

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2006, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began its Centers of Standardization program to develop design standards for facility types that the Army constructs on a regular basis. The Centers support broader Army efforts under the AFSP to standardize facility types with objectives such as improving design quality, reducing design and construction costs and time, and reducing change orders.

Senate Report 115-262 accompanying the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 included a provision for GAO to evaluate the Centers' effectiveness. This report assesses, among other things, the extent to which (1) the Centers have identified activities that support their objectives, and (2) the Army tracks the Centers' progress toward their objectives. GAO reviewed and analyzed applicable regulations and program and project documentation; compared Center activities to program objectives; and interviewed cognizant agency officials to gain an understanding of the Centers' operations and potential financial liabilities.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that the Army establish performance measures to assess the Centers' progress to (1) ensure the consistent use of standard designs and (2) reduce construction costs and time and reduce the occurrence of change orders. The Army concurred with our recommendations.

View [GAO-20-303](#). For more information, contact Diana Maurer at maurerd@gao.gov or (202) 512-9627.

DEFENSE INFRASTRUCTURE

Army Should Assess Progress in Standardizing Designs for Facility Construction

What GAO Found

The nine Centers of Standardization (Centers) within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers undertake a number of activities designed to support each of their program objectives. Their charter includes three objectives: (1) developing and refining Centers' policies and processes; (2) assuring consistent application of the Centers' standards; and (3) monitoring execution to meet the overarching objectives and priorities of the Army Facilities Standardization Program (AFSP) and standardization process. We found that the Centers' various activities—such as conducting value engineering and life-cycle cost studies to identify possible cost savings and analyze long-term costs of new facilities—are consistent with key principles and concepts in Office of Management and Budget guidance for a disciplined capital planning process. Additionally, the post-occupancy evaluations led by the Centers are designed to evaluate whether the Army functional requirements have been met, Army standard design has been implemented, and there are any areas where the design could be improved. These evaluations support all three of the Centers' objectives by evaluating whether a design needs improvement, a facility was constructed in accordance with the approved project design, and customer needs were met.

Centers of Standardization Activities Performed during Army Military Construction Projects

Pre-Design Phase	Design Phase	Construction Phase	Post-Construction Phase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop design standards Conduct Value Engineering (VE) Studies Conduct Life Cycle Cost Analyses (LCCA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in planning meetings Review project proposal Perform design reviews Conduct additional VE studies Conduct additional LCCA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in the evaluation of change orders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in post-occupancy evaluations Update standard designs

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Centers of Standardization information. | GAO-20-303

The Army has limited performance measures to track the Centers' progress in achieving program objectives. Semi-annual meetings of the Army's Centers of Standardization Management Board (Board) enable the Army to track the Centers' progress toward their goal of developing and updating Center policies and processes (first objective of the Centers). However, GAO found that the Army lacks performance measures to assess the Centers' progress in ensuring the consistent application of Army standard designs (second objective of the Centers) and in monitoring how well the Centers meet the objectives and priorities of the AFSP and standardization process (third objective of the Centers). Specifically, the Board does not maintain, consolidate, or analyze information about how frequently the Centers participate in construction projects, or how this activity affects the program and supports AFSP objectives, such as reducing project costs, times, and change orders. Taking steps to develop and implement appropriate performance measures would enhance the Army's efforts to ensure that the Centers are meeting their program objectives.