

6 WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

The Bureau of Human Resources rightly identifies staff as the Department's greatest asset. The Department accordingly expends substantial resources on recruiting, training, and retaining a diverse, talented workforce capable of carrying out the Department's foreign policy goals and priorities. Across functional areas and geographic regions, however, OIG's work finds that inexperienced staff, insufficient training, and staffing gaps and frequent turnover contribute to the Department's other management and performance challenges. These problems afflict programs and operations domestically and overseas and are identified in a range of reports that cover a variety of topics.

For example, as described previously, OIG issued a report that identified numerous physical deficiencies on two buildings constructed at Embassy Kabul.⁹⁸ OIG noted that these deficiencies were in large part a result of poor quality assurance and oversight of the construction process. OIG's report specifically commented that the lack of an adequate number of qualified quality assurance staff contributed to these problems. For example, OIG found that some of the Department's quality assurance staff did not take the opportunity to conduct physical inspections and signed off on items that were never inspected. OIG also identified the project director's failure to make full use of the subject-matter experts that OBO had retained to observe, oversee, and document the functional performance of building systems to verify that these systems met design intent and contract requirements. In another report, OIG noted that personnel responsible for overseeing contracts related to fuel acquisition in Iraq lacked contract-administration experience and technical expertise. OIG concluded that this lack of experience contributed to oversight deficiencies leading to millions of dollars in questioned costs stemming from fuel purchases that did not conform to quality standards specified in the contract.⁹⁹

In another example, OIG found that contract administration within CA's Office of Consular Systems and Technology was affected by the lack of training on contract administration policies for Contracting Officers Representatives and Government Technical Monitors; this same report found that more senior personnel did not sufficiently appropriately oversee Contracting Officers Representatives and Government Technical Monitors.¹⁰⁰ In another report, OIG identified a range of problems associated with allocation, tracking, and maintenance of armored vehicles.¹⁰¹ OIG specifically recommended that DS hire an "experienced program manager who has an expert knowledge of internal controls and vehicle fleet management experience" to manage the fleet. The report noted that the then-current branch chief position was typically a rotating Foreign Service position and that the person holding the position typically had the technical background necessary to manage the security aspects of the program but was not required to possess specialized skills necessary for the fleet management aspects of the program.

OIG also identified other workforce management concerns. For example, OIG's inspection of NEA found that this bureau attracted the fewest number of bidders for its domestic positions of any of the regional bureaus, and approximately 75 percent of its overseas positions were designated as hard-to-fill. This places at risk NEA's ability to develop the next generation of diplomats with expertise in the region. On a related point, OIG noted that NEA's growing workload in parts of the bureau combined with understaffing led to workplace stress and employee burnout.¹⁰²

These poor workforce practices have real, practical implications for the Department. Remedying physical deficiencies at the two new buildings at Embassy Kabul could cost the Department millions of dollars, and widespread inadequacies in the oversight of contracts and grants increases the risk of fraud, waste, and abuse of Government resources.

⁹⁸ AUD-MERO-17-44, June 2017. In addition to the fire and electrical concerns noted previously, these physical deficiencies included plumbing systems; heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems; and elevators.

⁹⁹ OIG, *Audit of the Oversight of Fuel Acquisition and Related Services Supporting Department of State Operations in Iraq* (AUD-MERO-17-16, December 2016).

¹⁰⁰ OIG, *Audit of the Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Consular System sand Technology, Administration of Selected Information Contracts* (AUD-CGI-17-38, May 2017).

¹⁰¹ AUD-SI-17-21, February 2017.

¹⁰² ISP-I-17-22, May 2017.