, which include personnel action processing and administration of payroll changes, among other actions.

Source: GAO analysis of FEMA information.

Within the baseline assessment, the Homeland Security Institute reported that FEMA did not have the integrated data needed to assess agencywide workforce needs, raising concerns that queries of existing FEMA workforce databases will, in some cases, produce questionable results. Specifically, for the baseline assessment, analysts from the institute identified inconsistencies in the spelling of FEMA's job titles, outdated position descriptions, and differences between the numbers of employees paid compared to the number of authorized positions among FEMA's three databases. As a result, the institute recommended that the agency develop a systematic process to collect and analyze such data to better inform its future workforce planning efforts. FEMA officials stated that they were aware of these inconsistencies and were working to resolve them as well as to improve their efforts to request workforce data from their existing databases. We also cited this issue in our 2007 report on FEMA's management of resources for day-to-day operations.⁴⁹ Specifically, we reported that FEMA lacked data on staffing levels because, in lieu of an integrated data collection process, the agency used multiple and disparate systems managed by different offices to gather data. As a result, we recommended that FEMA collect sufficient data to enable the agency to monitor its progress and support resource priorities for its operations. DHS did not comment on this recommendation.

⁴⁹[GAO-07-139](#).

Similarly, in 2009 the National Academy of Public Administration reported that a lack of a single system to track and account for the workforce, complexities associated with tracking multiple workforce categories, and problems with FEMA's human resource management system, had hindered efforts to obtain complete and accurate human capital data for review.⁵⁰ According to the Academy, these shortcomings had significant consequences in 2009, when FEMA established a hiring freeze because the number of staff hired exceeded authorized levels. Acknowledging this challenge, in March 2010, the FEMA Administrator noted that without institutional controls, the agency was hiring at rates that could not be sustained and there was no way to track these positions. FEMA, however, has not yet developed a systematic process for collecting and analyzing its workforce data to inform its workforce planning efforts. Instead, FEMA officials stated that their current efforts to improve how they request workforce data from the agency's existing databases have helped to resolve issues identified by the Homeland Security Institute. Nonetheless, in our discussions with analysts from the institute, they said that the challenges they identified in their baseline assessment will likely continue to hinder FEMA's ability to obtain accurate data until FEMA develops a systematic process to collect and analyze workforce data. Our model of strategic human capital management provides that decisions involving human capital management and their link to agency results should be routinely informed by complete, valid, and reliable data; and that data gathered should be kept current.⁵¹ The *DHS Workforce Planning Guide* also notes that as part of component agencies' workforce planning efforts, they should collect and analyze data on their workforce capabilities. Developing a systematic process to collect and analyze workforce data could help provide FEMA with key information on its workforce and help provide the agency with reasonable assurance that staffing discrepancies do not occur again.

Training-Related Data

Similarly in 2007, we reported that while agencies need to invest resources, including time and money, to ensure that employees have the information, skills, and competencies they need to work effectively in a

⁵⁰National Academy of Public Administration, *FEMA's Integration of Preparedness and Development of Robust Regional Offices: An Independent Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 2009).

⁵¹[GAO-02-373SP](#).

rapidly changing and complex environment, FEMA did not have an integrated system to track employee training and, therefore, no way of reliably tracking the cost of training, who has received it, or how successful it has been.⁵² We recommended that FEMA, among other things, establish training requirements and tracking systems for its workforce, and that the agency collect sufficient data in a way that enables managers to monitor progress and support resource priorities for day-to-day operations that are linked to its disaster relief mission. DHS did not comment on this recommendation, but in 2008, FEMA issued its *Strategic Human Capital Plan, 2008-2012*, in part, to address it. However, the agency has not developed an integrated process to track and analyze information on agencywide training activities, including training completions and training costs. Specifically, we identified five different systems that collect information on various workforce training activities throughout FEMA, which are characterized in table 2.

Table 2: FEMA Information Systems Used for Collecting and Tracking Training

Name	Description of training information collected
FEMA Employee Knowledge Center System	Collects information on FEMA intranet courses such as DHS and FEMA required courses, as well as Emergency Management Institute-developed independent study courses. The FEMA Employee Knowledge Center system is also the primary interface for the FEMA workforce to take online courses, and provides information on some classroom training course schedules.
Independent Study Database System	Collects information on FEMA emergency management courses online, but offered outside of the FEMA Employee Knowledge Center system and available to the general public.
National Emergency Training Center Admission System	Collects applications and admissions information about classroom courses offered at Emergency Management Institute-sponsored locations and used to determine attendance of courses.
Automated Deployment Database	Collects training records of courses taken while deployed to a disaster that were offered through the disaster field training office, which are then manually uploaded to the FEMA Employee Knowledge Center system. ^a
Training Information Access System	Collects and reports information on completed training, receiving intermittent updates of training records from the FEMA Employee Knowledge Center, the Independent Study Database, and the National Emergency Training Center Admission System.

Source: GAO analysis of FEMA information.

Note: ^aSome historical training records are not available through the Automated Deployment Database and may only be obtained through a disaster employee's home regional occupational manager.

⁵²[GAO-07-139](#).

FEMA has taken steps to consolidate and collect training information through the Training Information Access System, but the system does not provide a comprehensive or accurate account of all training activities of FEMA employees. For instance, Emergency Management Institute officials responsible for system maintenance stated that these information systems do not automatically download information with the Training Information Access System, and may have information that the Training Information Access System does not have to determine training completion. A regional training manager also said that to report back to FEMA headquarters on course completions, multiple databases must be accessed and disaster employees' occupational managers must also be consulted to obtain an accurate account of an employee's training record. Further, although FEMA's Human Capital Office must report on the completion of courses required by the department, FEMA human capital officials reported that they must access the Training Information Access System or the FEMA Employee Knowledge Center and reach out to FEMA's program offices to obtain information on the completion of its required courses. They added that a lack of policies and procedures for tracking and analyzing training data limits their ability to verify the accuracy or comprehensiveness of the information provided by other program offices. In addition, none of the five information systems track data related to the completion of leadership or professional development courses.

Officials from the Emergency Management Institute stated that their office is responsible for implementing upgrades to the FEMA Employee Knowledge Center system, and the planned upgrades will collect some professional development training information in the future. However, these officials stated that FEMA does not have plans to collect information related to leadership development with its current upgrades, although officials have discussed intentions to use the FEMA Employee Knowledge Center system to do this in the future.⁵³ Moreover, FEMA has plans to implement a new information system for FQS, but the agency has not yet developed plans to integrate this system with FEMA's other training information systems, citing that it was too early in the process to

⁵³According to Emergency Management Institute officials, FEMA implemented its first phase of the FEMA Employee Knowledge Center system updates in February 2012. They stated that this update allows FEMA managers to track additional information related to training, including the type of employee (permanent, DAE, or CORE) completing the training.

determine how such an integration may occur. However, until FEMA develops a plan to integrate its systems that track and analyze training, including the new information system for FQS, the agency will not have a complete picture of how training programs across the agency are being utilized, the effectiveness of these programs, or the costs associated with this training.

In our prior work related to strategic workforce planning, we concluded that staffing decisions, including needs assessments, should be based on valid and reliable data.⁵⁴ We have also reported that developing and implementing a training management information system is a key element for the strategic management of training and an attribute of effective training programs, and we note the importance of analyzing the results of training provided.⁵⁵ Further, an integrated training management information system can provide a more efficient means of ensuring quality, administrative efficiency, economy, or adequacy to meet requirements and can help agencies realize cost savings through standardization of record keeping and simplified and more accurate reporting on courses, certifications, educational attainment, costs, or standards.

According to officials from FEMA's Human Capital Office, DHS has efforts under way to review its human capital systems across the department, and FEMA is awaiting guidance from the department before developing new processes, systems or consolidating databases. In the absence of integrated systems, FEMA officials reported that they plan to continue gathering workforce data from FEMA's various databases to inform their workforce planning efforts. While FEMA began implementing a phased-in upgrade to the FEMA Employee Knowledge Center system in February 2012, Emergency Management Institute officials stated additional enhancements to this system, such as collecting information on completed leadership development training, could not be considered until initial upgrades were complete. In February 2012, FEMA released a directive that clarifies the role of FEMA's Chief Information Officer and a newly established governance board to lead and integrate FEMA's information technology role to consolidate duplicative investments and

⁵⁴GAO, *DHS Immigration Attorneys: Workload Analysis and Workforce Planning Efforts Lack Data and Documentation*, [GAO-07-206](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 17, 2007).

⁵⁵[GAO-04-546G](#).

applications, among other things. Such an integrated approach could provide FEMA's program offices the opportunity to develop systematic processes to track training information. Developing systematic processes to collect and analyze its agencywide workforce and training data could help the agency make more informed decisions about how to enhance its workforce planning and training efforts in an efficient and effective manner.

Conclusions

FEMA's ability to successfully meet its mission of preparing for, responding to, and recovering from all hazards has been tested as never before as FEMA responded to more disasters than any year in its history in 2011. To effectively respond to disasters, FEMA personnel must make the best decisions under extreme pressure inherent during large-scale disasters. Agency personnel are also required to work in dynamic environments characterized by rapidly changing priorities and ground rules to help communities respond and recover from disasters.

According to FEMA, the agency is taking steps to strengthen the nation's capacity to respond to and recover from large-scale disasters, such as those experienced in 2011. Since the enactment of the Post-Katrina Act in October 2006, FEMA has attempted to address historical workforce planning and training challenges. For instance, FEMA's Strategic Workforce Planning Initiative represents a commitment by the agency to determine the current workforce composition, what the workforce needs to be in the future, and how the gaps between the two may be overcome. Likewise, FEMA's workforce training programs address the challenge of meeting agency needs for implementing uniform credentialing for disaster response and providing leadership development opportunities for all full-time employees. FEMA is also taking steps to integrate its workforce planning and training efforts across the agency. For example, FEMA has established a working group to facilitate the implementation of the FEMA Qualification System that provides a venue for stakeholders from across the agency to provide input on its implementation and the training programs associated with this system's new disaster occupation. However, the effectiveness of these integration efforts is dependent upon FEMA following through with its plans and it is, therefore, too early to assess their impact.

As FEMA moves forward with its efforts to integrate its workforce planning and training programs, these efforts could be better guided by incorporating strategic management principles, to help ensure the agency is held accountable for producing results. For example, as part of the

agency's work to update its Strategic Human Capital Plan, FEMA could benefit from identifying and documenting long-term and quantifiable mission critical goals that provide a road map for meeting the agency's intended outcomes of its workforce planning and training efforts. In addition, establishing time frames for completing the development of quantifiable performance measures related to the agency's workforce planning and training efforts could help ensure that FEMA is held accountable for establishing measures that would assist the agency in gauging its progress implementing these efforts. These measures could, for example, be documented in its annual updates on its implementation of the Strategic Human Capital Plan. Such metrics could help ensure that the agency is held accountable for meeting the goals established for its workforce planning and training efforts. Moreover, explicitly establishing lines of authority among FEMA's program offices could help the agency ensure that workforce planning and training efforts address agency needs, and that appropriate decision makers are held accountable for implementing these programs in alignment with FEMA goals and objectives.

Moreover, we continue to believe that FEMA's workforce-related decisions could be enhanced by developing systematic processes to collect and analyze its agencywide workforce and training data. FEMA acknowledges the value of developing such processes, but the agency has not yet taken action to do so. Without systematically collecting and analyzing workforce and training data, FEMA will be limited in its understanding of its workforce and training needs.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To help ensure that FEMA's agencywide workforce planning and training efforts are conducted in a comprehensive and integrated manner, we recommend that the FEMA Administrator take the following three actions:

1. identify and document long-term and quantifiable mission critical goals that reflect the agency's priorities for workforce planning and training;
2. establish a time frame for completing the development of quantifiable performance measures related to workforce planning and training efforts; and
3. clearly establish lines of authority for agencywide workforce planning and training efforts.

To better inform FEMA's decision-making related to agencywide workforce planning and training efforts we recommend that the FEMA

Administrator develop systematic processes to collect and analyze workforce and training data.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to DHS for comment. We received written comments from DHS on the draft report, which are summarized below and reproduced in full in appendix IV. DHS concurred with the report and recommendations and indicated that it is taking steps to address the recommendations. In commenting on the draft report, DHS described the efforts the department has underway or planned to address our recommendations to improve FEMA's workforce planning and training efforts. The actions DHS reported are important first steps; however, additional efforts are needed to help ensure that our recommendations are fully implemented, as discussed below.

In regards to our recommendation that FEMA identify and document long-term and quantifiable mission critical goals that reflect the agency's priorities for workforce planning and training, DHS agreed and stated that FEMA is working with the Office of Personnel Management and other federal agencies to establish an emergency management occupational series that will assist FEMA in building its future workforce. Moreover, DHS stated that FEMA's updated Strategic Human Capital Plan for fiscal years 2012 through 2016 will specifically identify goals that move the agency closer to its priorities related to employees training. FEMA's stated plan for identifying goals that reflect its priorities for employee training is a positive step. DHS's response did not indicate whether FEMA intends to identify long-term and quantifiable mission critical goals related to its workforce planning efforts. Taking such action would more fully address our recommendation.

Regarding our recommendation that FEMA establish a timeframe for completing the development of quantifiable performance measures related to workforce planning and training efforts, DHS agreed and stated that in the spring of fiscal year 2012, the Homeland Security Institute will report its FEMA workforce planning study findings that will include strategies and recommendations to address identified workforce issues. On the basis of these strategies and recommendations, FEMA will establish timeframes for their implementation through the fiscal year 2012 through 2016 Strategic Human Capital Plan. The Strategic Human Capital Plan for fiscal years 2012 through 2016 will have milestones and metrics for addressing key workforce planning efforts and will align workforce planning and training to DHS guidance and FEMA doctrine. FEMA's reported efforts to address workforce planning are noteworthy. In order to

meet the full intent of our recommendation, FEMA should establish timeframes for completing the development of quantifiable performance measures related to workforce planning and training efforts.

In regards to our recommendation that FEMA clearly establish lines of authority for agencywide workforce planning and training efforts, DHS agreed and stated that in December 2010, FEMA on-boarded a Chief Component Human Capital Officer, a Deputy Component Human Capital Officer, and a Human Resources Officer who will have overall responsibility for the FEMA workforce planning initiative. According to DHS, in August 2011, the FEMA Human Capital Office reorganized to create the Workforce Effectiveness Division responsible for coordinating and managing this initiative. As a result of the Strategic Workforce Planning Initiative, the Workforce Effectiveness Division will develop agency procedures regarding the development of workforce plans. In addition, DHS stated that in 2011, the FEMA Deputy Administrator instituted FEMASat, an agencywide data-driven review process where FEMA leadership evaluates performance against objectives, identifies barriers to success, agrees on actions to eliminate barriers, and hold leaders of FEMA programs accountable for implementation. Through FEMASat, the FEMA Deputy Administrator required the Mission Support Bureau, the Office of Response and Recovery, and Protection and National Preparedness to develop an agreed upon approach with respect to employee training, management, and coordination throughout the agency. As such, DHS noted that FEMA, through FEMASat will clearly establish lines of authority for training. FEMA's planned efforts to assign responsibility for its Strategic Workforce Planning Initiative and establish lines of authority for training efforts are important steps. DHS's response did not indicate how FEMA will establish lines of authority for its other workforce planning efforts underway across the agency. Identifying and implementing such action would be necessary to fully address the intent of our recommendation.

With regard to our recommendation that FEMA develop systematic processes to collect and analyze workforce and training data, DHS agreed and noted that FEMA is implementing several initiatives that will increase the capacity to collect and analyze workforce planning and training data. For example, FEMA is in the process of implementing EmpowHR, which is an integrated suite of applications that will support a single system providing comprehensive employee information. According to DHS, EmpowHR will enable FEMA to (1) make critical decisions regarding workforce utilization, (2) forecast workforce turnover and placement, and (3) project future resource budget allocations on a fiscal

year basis to achieve mission goals. DHS also stated that FEMA is developing a human capital data warehouse that will provide the capacity to comprehensively report and analyze employee pay and training data. FEMA also recently implemented an upgrade to its learning management system, which will allow for scheduling and training employee training and provide reporting capabilities allowing for skill and competencies gap closing analysis. These actions, if implemented effectively, would address the intent of our recommendation.

DHS also provided technical comments that we incorporated, where appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to the Secretary of Homeland Security, appropriate congressional committees, and other interested parties. This report will also be available at no charge on GAO's website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staffs have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov. Contact points for our Office of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix V.



David C. Maurer
Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues

List of Congressional Requesters

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Susan M. Collins
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Daniel K. Akaka
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal
Workforce, and the District of Columbia
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Gus M. Bilirakis
Chairman
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and
Communications
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Strategic Human Capital Management Critical Success Factors

Our model of strategic human capital management identifies four cornerstones and eight critical success factors for managing human capital strategically, which embody an approach to human capital management that is fact-based, focused on strategic results, and incorporates merit principles and other national goals.¹ We noted that when considering the human capital cornerstones and the critical success factors, it is important to remember that they are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Table 3 identifies the critical success factors for managing human capital strategically.

Table 3: Strategic Human Capital Management Critical Success Factors

Cornerstone	Critical success factors	
Leadership	Commitment to Human Capital Management: Demonstrated commitment of senior leadership to develop more effective ways of doing business, accomplishing results, and investing in human capital.	Role of the Human Capital Function: Utilization of human capital professionals to contribute in management decisions to support the long-term accomplishment of the agency's mission.
Strategic Human Capital Planning	Integration and Alignment: Development of human capital strategies that effectively accomplish mission and programmatic goals and results.	Data-Driven Human Capital Decisions: Development of human capital management decisions using fact-based, performance-oriented approaches.
Acquiring, Developing, and Retaining Talent	Targeted Investments in People: Providing resources and incentives that support and encourage employees to attain agency goals and objectives.	Human Capital Approaches Tailored to Meet Organizational Needs: Utilization of flexibilities in human capital strategies that are appropriate to meet organizational requirements.
Results-Oriented Organizational Cultures	Empowerment and Inclusiveness: Involvement of employees and employee organizations in the planning process to develop agency goals, insights, and foster employee understanding and acceptance of organizational goals and objectives.	Unit and Individual Performance Linked to Organizational Goals: Alignment of individual employee performance expectations with agency goals so that individuals understand the connection between their daily activities and their organization's success.

Source: GAO.

¹ [GAO-02-373SP](#).

Appendix II: FEMA Program Office Responsibilities and Description of Initiatives Related to Workforce Planning

Program office	Responsibilities	Initiative related to workforce planning
Office of Chief Component Human Capital Officer	Is to provide leadership and direction to the agency concerning human capital programs; develops and manage policies, programs, and activities designed to ensure the strategic management of the agency's human capital assets; and ensure that strategic management of human capital is integrated into all aspects of the agency's operations.	<p>Strategic Workforce Planning Initiative</p> <p>Aimed at identifying the gaps in current workforce based upon identified requirements, as well as human capital requirements to achieve required operational capabilities. This initiative is to result in the development of workforce plans, strategies, and tools to transform the current posture into the workforce of the future.</p>
Incident Workforce Management Office	Is responsible for coordinating strategic priorities for FEMA's disaster workforce and strengthening partnerships and processes that qualify, prepare, support, and deploy the right disaster workers with the right skills at the right time.	<p>FEMA Qualification System</p> <p>FEMA created this system to establish minimum, consistent, and fair qualification requirements for all FEMA employees; and for deployment purposes, to help ensure a qualified disaster workforce based on performance standards.</p>
Office of Policy and Program Analysis	Is to guide and coordinate the policies, strategic planning, and analysis of FEMA programs.	<p>Force Planning Model</p> <p>Designed to provide FEMA with the number of employees, broken out by permanent full-time employees, Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees, and Disaster Assistance Employees needed to effectively respond to a disaster dependent on its severity, and to sustain day-to-day operations.</p>
Office of Chief Procurement Officer	Is responsible for overseeing FEMA's acquisition mission, providing customer support in acquisition planning, and developing and monitoring the agency's acquisition policy, among other things.	<p>Balanced Workforce Strategy</p> <p>Gathers the results of program offices' use of DHS's Balanced Workforce Strategy tool. DHS established the Balanced Workforce Strategy as a departmentwide initiative to assist the department and its component agencies in determining the appropriate balance of federal employees and contractors.</p>

Source: GAO analysis of FEMA information

Appendix III: FEMA Program Office Responsibilities Related to Workforce Training

Program office	Responsibilities
Office of Chief Component Human Capital Officer	Is to provide leadership and direction to the agency concerning human capital programs, including workforce training. Tracks human capital training information on permanent full-time employees and the Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery Employees.
Incident Workforce Management Office	Is responsible for defining and coordinating the strategic priorities for FEMA's response workforce training programs, including the implementation of training requirements associated with new occupations under the FEMA Qualification System. Is also to work with other disaster-response stakeholders, such as the Emergency Management Institute and disaster occupation managers, to ensure that standards for training are implemented broadly throughout the workforce.
Training, Exercise, and Doctrine Office	Is to develop and validate training requirements for disaster response occupations under the FEMA Qualification System certification. Is responsible for working with stakeholders, such as disaster occupation managers, to develop requirements and courses for each disaster-related occupation. Annually evaluates courses to ensure that the meet expectations for preparing the workforce for disaster deployment.
Emergency Management Institute	Is responsible for supporting the creation and delivery of disaster response-related courses for FEMA's workforce, including providing classroom courses, and ensures that all disaster-related courses meet accreditation requirements. Is also responsible for working with officials responsible for training deployed personnel to properly staff courses with subject matter experts. Responsible for managing training information management systems that provide online training and track training information.
Protection and National Preparedness	Appointed an individual to lead the creation of a comprehensive FEMA workforce leadership development training program with direction from the Leadership Development Council. However, FEMA has not yet delegated which program office is responsible for the implementation.
Individual Program Offices	Professional Development Training: Initiated or authorized by program management for individual employees. May be identified through employee individual development plans or through program office needs. This training is provided by both internal and external sources.

Source: GAO analysis of FEMA information.

Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528



**Homeland
Security**

April 10, 2012

David C. Maurer
Director, Homeland Security and Justice
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Draft Report GAO-12-487, "FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY:
Workforce Planning and Training Could Be Enhanced By Incorporating Strategic
Management Principles"

Dear Mr. Maurer:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO's) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

The Department is pleased to note GAO's positive recognition of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) leadership commitment to enhancing and integrating agency-wide strategic workforce planning and training, as reflected in multiple FEMA strategic planning documents. We also appreciate GAO's recognition of many of the challenges FEMA faces, including the fact that during the Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 FEMA responded to more disasters than any other year in its history. DHS remains committed to effectively identifying the appropriate size and skills of its workforce and working with its partners throughout all levels of government, law enforcement, private industry, and in the public to ensure the safety, security, and resilience of our Nation.

The draft report contained four recommendations, with which the Department concurs. Specifically, GAO recommended that the FEMA Administrator:

Recommendation 1: Identify and document long-term and quantifiable mission critical goals that reflect the agency's priorities for workforce planning and training.

Response: Concur. The Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (PKEMRA) outlined the legislative requirement for the FEMA's Strategic Human Capital Plan (SHCP). In May 2008, FEMA submitted to Congress a SHCP for FY 2008 – FY 2012. This plan provided an initial map of how FEMA would create an environment and culture that supports, nurtures, and sustains a ready workforce. The updated plan for FY 2012 – FY 2016 SHCP will take that charge further by addressing workforce planning issues as identified in PKEMRA and the Office

of Personnel Management's (OPM's) Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework.

Other FEMA priorities related to workforce planning include the FEMA Office of the Chief Component Human Capital Officer (OCCHCO) tasking the Homeland Security Studies and Analysis Institute (HSSAI) to assist with its strategic workforce planning initiative. There are three overall objectives to this initiative: (1) identify the human capital requirements needed for FEMA to achieve its required operational capabilities; (2) identify gaps in its current workforce based upon identified requirements; and (3) develop workforce plans, strategies, and tools to ensure FEMA has the right people in the right place at the right time. In addition, FEMA, in conjunction with the OPM and several other federal agencies, is in the process of establishing an emergency management occupational series that will assist FEMA in building the future workforce to include developing succession planning methodologies, career pathing, building competencies, etc.

Additionally, FEMA's FY 2011 – FY 2014 Strategic Plan's fourth initiative, enhancing FEMA's ability to learn and innovate as an organization, reflects the agency's priority towards building, sustaining and improving the workforce and developing the current and future leadership. As part of this initiative, the FEMA Administrator has required FEMA's Mission Support Bureau to create a collaborative infrastructure to support learning and innovation across the emergency management enterprise. The updated FEMA FY 2012 – FY 2016 SHCP will specifically identify goals that move the agency closer to our priorities regarding employee training.

Recommendation 2: Establish a timeframe for completing the development of quantifiable performance measures related to workforce planning and training efforts

Response: Concur. Annually, FEMA reports to Congress its yearly human capital accomplishments through the Human Capital Operational Plan. In addition, in the spring of FY 2012, the HSSAI will present its workforce planning study findings. This study will include strategies/recommendations to address identified workforce issues. On the basis of these strategies/recommendations, FEMA will establish timeframes for implementation through the FY 2012 – FY 2016 SHCP. The SHCP will have milestones and metrics for addressing key workforce planning parameters and will align workforce planning and training to DHS guidance and FEMA doctrine. Finally, FEMA is in the process of consolidating agency training, as mentioned above, which will prioritize agency-wide training efforts.

Recommendation 3: Clearly establish lines of authority for agency wide workforce planning and training efforts.

Response: Concur. Beginning in December 2010, FEMA on-boarded a Chief Component Human Capital Officer, a Deputy Component Chief Human Capital Officer, and a Human Resources Officer who will have overall responsibility for the FEMA workforce planning initiative. The FEMA OCCHCO reorganized in August 2011, creating the Workforce Effectiveness Division (WED) responsible for the coordination and management of the agency's workforce planning initiative. As a result of the HSSAI workforce planning

strategies/recommendations, FEMA OCCHCO WED will develop agency procedures regarding the development of workforce plans.

Additionally, in 2011, the FEMA Deputy Administrator instituted FEMASat, an agency-wide data driven review process where FEMA Senior leadership evaluates performance against objectives, identifies barriers to success, agrees on actions to eliminate barriers and hold Senior leaders of FEMA programs accountable for implementation. The FEMA Deputy Administrator through FEMASat assigned an action item to the Mission Support Bureau, Office of Response and Recovery, and Protection and National Preparedness requiring an agreed upon Agency approach to employee training, management and coordination. As such, FEMA through FEMASat will clearly establish lines of authority for training.

Recommendation 4: Develop systematic processes to collect and analyze workforce and training data.

Response: Concur. FEMA is currently implementing several initiatives that will increase the capacity to collect and analyze workforce and training data. For example, FEMA is currently in the process of implementing EmpowHR. EmpowHR is an integrated suite of applications that support critical human resources components in a single enterprise system providing comprehensive employee information enabling FEMA to: (1) make critical decisions concerning workforce utilization, (2) forecast workforce turnover and placement, and (3) project future resource budget allocations on a fiscal year basis, for optimum achievement of mission goals.

Currently one of the ways FEMA is building its capacity to collect and analyze workforce and training data is through the development of a human capital data warehouse. The warehouse will provide the capacity to report and analyze employee pay and training datasets that previously were housed separately. FEMA also recently implemented an upgrade to the learning management system which will allow for scheduling and tracking our employees for training. This system will also provide reporting capabilities allowing for skills and competencies gap closing analyses. Each of these initiatives will significantly improve FEMA's ability analyze workforce and training data.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Technical comments for the report were previously provided under separate cover. We look forward to working with you on future Homeland Security issues.

Sincerely,



Jim H. Crumpacker
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Appendix V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

David C. Maurer, (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov

Acknowledgments:

In addition to the contact named above, Christopher Keisling, Assistant Director, managed this assignment. Vanessa Dillard, Jeremy Manion, and Meg Ullengren made significant contributions to the work. Tracey King provided significant legal support and analysis. Cynthia Saunders assisted with design and methodology. Linda Miller and Debbie Sebastian provided assistance in report preparation. Robert Robinson developed the report graphics.

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