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Audit of the Bureau of Global Talent Management, Office of Talent Services, Fulfillment of Service-Level Agreement Requirements

CONTRACTS, GRANTS, AND INFRASTRUCTURE DIVISION

HIGHLIGHTS
Office of Inspector General
United States Department of State

AUD-CGI-21-36

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What OIG Audited

The Department of State (Department) employs more than 10,000 Civil Service employees. The Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM) has the critical responsibility of hiring, developing, assigning, and supporting the Department's workforce. To accomplish this, for civil service personnel, within GTM, the Office of Talent Services (TS) executes service-level agreements (SLA) that detail expected services and performance timelines for recruitment, classification, and personnel actions at defined levels.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted this audit to determine whether TS fulfilled human resources services requirements in accordance with client bureau SLAs. To perform the audit, OIG reviewed eight SLAs and corresponding recruitment actions, classification actions, and available status reports for each client bureau between October 1, 2018, and June 30, 2020.

What OIG Recommends

OIG made three recommendations to GTM that are intended to improve TS's ability to fulfill human resources services requirements in accordance with SLAs. On the basis of GTM's response to a draft of this report, OIG considers two recommendations resolved, pending further action, and one recommendation implemented and closed. A synopsis of GTM's response to the recommendations offered and OIG's reply follow each recommendation in the Audit Results section of this report. GTM's response to a draft of this report is reprinted in Appendix D.

What OIG Found

TS did not consistently fulfill human resources services requirements in accordance with the expectations set forth in the eight client bureau SLAs reviewed for this audit. Specifically, OIG reviewed 46 competitive hiring recruitment actions and found that 42 (91 percent) were not completed within the Office of Personnel Management-established 80-day timeframe. In addition, OIG reviewed 79 new position description classification actions and found that 37 (47 percent) did not meet the 20-business day performance goal included in SLAs. Furthermore, neither TS nor the client bureaus could locate and provide OIG with all the weekly, monthly, and quarterly case status reports required by the SLAs. These shortcomings could be attributed, at least in part, to key leadership vacancies in GTM and TS during the period of review for this audit. In addition, TS lacked an action plan to deal with the caseload surge that occurred when the Department lifted its hiring freeze in May 2018. Finally, internal staffing shortages within TS impacted its capacity to process human resources actions in accordance with SLA timeliness metrics.

Before and during this audit, TS took steps to address many of the challenges it encountered after the Department lifted its hiring freeze in May 2018. Specifically, TS began to cross-train personnel to process multiple types of hiring actions, increased the number of TS staff, and worked to reduce the recruitment case backlog. In addition, TS's processes for providing human resources services need further improvement to fulfill SLA timeliness metrics. However, 72 percent of respondents to a September 2020 OIG customer satisfaction survey indicated that they were satisfied with the services provided by TS between September 2019 and September 2020 when compared to the 3 months following the Department hiring freeze. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to consistently fulfill human resources services requirements at the levels set forth in the client bureau SLAs and to help recruit, classify, and fill mission-critical positions within the Department.

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OBJECTIVE

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted this audit to determine whether the Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM), Office of Talent Services (TS), fulfilled human resources services requirements in accordance with client bureau service-level agreements (SLA).

BACKGROUND

GTM is a global operation, providing services for more than 76,000 employees (including more than 10,000 Civil Service employees) who make up the Department of State's (Department) workforce at 276 posts in 195 countries. Under the leadership of the Director General (DG) of the Foreign Service, who also serves as the Director of GTM,[1] GTM is responsible for steering recruitment, assignment, and career development processes to build an engaged workforce that delivers results and services. Through a delegation of authority, certain other bureaus and offices within the Department to act as Human Resources Service Providers (HRSP) to provide human resources services. As of March 2020, the Department had 10 HRSPs, which included TS.[2]

Bureau of Global Talent Management, Office of Talent Services

TS is a HRSP, providing recruitment, classification, and personnel action processing for client bureaus. TS monitors the metrics within SLAs to increase the effectiveness of service delivery. TS, which is in Charleston, SC, services 33 client bureaus.[3]

TS has a dedicated employee that serves as a Client Relations Coordinator (CRC) who advocates for the client and provides support to foster client success, education, and productive relationships. Specifically, the CRC helps a client understand processes and procedures and assists with determining case status. The CRC should be the client's first point of contact for deficiencies that cannot be resolved at the working level. The CRC also distributes the weekly status, monthly open cases, and quarterly planning reports.[4] Each bureau is required to appoint a Client Bureau Liaison (CBL) to provide human resources advisory services to bureau

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[1] Since November 23, 1975, under a Department administrative action, the DG has concurrently held the title of Director of GTM.

[2] In addition to TS, the Department has nine other HRSPs: Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of the Secretary, Bureau of Global Public Affairs, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Affairs, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Bureau of Administration, Foreign Service Institute, and Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights. The Bureau of Consular Affairs, Bureau of Global Public Affairs, and Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Affairs (which includes the Bureau of Arms, Verification, and Compliance; Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation; and Bureau of Political-Military Affairs) are identified as both HRSPs and client bureaus because they have HRSP delegation authority for select services. TS provides other services that are not delegated to the HRSPs.

[3] Appendix B provides details about the human resources services that TS provides to each of its client bureaus.

[4] SLA between TS and client bureaus.

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managers. CBLs play an integral part in the shared-services model and serve as the main connection between TS and the client bureau.

Service-Level Agreements

SLAs represent an agreement between HRSPs and each of their client bureaus on the delivery of specified human resources services at defined levels. SLAs are developed to strengthen and integrate human resources across the Department to better serve employees, enhance support to managers, and more efficiently use resources. TS's SLAs include information on defined levels of service and performance timelines for recruitment, classification, and personnel actions.[5] Not all SLAs provide for all services (i.e., some client bureaus may request that TS perform only recruitment, classification, or personnel action services). If a service does not have an explicit service level in an SLA, then the parties agree to discuss the subjective quality and timeliness of services provided on a regular basis and to take steps to modify or satisfy requirements.[6]

For this audit, OIG reviewed the SLAs and performance metrics for eight client bureaus:[7]
- Bureau of Global Public Affairs (GPA)
- Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR)
- Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA)
- Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO)
- Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES)
- Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA)
- Office of the Legal Adviser
- Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA)

Civil Service Recruitment Actions

TS performs recruitment for Civil Service positions up to the General Schedule-15 level for its client bureaus. TS is responsible for competitive hiring, which includes delegated examining authority vacancy announcements[8] and merit promotion vacancy announcements.[9] TS is also

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[5] Personnel actions processed by TS include appointments; returns to duty from nonpaid status; separations; placement in nonpaid or nonduty status; conversions to appointment; position changes, extensions, and miscellaneous changes; and pay changes. OIG did not assess personnel actions during the audit.

[6] SLA between TS and client bureaus.

[7] See Appendix A: Purpose, Scope, and Methodology for information about the selection of client bureaus.

[8] Delegated examining authority is an authority that the Office of Personnel Management delegates to agencies to fill competitive Civil Service jobs through a competitive process that is open to all U.S. citizens, including current Federal employees.

[9] Merit promotion allows for a current or former Federal employee to apply for a job without having to compete with the general public or people with veterans' preference. Instead, you compete with other competitive service employees.

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responsible for noncompetitive hiring,[10] in which certain individuals could bypass the competitive examining process and enter the Civil Service without having to compete with the general public.[11] Throughout the hiring process, TS is supposed to work in partnership with the hiring manager and CBL to complete the process in adherence to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) end-to-end hiring roadmap.[12]

Individual 80-Day Hiring Timeline Service Agreement

TS uses the Individual 80-Day Hiring Timeline Service Agreement[13] as part of its internal control[14] system during the recruitment process. The timeline identifies the actions to be taken and the maximum timeframe for each action item required to achieve the OPM end-to-end hiring roadmap, which is shown in Table 1.[15]

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[10] There are two broad categories of noncompetitive, qualified candidates: an individual who acquired noncompetitive eligibility due to a specific authority and a current or former Federal employee in the competitive service seeking a position having promotion potential no higher than the position they currently hold or previously held on a "permanent" basis.

[11] OIG did not review noncompetitive hiring during the audit.

[12] OPM, "End to End Hiring Initiative," end-to-end-hiring-initiative.pdf (opm.gov).

[13] The DS-5109 Individual 80-day Hiring Timeline Service Agreement states that human resources is committed to providing services based on an 80-day hiring model for every hiring action.

[14] Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* 5 (GAO-14-704G, September 2014) defines internal control as a process effected by an entity's oversight body, management, and other personnel that provides reasonable assurance that the objectives of an entity will be achieved.

[15] Employees use the OPM end-to-end hiring roadmap as a guideline to complete the recruitment process within 80 days. The 80-day hiring process begins when TS receives a complete hiring package from a hiring manager and ends when the employee enters on duty. The number of days does not include the time required to obtain a security clearance.

Table 1: OPM End-to-End Hiring Roadmap

Step	Description	Number of Calendar Days
1	Validate the Need Against the Workforce, Staffing, and Recruiting Plans	1
2	Request for Personnel Action To Fill the Job	1
3	Review the Position Description	1
4	Confirm the Job Analysis and Assessment Strategy	5
5	Create and Post a Job Opportunity Announcement Identifying Career Patterns	2
6	Receive Applications and Notify Applicants	10
7	Close Job Opportunity Announcement	0
8	Evaluate Applications	15
9	Issue Certificate and Notify Applicants of Eligibility	1
10	Review Applications, Schedule and Conduct Interviews, Check References, Make Selection, and Return Certificate	15
11	Tentative Job Offer and Acceptance	3
12	Initiate Investigation at the Appropriate Level for the Position To Be Filled	10
13	Official Offer and Acceptance	2
14	Enter on Duty	14
Total		**80**

Source: OIG generated based on data obtained from the OPM end-to-end hiring roadmap.

TS uses the OPM end-to-end hiring roadmap as a guide for providing services. The number of days for each step within the OPM end-to-end hiring roadmap is a suggested timeframe.[16] Therefore, within 2 calendar days of the receipt of the complete recruitment package, TS should consult with the hiring official to gain an understanding of the critical information needed to be included in the requirements of the vacancy announcement. TS should then prepare a draft packet for the hiring manager's review and approval within 8 calendar days of the initial consultation. Once TS receives the final vacancy announcement package from the client bureau, the vacancy should be posted to USAJOBS[17] for 5 to 10 calendar days. Once the announcement closes, TS is supposed to review applications, update statuses, determine the best qualified candidates, and issue a certificate of eligible candidates. The hiring manager is required to return the certificate to TS, indicating selection or nonselection no later than 20 calendar days from the date of issuance of the certificate of eligible candidates. TS is supposed to act on the returned certificate no more than 3 calendar days from the date of receipt.[18]

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[16] As authorized by OPM, TS adjusted the number of days for each step within the DS-5109 Individual 80-day Hiring Timeline Service Agreement while keeping within the 80-day standard for end-to-end hiring.

[17] USAJOBS is the official job site of the United States Federal Government. The website, www.usajobs.gov, is the centralized site for most Federal agencies to post vacancy announcements.

[18] DS-5109 Individual 80-day Hiring Timeline Service Agreement.

Classification Services

TS provides classification for Civil Service positions and employees up to the General Schedule-15 level. Position classification is the assignment of proper pay plan, position title, occupational series, and grade level to a position by applying authorized OPM and Department position classification standards and methodologies.[19] TS creates new position descriptions (PD), performs "pen and ink" changes to existing PDs, and performs recertification[20] of existing PD classifications.[21]

Throughout the classification phase, TS personnel should work with the CBL or the hiring manager to identify the appropriate classification standard, classify the PD, and complete the position evaluation in the Automated Classification and Recruitment System, in accordance with OPM and Department classification standards.[22]

TS's goal for new PD classification, as defined in the SLA, is 20 business days, which begins when the classification case is assigned to the classifier. The classifier is supposed to notify the CBL that he or she has been assigned the case. The classifier then reviews the case and informs the CBL or hiring manager about any questions or concerns with the request. TS requests that bureaus respond to any information or document requests within 5 business days. Once all outstanding issues have been resolved, the classifier will evaluate the PD and compile an evaluation according to OPM classification criteria, which the classifier will enter into the Automated Classification and Recruitment System. The classifier will then approve the PD. Once the classifier's approval is processed, which may take 1 to 2 days, the classifier is supposed to email final copies of the PD to the CBL, informing the requestor of the completion.

Communication

In accordance with the SLAs, TS is supposed to conduct monthly client bureau meetings to discuss updates to policies, procedures, workflow, and areas for improvement. However, in April 2020, TS replaced the monthly client bureau meetings with monthly emails followed by a monthly client connection newsletter due to the lack of CBL meeting attendance. Because meeting minutes were already being sent out after the meetings, TS stated that the newsletter was a more productive way to provide the client bureaus with information. Furthermore, TS provides client bureaus with several types of reports[23] to communicate case status and assist client bureaus with planning.

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[19] TS Client Bureau Liaison Handbook.

[20] Recertification is the process of renewing the classification of a PD that is 5 or more years old by verifying that the established title, pay plan, series, and grade remain unchanged after the supervisor of the position has recertified that the duties and responsibilities continue to be accurately described.

[21] OIG did not review "pen and ink" changes to and recertification of existing PD classifications during the audit.

[22] OPM provides general information about the classification of Federal positions. The Department developed classification implementation guidelines and methodologies.

[23] Specific reports provided by TS are case status reports (weekly), open cases reports (monthly), quarterly reports, such as eligible career-ladder promotions, not-to-exceed, tenure, within grade increase, and reemployed annuitant.

Hiring Freeze

On January 23, 2017, the President ordered a Government-wide freeze on hiring Federal civilian employees.[24] The Office of Management and Budget lifted the hiring freeze on April 12, 2017, when its director released a plan to reduce the size of the Federal Government workforce through attrition, fulfilling a presidential requirement to develop such a plan before lifting the hiring freeze.[25] However, the Department continued the hiring freeze for another 13 months, until the Secretary of State lifted it on May 15, 2018.[26] An OIG report[27] issued in August 2019 states that a key GTM office responsible for Civil Service hiring was understaffed, which magnified difficulties in meeting performance goals established for Civil Service hiring.[28] As a result, as of December 2018, GTM estimated that it would take approximately 2 years to fill Civil Service vacancies created by the hiring freeze.

AUDIT RESULTS

Finding A: The Office of Talent Services Did Not Consistently Meet Service-Level Agreement Performance Goals

OIG found that TS did not consistently fulfill human resources services requirements in accordance with the expectations set forth in the eight client bureau SLAs reviewed for this audit.[29] Specifically, OIG reviewed 46 competitive hiring recruitment actions and found that 42 (91 percent) were not completed within the OPM-established 80-day timeline.[30] In addition, OIG reviewed 79 new PD classification actions and found that 37 (47 percent) did not meet the 20-business day performance goal included in SLAs. Furthermore, neither TS nor the client bureaus could locate and provide OIG with all of the weekly, monthly, and quarterly case status reports required by the SLAs. The shortcomings in achieving the level of services set forth in SLAs could be attributed, at least in part, to key leadership vacancies in GTM and TS during the period of review for this audit.[31] According to TS officials, TS lacked an action plan to deal with

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[24] Presidential Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, "Hiring Freeze" (January 23, 2017).

[25] Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-17-22, "Comprehensive Plan for Reforming the Federal Government and Reducing the Federal Civilian Workforce" (April 12, 2017).

[26] Department telegram 18 STATE 64296, "Lifting the Hiring Freeze," June 25, 2018.

[27] OIG, Review of the Effects of the Department of State Hiring Freeze (ISP-I-19-23, August 2019).

[28] During the hiring freeze, TS experienced significant employee attrition and was unable to meet internal performance metrics. In November 2018, the Department established a task force with the Department of Defense's Defense Finance and Accounting Service to reduce a backlog of 146 vacancy announcement requests from client bureaus. GTM officials stated that the task force reduced the backlog in March 2019.

[29] OIG selected GPA, INR, Office of the Legal Adviser, NEA, OBO, OES, SCA, and WHA. Appendix A: Purpose, Scope, and Methodology provides details of the selection of client bureaus, recruitment actions, classification actions, and status reports for review.

[30] The OPM end-to-end hiring roadmap documents an 80-day hiring timeline that OPM mandates.

[31] To perform this audit, OIG reviewed eight SLAs and corresponding recruitment actions, classification actions, and available status reports for each client bureau between October 1, 2018, and June 30, 2020.

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the caseload surge that occurred when the Department lifted its hiring freeze in May 2018. The officials also stated, internal staffing shortages within TS impacted its capacity to process human resources in accordance with SLA timeliness metrics.

The same TS officials added that before and during this audit, TS took steps to address many of the challenges it encountered after the Department lifted its hiring freeze in May 2018. Specifically, TS began to cross-train personnel to process multiple types of hiring actions, increased the number of TS staff, and worked to reduce the recruitment case backlog. In addition, TS's processes for providing human resources services need further improvement to fulfill SLA timeliness metrics. However, 72 percent of respondents to a September 2020 OIG customer satisfaction survey[32] indicated that they were satisfied with the services provided by TS between September 2019 and September 2020 when compared to the 3 months following the Department hiring freeze. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to consistently fulfill human resources services requirements at the levels set forth in the client bureau SLAs and to help recruit, classify, and fill mission-critical positions within the Department.

Recruitment Actions Were Not Always Completed Within the 80-Day Timeline Established by OPM

According to the SLAs and the timeline established by OPM for recruitment, TS is expected to complete the recruitment process within 80 days. OIG found that TS did not complete 42 (91 percent) of 46 recruitment actions tested within the 80-day timeline established by OPM and outlined in the SLAs.[33] In addition, OIG found that the average timeline across the eight bureaus reviewed between October 1, 2018, and June 30, 2020, was 189 days. Table 2 details the results of OIG's testing of recruitment actions, including the average number of days to complete recruitment actions, for the eight selected bureaus.

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[32] The September 2020 OIG customer satisfaction survey was sent to Client Bureau Liaisons and Human Resources Officers representing 33 client bureaus. A total of 40 surveys were sent to recipients, and 36 responses to the survey were returned to OIG (a 90-percent response rate).

[33] Appendix A: Purpose, Scope, and Methodology provides details of the sample selection.

Table 2: Full Recruitment Actions Tested Between October 2018 and June 2020

Client Bureau	Number Tested	Did Not Meet 80-Day Timeline	Did Not Meet 80-Day Timeline (Percentage)	Average Number of Days to Complete[*]
GPA	2	1	50	128
INR	6	3	50	113
NEA	5	5	100	181
OBO	20	20	100	220
OES	4	4	100	211
SCA	3	3	100	230
Office of the Legal Adviser	2	2	100	132
WHA	4	4	100	208

[*] This metric only includes recruitment actions that did not meet the 80-day timeline. The time to complete the security background clearance is not included in this metric.
Source: OIG generated based on an analysis of full recruitment action data and information provided by TS.

Of the 46 recruitment actions OIG tested for this audit, 37 (80 percent) were received by TS within 9 months after the Department lifted its hiring freeze in May 2018. A TS official stated that during this period, TS had a significant backlog of requests and staffing shortages and that when the Department's hiring freeze ended, TS was receiving about 200 recruitment actions a month from client bureaus. In addition, another TS official stated that by August 2018, TS had about 600 recruitment actions that it was trying to process. By November 2018, TS officials stated that it was evident to TS leadership that client bureaus were waiting too long for TS to process actions. However, at that time, TS did not have a plan to address the backlog challenges.

According to a TS official, in November 2018, the acting Under Secretary for Management authorized the detail of 15 human resources specialists that worked in other GTM offices to assist TS in completing 140 vacancy announcements. The TS official added that, the human resources specialists did not have experience with drafting and posting vacancy announcements, so TS had to have its staff conduct quality assurance of the work performed and that trying to process the 140 vacancies all at once led to an additional backlog. The same TS official stated that in the fall of 2019, the Department entered into an agreement with the Department of Defense's Defense Finance and Accounting Service to post vacancy announcements and prepare certificates of eligibility. Once client bureaus selected an applicant to hire, TS would complete the job offer and onboarding process.

In addition, a TS official stated that internal staffing shortages within TS impacted its capacity to process recruitment actions in accordance with SLA timeliness metrics. Specifically, during the hiring freeze, TS experienced significant attrition and was unable to meet internal performance

metrics. According to TS officials, in October 2018, 5 months after the Government-wide hiring freeze ended, TS had 13 (57 percent) of 23 full-time positions filled to address the backlog of vacancy announcements. However, a TS official added that in the spring of 2019, the newly appointed DG authorized additional full-time positions and instructed TS to prioritize internal vacancies to address this issue. As of March 2021, a TS official stated that the recruitment division had 28 of 30 (93 percent) positions filled, which included 3 supervisors.

OIG Compared TS Recruitment Statistics With Government-Wide Statistics

OIG compared the Department's average number of days to process recruitment actions for 3 fiscal years to OPM data available for the Federal Government. During FY 2017 and FY 2018, the Department's average number of days was slightly lower than the Government-wide average. However, in FY 2019, after the end of the hiring freeze, TS received almost double the number of recruitment actions, and its average number of days rose significantly above the Government-wide average. Details of the comparison are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Department Statistics for Hiring Compared With Government-Wide Statistics for Fiscal Years 2017–2019*

	FY 2017		FY 2018		FY 2019	
	Number of Hires	**Average Number of Days**	**Number of Hires**	**Average Number of Days**	**Number of Hires**	**Average Number of Days**
Government-wide	239,091	106	303,167	98	369,307	101
Department	496	100	487	97	805	141

* The Department's data include information related to all HRSPs. OPM does not provide separate statistics for each individual HRSP within the Department.
Source: OIG generated based on an analysis of hiring data received from OPM.

New Position Description Classification Actions Were Not Always Completed in a Timely Manner

The eight SLAs reviewed for this audit establish that new PDs are to be completed within 20 business days, which begins when the classification case is assigned to the TS classifier. The TS classifier will work with the requesting bureau and compile an evaluation according to OPM classification criteria, which will be entered into the Automated Classification and Recruitment System. OIG found that TS did not complete 37 of 79 (47 percent) new PDs tested within 20 business days, as established in the SLAs reviewed.[34] The average time across all eight bureaus to complete the new PDs between October 1, 2018, and June 30, 2020, was 41 days. Table 4 details the results of OIG's testing of new PDs, including the average number of days to complete the new PDs for the eight bureaus reviewed for this audit.

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[34] Appendix A: Purpose, Scope, and Methodology provides details of the sample selection.

Table 4: New PD Classification Actions Tested Between October 2018 and June 2020

Client Bureau	Number Tested	Did Not Meet 20 Business-Day Goal	Did Not Meet 20 Business-Day Goal (Percentage)	Average Number of Days to Complete
GPA	6	2	33	34
INR	21	7	33	32
Office of the Legal Adviser	3	2	67	42
NEA	10	7	70	30
OBO	12	5	42	34
OES	16	7	44	33
SCA	5	5	100	87
WHA	6	2	33	35

Source: OIG generated based on an analysis of data on new PD classification action timeline and information provided by TS.

Agreed-Upon Reports and Client Bureau Meeting Minutes Could Not Be Located

According to the SLAs, TS is required to provide its client bureaus with several types of reports (weekly, monthly, and quarterly) to communicate the status of cases and assist the client bureaus with planning. For example, between April 1, 2019, and June 30, 2020, TS should have provided 13 weekly reports and 3 monthly reports. In addition, the SLAs state that TS will conduct monthly meetings with the client bureaus to discuss updates to policies, procedures, workflow, and areas for improvement.[35] However, TS was unable to locate and provide OIG with all of the requested case status reports and the client bureau meeting notes for the quarters tested for the selected bureaus.[36] Because TS was unable to provide all of the reports, OIG requested the same reports from the client bureaus. The client bureaus were able to provide some of the reports requested. For the reports they could not provide, client bureau officials stated that the reports were either not provided to them by TS or were misplaced. Table 5 details the number of missing status reports for each of the five bureaus reviewed for this audit.

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[35] According to TS officials, TS replaced the monthly client meeting with the client connection newsletter because CBLs were not attending the meetings. According to TS officials, the minutes from the meetings were emailed after the meetings, so providing a newsletter was a more productive way to provide the client bureaus with information. According to TS officials, this approach is widely accepted by the client bureaus.

[36] Appendix A: Purpose, Scope, and Methodology provides details of the selection methodology.

Table 5: Number of Missing Status Reports Between April 2019 and June 2020

Report	GPA FY 2020, Quarter 2	INR FY 2019, Quarter 3	Legal Adviser FY 2020, Quarter 3	OBO FY 2020, Quarter 2	SCA FY 2019, Quarter 3
Weekly Case Status Report[a]	2	12	8	3	2
Monthly Open Cases Report[b]	1	3	2	1	1
Quarterly Career-Ladder Promotions Report[c]	0	1	0	0	0
Quarterly Not-to-Exceed Report[c]	0	1	0	0	0
Quarterly Tenure Report[c]	0	1	0	0	0
Quarterly Within Grade Increase Report[c]	0	1	0	0	0
Quarterly Reemployed Annuitant Report[c]	0	1	0	0	1
Monthly Meeting Minutes[b]	0	3	1	0	3

[a] Thirteen weekly reports should have been prepared and provided each quarter.
[b] Three monthly reports should have been prepared and provided each quarter.
[c] One quarterly report should have been prepared and provided each quarter.
Source: OIG generated based on an analysis of status reports provided by TS and client bureaus.

Based on statements by TS officials, OIG concluded that one reason for the reporting deficiencies is that TS did not establish procedures for the CRCs to maintain reports in a centralized, organized manner. In addition, TS had not established internal controls or guidance related to storing or transferring information when a CRC leaves the organization, and TS has had four different people in that position since 2018. The TS official further added that some of the case status reports and the meeting minutes were created and stored by the CRC on their computer's desktop files.

In the fourth quarter of FY 2019, TS recognized this issue and took steps to maintain status reports in a centralized location and developed internal control procedures that included a work instruction for creating and submitting client reports. The procedures define the steps necessary to provide client bureaus with weekly, monthly, and quarterly reports to ensure that the client bureaus and TS are advised and aware of the status of all open cases, any open actions needed to be taken by the client bureau, and any planned future actions. In addition, TS now uses its SharePoint site to store the case status reports and client bureau meeting minutes. Because of these developments, OIG is not making a recommendation to address the deficiencies noted with the missing status reports.

GTM Did Not Sufficiently Plan for the Caseload Surge Once the Department Hiring Freeze Was Lifted

According to statements from TS officials, OIG concluded that one reason for the deficiencies identified with TS meeting defined service-level requirements is that TS did not have a sufficient plan to address the caseload surge once the Department's hiring freeze was lifted in May 2018. According to internal control guidance, "conditions affecting the entity and its environment

continually change. Management can anticipate and plan for significant changes by using a forward-looking process for identifying change."[37] In addition, the Foreign Affairs Manual requires all levels of Department management to maintain effective systems of management control to ensure that activities are managed effectively, efficiently, economically, and with integrity.[38] According to one TS official, after the hiring freeze ended, GTM officials did not make a determination to prioritize actions that would be best for the Department, such as filling certain mission-critical positions first. Instead, client bureaus submitted their requests, and TS made no attempt to work with the bureaus to prioritize the requests.

The official added that TS failed to implement a sufficient plan to address internal TS staffing shortages after the hiring freeze ended. Internal control guidance states:

> Effective management of an entity's workforce, its human capital, is essential to achieving results and an important part of internal control. As part of its human capital planning, management also considers how best to retain valuable employees, plan for their eventual departure, and maintain a continuity of needed skills and abilities.[39]

Furthermore, the guidance states that management should "define succession and contingency plans for key roles to help the entity continue achieving its objectives."[40]

OIG found that the inability of GTM to strategically act and proactively recognize the magnitude of potential problems arising in the aftermath of the Department's hiring freeze occurred because of the absence of clear leadership and guidance within GTM. Both GTM, and particularly TS, operated without key leadership during the critical time after the hiring freeze ended. For example, the DG position was vacant for 20 months (the new DG started in February 2019). In addition, a TS official stated that GTM did not have a Director of its Charleston Service Center for 12 months (the new Director started in September 2019).

Office of Talent Service Implemented Initiatives and Improvements

According to TS officials, before and during this audit, TS took steps to address many of the challenges identified in this audit. Specifically, TS began to cross-train personnel to process multiple types of hiring actions, increased the number of TS staff, and worked to reduce the recruitment case backlog. In addition, in October 2018, GTM had an external consultant

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[37] GAO-14-704G, September 2014, at 42.

[38] 2 Foreign Affairs Manual 021.1, "Policy and Scope," and 2 Foreign Affairs Manual 021.2, "Authorities and Requirements."

[39] GAO-14-704G, September 2014, at 46.

[40] GAO-14-704G, 4.06, "Succession and Contingency Plans and Preparation," at 31, states that succession plans address the entity's need to replace competent personnel over the long term, whereas contingency plans address the entity's need to respond to sudden personnel changes that could compromise the internal control system.

assess[41] the Department's HRSPs[42] to determine best practices and compare performance, costs, and customer perception across providers. The study revealed that HRSPs were often severely understaffed. For example, the consultant reported that the average vacancy rate for all HRSPs in FY 2018 was 34 percent. The consultant therefore recommended that GTM enhance human resources structures and support mechanisms to address HRSP staffing gaps, make technological modifications to improve data tracking and reporting capabilities, and establish and use metrics to drive performance across all HRSPs. TS took steps to increase its staffing levels and as of March 2021, TS was 90 percent staffed. In addition, TS upgraded its technology by replacing an outdated database with GTM Next[43] and is using a quality management system that encompasses key metrics to monitor and drive performance goals.

OIG Conducted a Customer Service Satisfaction Survey

In September 2020, OIG sent a customer satisfaction survey[44] to Client Bureau Liaisons and Human Resources Officers representing 33 client bureaus. A total of 40 surveys were sent to recipients, and 36 responses to the survey were returned to OIG, representing a 90-percent response rate. From the survey, 26 of 36 (72 percent) respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the services provided by TS between September 2019 and September 2020 when compared to the 3 months following the end of the Department's hiring freeze. Specifically, respondents indicated that TS's efforts to process recruitment actions following the end of the hiring freeze in May 2018 was inadequate. However, respondents also indicated that their satisfaction improved between September 2019 and September 2020, which suggests that the respondents understood TS's limited capacity to effectuate hiring following the hiring freeze and were satisfied with TS's efforts and actions to improve.

Over the 2 years following the hiring freeze, TS has taken steps to improve the timeliness of recruitment and classification actions provided to client bureaus. Specifically, TS has improved in posting announcements and issuing certificates. For example, during the fourth quarter of FY 2019, TS posted 119 announcements and issued 105 certificates in an average of 98 and 62 days, respectively. Likewise, during the third quarter of FY 2020, TS posted 150 announcements and issued 167 certificates in an average of 45 and 40 days, respectively. However, TS will need to continue to improve performance to meet the levels set forth for in the SLAs, which are 20 business days for PD classification actions and 80 days for recruitment actions. Specifically, additional management attention and planning are needed to consistently fulfill human

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[41] This HRSP study and the resulting findings were intended to be used by Department leadership to streamline core human resources functions and responsibilities to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the provision of these services. The Department's assessment focused on the core human resources functions of position classification, recruitment and staffing, and employee personnel actions. The assessment began in October 2018 and concluded in May 2019.

[42] The Department's HRSPs serve as the primary vehicle for Civil Service workforce management. The Department has multiple HRSPs, including TS in Charleston, SC.

[43] Launched on March 2, 2021, GTM Next is a cloud-based human resources platform designed to enhance the human resources customer experience. GTM Next was designed to streamline human resources service delivery and management of human resources services, promoting ease of use with accountability and transparency.

[44] Appendix C includes a summary of responses to the survey.

resources services requirements at the levels set forth in the client bureau SLAs. Equally important, marked improvement is necessary to help recruit, classify, and fill mission-critical positions within the Department. OIG is therefore offering the following recommendations that are intended to improve TS's ability to fulfill human resources services requirements in accordance with SLAs.

Recommendation 1: OIG recommends that the Bureau of Global Talent Management develop and implement an action plan for achieving the goals, objectives, and milestones/timeframes in the client bureau service-level agreements for completing position description classification actions within 20 business days and recruitment actions within 80 days, as prescribed by the Office of Personnel Management.

Management Response: GTM concurred with the recommendation, stating that it is currently evaluating the capabilities of GTM Next, a new case management system, and awaiting enhancements to the system that will better allow for tracking the timeliness of each action. In addition, once system enhancements are complete, GTM plans to modify current working instructions.

OIG Reply: On the basis of GTM's concurrence with the recommendation and planned actions, OIG considers this recommendation resolved, pending further action. The recommendation will be closed when OIG receives documentation demonstrating that TS has implemented an action plan for achieving the goals, objectives, and milestones/timeframes in the client bureau service-level agreements for completing classification actions and recruitment actions, as prescribed by OPM.

Recommendation 2: OIG recommends that the Bureau of Global Talent Management develop a contingency action plan that could be enacted quickly to optimize caseload management and facilitate operational continuity of human resources services during challenging periods, such as when a surge of hiring requests is received.

Management Response: GTM concurred with the recommendation, stating that it is "currently drafting a plan that outlines identification of surge work and action to be taken . . . to facilitate operational continuity of Classification and Recruitment [and] Staffing services during challenging periods."

OIG Reply: On the basis of GTM's concurrence with the recommendation and planned actions, OIG considers this recommendation resolved, pending further action. The recommendation will be closed when OIG receives documentation that TS has developed a contingency action plan that could be enacted quickly to optimize caseload management and facilitate operational continuity of human resources services during challenging periods.

Recommendation 3: OIG recommends that the Bureau of Global Talent Management develop and implement an action plan to maintain appropriate staffing levels, retain the continuity of needed skills and abilities to perform human resources services, and establish

succession and contingency plans for key positions to sustain defined levels of performance and to help recruit, classify, and fill mission-critical positions within the Department.

Management Response: GTM stated that it had addressed this recommendation following audit fieldwork and receipt of a draft of this report. Specifically, GTM stated that it has made great strides in supporting efforts to minimize the backlog of actions that occurred during the hiring freeze. GTM also stated that it has provided additional staffing authorizations to TS and that TS is nearing the completion of hiring to full authorization in both the Classification and Recruitment and Staffing functions. In addition, GTM has established a contingency contract with the Defense Finance and Accounting Service to address surge needs.

OIG Reply: Based on documentation provided by GTM that describes recent actions taken to maintain appropriate staffing levels, retain the continuity of needed skills and abilities to perform human resources services, and establish succession and contingency plans for key positions, OIG considers this recommendation implemented and closed. Specifically, the recent actions undertaken by GTM will help sustain defined levels of performance and help to recruit, classify, and fill mission-critical positions within the Department. Therefore, the intent of the recommendation is met, and no further action concerning this recommendation is required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: OIG recommends that the Bureau of Global Talent Management develop and implement an action plan for achieving the goals, objectives, and milestones/timeframes in the client bureau service-level agreements for completing position description classification actions within 20 business days and recruitment actions within 80 days, as prescribed by the Office of Personnel Management.

Recommendation 2: OIG recommends that the Bureau of Global Talent Management develop a contingency action plan that could be enacted quickly to optimize caseload management and facilitate operational continuity of human resources services during challenging periods, such as when a surge of hiring requests is received.

Recommendation 3: OIG recommends that the Bureau of Global Talent Management develop and implement an action plan to maintain appropriate staffing levels, retain the continuity of needed skills and abilities to perform human resources services, and establish succession and contingency plans for key positions to sustain defined levels of performance and to help recruit, classify, and fill mission-critical positions within the Department.

APPENDIX A: PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted this audit to determine whether the Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM), Office of Talent Services (TS), fulfilled human resources services requirements in accordance with client bureau service-level agreements (SLA).

OIG conducted this audit from September 2020 to March 2021 in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. The scope of this audit was full recruitment and full classification actions, for civil service personnel, completed between October 1, 2018, and June 30, 2020.[1] OIG faced challenges in completing this work because of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting operational challenges. These challenges included the inability to conduct in-person meetings. OIG conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. These standards require that OIG plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for the findings and conclusions based on the audit objective. OIG believes that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for the findings and conclusions based on the audit objective.

To obtain background information for this audit, OIG researched and reviewed Office of Personnel Management guidance, as well as Department's policies and procedures relating to human resources services. Specifically, OIG reviewed Executive orders, Office of Personnel Management hiring information, including its "Delegated Examining Operations Handbook," the Foreign Affairs Manual, the Foreign Affairs Handbook, and SLAs. OIG also conducted interviews with TS officials that had direct oversight of and authority over SLAs and related services. Additionally, OIG reviewed and analyzed documentation, such as SLAs, status reports, and information obtained from the Human Resources Customer Connect (HRCC) system[2] related to recruitment and classification actions, and TS documentation related to human resources services.

OIG Client Bureau Satisfaction Survey

In September 2020, OIG distributed a client bureau Satisfaction Survey[3] to Client Bureau Liaisons and Human Resources Officers representing 33 client bureaus. OIG sent out 40 surveys to recipients and received 36 responses (a 90-percent response rate). OIG determined the level of satisfaction among client bureaus with the quality of services provided by TS within the last 12 months, as compared to the 3 months following the Department hiring freeze that ended in

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[1] It is defined in the SLAs that services are for civil service recruitment, civil service classification, and civil service personnel actions.

[2] HRCC is the Department's case management system that tracks human resources services while streamlining the reporting and resolution of human resources inquiries from employees, managers, and annuitants. HRCC allows users to manage and deliver human resources services efficiently, effectively, and transparently while reporting measurable outcomes.

[3] The survey opened on September 8, 2020, and closed on September 29, 2020. Appendix C includes a summary of survey responses.

May 2018.[4] As appropriate, information relating to the survey was incorporated into the Audit Results section of this report, and a summary of the survey results is presented in Appendix C.

Data Reliability

OIG used computer processed data received from TS to determine the universe of client bureau recruitment and classification actions completed between October 1, 2018, and June 30, 2020. OIG obtained access to HRCC to independently review case numbers associated with completed recruitment and classification actions, and to validate the completeness of the data provided by TS. OIG reviewed each case number received from TS in HRCC, compared that to the data requested by OIG, and identified any differences. OIG determined that the data was sufficiently reliable for the purpose of selecting recruitment and classification actions to review.

Work Related to Internal Control

During the audit, OIG considered several factors, including the subject matter of the project, to determine whether internal control was significant to the audit objective. Based on this consideration, OIG determined that internal control was significant to this audit. OIG then considered the components of internal control and the underlying principles included in the *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*[5] to identify internal controls that were significant to the audit objective. Considering internal control in the context of a comprehensive internal control framework could help auditors determine whether underlying internal control deficiencies exist.

For this audit, OIG concluded that three of five internal control components from the *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*—Control Environment, Control Activities, and Information and Communication—were significant to the audit objective. The Control Environment component is the foundation for an internal control system. It provides the discipline and structure to help an entity achieve its objectives. The Control Activities component includes the actions management establishes through policies and procedures to achieve objectives and respond to risks in the internal control system, which includes the entity's information system. The Information and Communication component relates to the quality information that management and personnel communicate and use to support the internal control system. OIG also concluded that five of the principles related to the selected components were significant to the audit objective, as described in Table A.1.

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[4] The Department hiring freeze began on January 23, 2017, and ended on May 15, 2018.

[5] Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (GAO-14-704G, September 2014).

Table A.1: Internal Control Components and Principles Identified as Significant

Components	Principles
Control Environment	Management should establish an organizational structure, assign responsibility, and delegate authority to achieve the entity's objectives.
Control Activities	Management should design control activities to achieve objectives and respond to risks.
Control Activities	Management should implement control activities through policies.
Information and Communication	Management should use quality information to achieve the entity's objectives.
Information and Communication	Management should externally communicate the necessary quality information to achieve the entity's objectives.

Source: OIG generated based on an analysis of internal control components and principles from the Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (GAO-14-704G, September 2014).

OIG then interviewed pertinent officials, reviewed relevant documents, and performed walkthroughs of the human resources process to attain an understanding of the internal controls related to the components and principles identified as significant to this audit. In addition, OIG performed procedures to assess the design, implementation, and operating effectiveness of key internal controls. Specifically, OIG:

- Reviewed SLAs, policies, procedures, and processes in place.
- Tested recruitment and classification actions to determine if performance goal timelines were met in accordance with SLAs.
- Tested several types of reports provided by TS to determine if communication occurred in accordance with the SLAs.

Internal control deficiencies identified during the audit that are significant within the context of the audit objective are presented in the Audit Results section of this report.

Sampling Methodology

OIG used the results of a customer satisfaction survey conducted in September 2020 to select a sample of client bureaus to review for this audit. OIG also selected a sample of recruitment and classification actions for each of the bureaus selected for review. OIG employed risk-based selection criteria[6] and nonstatistical random sampling[7] to select eight client bureaus for review and used nonstatistical sampling to select 46 recruitment and 79 classification actions for testing and analysis.

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[6] When a representative sample is not needed, a targeted selection may be effective if the auditors have isolated risk factors or other criteria to target the selection.

[7] Nonstatistical sampling draws on the auditor's experience and professional judgment in selecting units for evidence from the sampling frame.

Client Bureau Selection

OIG used client bureau responses related to 23 fields from OIG's customer satisfaction survey to calculate a score for each bureau. A high score represented client bureaus with the highest volume in recruitment, classification, and personnel actions, and with higher levels of dissatisfaction with TS services. The bureaus with a total score greater than 20 were selected, except for GTM. OIG removed GTM from sample selection because TS, the office being audited, is part of GTM. The bureaus selected were the Bureau of Global Public Affairs (GPA), Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA), Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO), Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES), and Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA).

OIG wanted to ensure that it had coverage of bureaus and organizations that did not respond to OIG's survey (i.e., Office of the Legal Adviser; Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA); Bureau of Legislative Affairs; Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance; and the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, U.S. Section. TS indicated that the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, U.S. Section, United States and Mexico, U.S. Section does few recruitment actions (less than five each year); therefore, OIG did not select that organization. OIG selected two of the other four organizations, the Office of the Legal Adviser and WHA, using a random-number generator.

Details of the selection methodology are provided in Table A.2.

Table A.2: Selection of Eight Client Bureaus

Survey Response	Bureau	Methodology
GPA	Responded	Risk-based selection: total score > 20
INR	Responded	Risk-based selection: total score > 20
NEA	Responded	Risk-based selection: total score > 20
OBO	Responded	Risk-based selection: total score > 20
OES	Responded	Risk-based selection: total score > 20
SCA	Responded	Risk-based selection: total score > 20
Office of the Legal Adviser	Did Not Respond	Nonstatistical random sample
WHA	Did Not Respond	Nonstatistical random sample

Source: OIG generated based on analysis of information obtained from OIG's September 2020 customer satisfaction survey and the testing methodology employed for this audit.

Recruitment and Classification Actions Selection

The audit team reviewed full classification[8] and full recruitment[9] actions completed by TS between October 1, 2018, and June 30, 2020, for the eight selected bureaus (GPA, INR, NEA, OBO, OES, SCA, Office of the Legal Adviser, and WHA). OIG used a random-number generator to select three quarters to review for each of the bureaus. For the 24 selected quarters, OIG requested a list of all full recruitment and full classification actions that were completed during the selected quarters. OIG reviewed all the transactions that occurred during the selected quarters. Table A.3 shows the quarters selected for each bureau and the number of actions reviewed.

Table A.3: Quarters Selected and Actions Tested by Bureau

Bureau	Randomly Selected Quarters	Full Classification Actions	Full Recruitment Actions
GPA	Quarter 2, FY 2020	1	0
	Quarter 2, FY 2019	1	1
	Quarter 1, FY 2019	4	1
INR	Quarter 3, FY 2019	7	3
	Quarter 1, FY 2020	6	0
	Quarter 1, FY 2019	8	3
NEA	Quarter 2, FY 2020	3	1
	Quarter 3, FY 2019	4	1
	Quarter 2, FY 2019	3	3
OBO	Quarter 2, FY 2020	6	3
	Quarter 1, FY 2020	1	9
	Quarter 4, FY 2019	5	8
OES	Quarter 2, FY 2020	7	3
	Quarter 3, FY 2019	5	1
	Quarter 1, FY 2019	4	0
SCA	Quarter 1, FY 2020	1	1
	Quarter 4, FY 2019	0	2
	Quarter 3, FY 2019	4	0
Office of the Legal Adviser	Quarter 3, FY 2020	1	0
	Quarter 1, FY 2020	1	0
	Quarter 2, FY 2019	1	2
WHA	Quarter 3, FY 2020	1	0
	Quarter 2, FY 2020	3	3
	Quarter 3, FY 2019	2	1
Total	**24 Quarters**	**79**	**46**

Source: OIG generated based on the testing methodology employed for this audit involving classification and recruitment actions.

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[8] Full classification actions consist of actions related to creating new positions and rewriting position descriptions.

[9] Full recruitment (with announcement) actions consisted of cases that require preparing an announcement and a certificate of eligible candidates. The number represents cases, not necessarily the number of announcements and certificates. Some cases require multiple announcements (such as merit promotion, delegated examining authority, and multiple grade-level announcements).

Client Bureau and Fiscal Year Quarter Selection for Case Status Reports

To determine whether TS executed select terms and conditions of the SLAs related to providing status reports, establishing communication mechanisms, and having required meetings, OIG used a random-number generator to select five of the eight previously selected client bureaus for review. For each of the five bureaus, OIG assessed TS compliance with communication requirements included in the SLA for one quarter. OIG reviewed all available weekly, monthly, and quarterly case status reports,[10] along with the available monthly meeting minutes and newsletters associated with the quarters selected to review. Table A.4 shows the client bureaus and quarters selected for review.

Table A.4: Selection of Client Bureaus and Fiscal Year Quarters

Bureau	Quarter and FY
GPA	Quarter 2, FY 2020
INR	Quarter 3, FY 2019
Office of the Legal Adviser	Quarter 3, FY 2020
OBO	Quarter 2, FY 2020
SCA	Quarter 3, FY 2019

Source: OIG generated based on the testing methodology employed for this audit involving case status reports.

Prior Office of Inspector General Reports

In the *Review of the Effects of the Department of State Hiring Freeze* (ISP-I-19-23, August 2019), OIG reported that the Department's hiring freeze had a broad and significant effect on overall Department operations, particularly on its ability to address its most significant management challenges.[11] OIG's conclusion was based on its review of responses from 38 domestic bureaus and offices and 151 overseas posts, as well as its analysis of Department-furnished staffing data. OIG's report included examples of the impact of the hiring freeze. OIG was unable to assess the financial costs of the hiring freeze because the Department did not systematically track these costs.

In the *Inspection of the Bureau of Counterterrorism* (ISP-I-20-13, May 2020), OIG reported that the bureau's inability to fill vacant Civil Service positions hampered its operations. For example, owing partly to delays caused by the hiring freeze, the Bureau of Counterterrorism was unable to establish and fill four positions in the Office of Terrorist Detentions for more than 2 years,

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[10] Specifically, OIG reviewed available case status reports (weekly); open cases reports (monthly); and quarterly reports, such as eligible career-ladder promotions, not-to-exceed, tenure, within-grade increase, and reemployed annuitant.

[11] OIG, Inspector General Statement on the Department of State's Major Management and Performance Challenges (OIG-EX-19-01, November 2018).

which resulted in additional work and inefficiencies in setting up an office with key policy responsibilities. At the time of the inspection, the bureau told OIG that 20 of its 92 authorized Civil Service positions were vacant—a rate of nearly 22 percent. One reason this occurred was that TS did not meet timeliness metrics established in its service-level agreement for hiring actions. TS acknowledged it had a backlog of recruitment actions, in part, because of the hiring freeze.

APPENDIX B: SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE OFFICE OF TALENT SERVICES TO CLIENTS

Table B.1. shows the services that the Bureau of Global Talent Management, Office of Talent Services, provides to each of its clients.

Table B.1: Services Provided by the Office of Talent Services to Clients

Client Bureaus	Civil Service Hiring	Classification	Personnel Actions
1. Bureau of African Affairs	✓	✓	✓
2. Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance	✓	✓	✓
3. Bureau of Budget and Planning	✓	✓	✓
4. Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services	✓	✓	✓
5. Bureau of Consular Affairs		✓	
6. Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism	✓	✓	✓
7. Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations	✓	✓	✓
8. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor	✓	✓	✓
9. Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs	✓	✓	✓
10. Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs	✓	✓	✓
11. Bureau of Energy Resources	✓	✓	✓
12. Bureau of Global Talent Management	✓	✓	✓
13. Bureau of Intelligence and Research	✓	✓	✓
14. International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, U.S. Section	✓	✓	✓
15. International Joint Commission	✓	✓	✓
16. Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs	✓	✓	✓
17. Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation	✓	✓	✓
18. Bureau of Legislative Affairs	✓	✓	✓
19. Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs	✓	✓	✓
20. Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs	✓	✓	✓
21. Office of Foreign Missions	✓	✓	✓
22. Office of Global Partnership Initiatives	✓	✓	✓
23. Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs	✓	✓	✓
24. Office of the Chief of Protocol	✓	✓	✓
25. Office of Inspector General	✓		
26. Office of the Legal Adviser	✓	✓	✓
27. Office of the Secretary		✓	

Client Bureaus	Civil Service Hiring	Classification	Personnel Actions
28. Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons	✓	✓	✓
29. Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations	✓	✓	✓
30. Bureau of Political-Military Affairs	✓	✓	✓
31. Bureau of Global Public Affairs	✓	✓	✓
32. Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs	✓	✓	✓
33. Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs	✓	✓	✓

Source: OIG generated based on information obtained from the Office of Talent Services regarding the personnel services provided to 33 client bureaus.

APPENDIX C: SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO SATISFACTION SURVEY

To obtain feedback about clients' satisfaction with the human resources services provided in accordance with the Bureau of Global Talent Management, Office of Talent Services, service-level agreements, the Office of Inspector General developed and distributed a survey in September 2020. The survey was primarily for Client Bureau Liaisons and Human Resources Officers at 33 client bureaus regarding recruitment, classification, communication, and service-deficiency resolution. OIG distributed 40 surveys and received 36 responses (a 90-percent response rate). Table C.1 presents a summary of the responses to the survey.

Table C.1: Summary of Responses to a Client Bureau Satisfaction Survey

Questions	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
1. Please provide your level of satisfaction in the last 12 months with the Civil Service recruitment process, as stated in the SLAs, for Competitive Service (i.e., all sources candidates).	36	100
Very Satisfied	13	36
Somewhat Satisfied	10	28
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	3	8
Somewhat Dissatisfied	4	11
Very Dissatisfied	3	8
This service does not apply to my bureau.	3	8
2. Please provide your level of satisfaction in the last 12 months with the recruitment process, as stated in the SLAs, for Merit Promotion.	36	100
Very Satisfied	0	0
Somewhat Satisfied	5	14
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	5	14
Somewhat Dissatisfied	2	6
Very Dissatisfied	3	8
This service does not apply to my bureau.	21	58
3. How does the service provided within the past 12 months for recruitment actions compare to the service provided within the first 3 months following the hiring freeze ending in May 2018?	36	100
Better Service	22	61
About the same	4	11
Worse Service	3	8
Not Applicable	7	19

4. Please provide your level of satisfaction in the last 12 months with the performance goals, as stated in SLAs, for Classification Services:	36	100
Very Satisfied	17	47
Somewhat Satisfied	10	28
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	2	6
Somewhat Dissatisfied	3	8
Very Dissatisfied	2	6
This service does not apply to my bureau.	2	6
5. How does the service provided within the past 12 months for classification services compare to the service provided within the first 3 months following the hiring freeze ending in May 2018?	36	100
Better Service	14	39
About the same	14	39
Worse Service	3	8
Not Applicable	5	14
6. Please provide your level of satisfaction in the last 12 months with the communication process, as stated in SLAs, for Monthly and Quarterly meetings.	36	100
Very Satisfied	14	39
Somewhat Satisfied	12	33
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	7	19
Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	3
Very Dissatisfied	0	0
This service does not apply to my bureau.	2	6
7. Please provide your level of satisfaction in the last 12 months with the communication process, as stated in SLAs, for Case Status reports.	36	100
Very Satisfied	22	61
Somewhat Satisfied	7	19
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	2	6
Somewhat Dissatisfied	3	8
Very Dissatisfied	2	6
This service does not apply to my bureau.	0	0
8. Please provide your level of satisfaction in the last 12 months with the communication process, as stated in SLAs, for availability to speak by phone with you.	36	100
Very Satisfied	20	56
Somewhat Satisfied	12	33
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	1	3
Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	3
Very Dissatisfied	2	6
This service does not apply to my bureau.	0	0

9. Please provide your level of satisfaction in the last 12 months with the communication process, as stated in SLAs, for availability on the days and hours you need.	36	100
Very Satisfied	21	58
Somewhat Satisfied	10	28
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	2	6
Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	3
Very Dissatisfied	2	6
This service does not apply to my bureau.	0	0
10. Please provide your level of satisfaction in the last 12 months with the communication process, as stated in SLAs, for email communication through established group email.	**36**	**100**
Very Satisfied	17	47
Somewhat Satisfied	8	22
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	4	11
Somewhat Dissatisfied	2	6
Very Dissatisfied	2	6
This service does not apply to my bureau.	3	8
11. How does the service provided within the past 12 months for the communication process compare to the service provided within the first 3 months following the hiring freeze ending in May 2018?	**36**	**100**
Better Service	13	36
About the same	15	42
Worse Service	2	6
Not Applicable	6	17
12. Please provide your satisfaction in the last 12 months with the Service-Deficiency Resolution process, as stated in SLAs.	**36**	**100**
Very Satisfied	13	36
Somewhat Satisfied	13	36
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	4	11
Somewhat Dissatisfied	0	0
Very Dissatisfied	2	6
This service does not apply to my bureau.	4	11
13. How does the service provided within the past 12 months for the service-deficiency resolution process compare to the service provided within the first 3 months following the hiring freeze ending in May 2018?	**36**	**100**
Better Service	13	36
About the same	13	36
Worse Service	2	6
Not Applicable	8	22

14. What is your level of satisfaction with the overall quality of services provided by TS within the last 12 months as compared to the 3 months following the end of the hiring freeze in May 2018.	36	100
Very Satisfied	16	44
Somewhat Satisfied	10	28
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	4	11
Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	3
Very Dissatisfied	2	6
This service does not apply to my bureau.	3	8

Source: OIG generated based on an analysis of responses to the September 2020 client bureau satisfaction survey.

APPENDIX D: BUREAU OF GLOBAL TALENT MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

July 20, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: OIG – Denise Colchin, Director of Contracts, Grants, and Infrastructure Division

FROM: DGTM – Kenneth Merten, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Response to Draft OIG Report – Audit of the Bureau of Global Talent Management, Office of Talent Services, Fulfillment of Service-Level Agreement Requirements

The Bureau of Global Talent Management has reviewed the draft OIG report. We provide the following comments in response to the recommendations outlined in the report for GTM action.

Recommendation 1: OIG recommends that the Bureau of Global Talent Management develop and implement an action plan for achieving the goals, objectives, and milestones/timeframes in the client bureau service-level agreements for completing position description classification actions within 20 business days and recruitment actions within 80 days, as prescribed by the Office of Personnel Management.

Management Response: The Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM) concurs with the recommendation. The Office of Talent Services (GTM/TS) is currently evaluating the capabilities of GTM Next (our new case management system) and is awaiting enhancements to the system that will better allow GTM/TS to track timeliness of each action. Once system enhancements are complete, GTM/TS will make changes to current working instructions. We have not been provided with a definitive date for changes in the system; however, our request has been documented with the developers.

Recommendation 2: OIG recommends that the Bureau of Global Talent Management develop a contingency action plan that could be enacted quickly to optimize caseload management and facilitate operational continuity of human resources services during challenging periods, such as when a surge of hiring requests is received.

Management Response: The Bureau of Global Talent Management concurs with the recommendation. We are currently drafting a plan that outlines identification of surge work and action to be taken within GTM/TS to facilitate operational continuity of Classification and Recruitment & Staffing services during challenging periods. Finalization of a plan is expected by September 1, 2021.

Recommendation 3: OIG recommends that the Bureau of Global Talent Management develop and implement an action plan to maintain appropriate staffing levels, retain the continuity of needed skills and abilities to perform human resources services, and establish succession and contingency plans for key positions to sustain defined levels of performance and to help recruit, classify, and fill mission-critical positions within the Department.

Management Response: The Bureau of Global Talent Management feels we have adequately addressed this recommendation since the timeframe of this audit. The Bureau recognizes the need to maintain adequate staffing levels in GTM/TS in order to meet established SLA timelines for our clients. The timeframe of this audit encompassed a lengthy and devastating hiring freeze that did not allow us to pre-position for a successful roll out after the lifting of the freeze. The Bureau has made great strides in supporting efforts to minimize the backlog of actions that occurred during the hiring freeze. The Bureau has since provided additional staffing authorizations to GTM/TS and they are nearing completion of hiring to full authorization in both the Classification and Recruitment & Staffing functions. We also have a contingency contract with an external HR Service provider (Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)) to address surge needs. We are again allowing for the submission of recruit actions as soon as a vacancy is identified. Both the Classification and Recruitment & Staffing functions have undergone structural changes that allow for maximum productivity levels of staff members while highlighting customer service efforts. As a result of GTM/TS' actions, the Department respectfully requests to close this recommendation.

ABBREVIATIONS

CBL	Client Bureau Liaison
CRC	Client Relations Coordinator
DG	Director General
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GPA	Bureau of Global Public Affairs
GTM	Bureau of Global Talent Management
HRCC	Human Resources Customer Connect
HRSP	Human Resources Service Provider
INR	Bureau of Intelligence and Research
NEA	Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OES	Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
PD	position description
SCA	Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs
SLA	service-level agreement
TS	Office of Talent Services
WHA	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

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