

Department of Homeland Security Human Resources Management: Homeland Security Issues in the 116th Congress

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Homeland Security Issues in the 116th Congress

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Human resources management (HRM) underlies the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) mission and performance. DHS's [Chief Human Capital Officer](#) (CHCO) "is responsible for the Department's human capital program," which is described as including such elements as "human resources policy, systems, and programs for strategic workforce planning, recruitment and hiring, pay and leave, performance management, employee development, executive resources, labor relations, work/life and safety and health."

Under [Title 5, Section 1402](#), of the *United States Code*, a CHCO's functions include "setting the workforce development strategy" and aligning HRM with "organization mission, strategic goals, and performance outcomes." DHS's [Management Directorate](#) web page includes the CHCO position under the Under Secretary for Management (USM). The [Organizational Chart](#) and [Leadership](#) web pages do not include the position under the USM nor explain that difference. At DHS, the CHCO is a career Senior Executive Service position. The incumbent CHCO assumed the position in January 2016.

The 116th Congress may decide to conduct oversight of DHS CHCO operations—including placement, role, and functions within the department—and DHS human resources management. Such reviews could

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focus on the department's plans for, and performance of, HRM. These plans are set forth in a [Strategic Plan](#) and an [Annual Performance Report](#). The latter report for FY2020 is expected to be published along with the release of the department's budget request. Congress may also examine DHS activities related to the [President's Management Agenda](#) (PMA), particularly the agenda's [Cross-Agency Priority Goal](#) (CAP) to develop the federal workforce. These topics are briefly discussed below.

Hearings, roundtables, and meetings with officials and employees could inform congressional oversight on DHS appropriations, administration, and management as they relate to HRM. Annually, on or about the anniversary of DHS's [official inception](#), which occurred on March 1, 2003, Congress could consider conducting a review that focuses specifically on the CHCO operations and HRM policies and programs. The DHS FY2020 budget request, anticipated in March 2019, may enable Congress to conduct such a review within the context of the department's Strategic Plan, Performance Report, and PMA activities.

DHS Strategic Plan

Section 2 of the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-352) requires [agency](#) heads to submit a strategic plan that provides, among other things, "a description of how the goals and objectives are to be achieved," including a description of the "human, capital ... resources required to achieve those goals and objectives." [Section 230](#) of the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) [Circular No. A-11](#) (2018), "Preparation, Submission and Execution of the Budget," stated:

An agency's Strategic Plan should provide the context for decisions about performance goals, priorities, strategic human capital planning and budget planning. It should provide the framework for the detail published in agency Annual Performance Plans, Annual Performance Reports and on Performance.gov.

DHS published its most recent publicly available [Strategic Plan](#), covering FY2014-FY2018, in September 2015. The plan briefly mentioned HRM. To "strengthen service delivery and manage DHS resources," the plan stated that the department would "[r]ecruit, hire, retain, and develop a highly qualified, diverse, effective, mission-focused, and resilient workforce." Specific objectives identified to accomplish this were "1) building an effective, mission-focused, diverse, and inspiring cadre of leaders; 2) recruiting a highly qualified and diverse workforce; 3) retaining an engaged workforce; and 4) solidifying a DHS culture of mission performance, adaptability, accountability, equity, and results."

To obtain an understanding of progress on the plan's HRM components to date, Congress could ask the department to document the specific framework for these four objectives and the conditions and factors related to each being fulfilled. Congress could also ask DHS to include a statement about the expected publication of an updated Strategic Plan on the [Strategic Planning](#) page of its website.

DHS Annual Performance Report

A Performance Report, required by Section 3 of P.L. 111-352, is to be published by the first Monday in February each year and cover "each program activity set forth in the budget." Among the other requirements that are specified at [Title 31, Section 1115\(b\)](#), of the *United States Code*, the plan must "provide a description of how the performance goals are to be achieved," including "the operation processes, training, skills and technology, and the human, capital, information, and other resources and strategies required to meet those performance goals."

DHS published its most recent [Performance Report](#), covering FY2017-FY2019, in February 2018. The report noted that the Human Capital Operating Plan (HCOP) identifies "goals, objectives, and performance measures linked to DHS strategy" and "emphasizes management integration, accountability tracking, and the use of human capital data analysis to meet DHS mission needs." According to the department, the HCOP is used to "identify and address critical skills gaps." The Performance Report

stated that Component Recruitment and Outreach Plans specify “recruitment strategies” as “a key element to sustain progress in skill gap closure.”

The HCOP and the Component Recruitment and Outreach Plans do not appear to be publicly available on the department’s website. Congress could suggest that the department include a link to these documents on [DHS.gov](https://www.dhs.gov) to facilitate consultation and oversight about measurable results for performance goals.

President’s Management Agenda

The President Donald Trump Administration describes the [PMA](#) as setting forth “a long-term vision for modernizing the Federal Government.” The PMA is to be implemented through CAPs that address “critical government-wide challenges.” One such CAP—led by the Office of Personnel Management, OMB, and the Department of Defense—is “[Developing a Workforce for the 21st Century](#).” It seeks a strategic human capital management framework that enables managers to “hire the best employees, remove the worst employees, and engage employees.” Three CAP [subgoals](#) under this objective are “Improve Employee Performance Management and Engagement,” “Reskill and Redeploy Human Capital Resources,” and “Simple and Strategic Hiring.”

The DHS CHCO is the leader for the third CAP subgoal, which includes strategies to reduce hiring times; “better differentiate applicants’ qualifications, competencies, and experience;” and “eliminate burdensome policies and procedures.”

Congressional oversight of PMA activities at DHS could focus on such matters as key initiatives, measureable results, and anticipated timelines for accomplishing subgoals.

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