

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-20-93](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Army requested nearly \$335 million for fiscal year 2020 to conduct marketing and advertising activities intended to increase awareness of Army service and ultimately generate leads for potential recruits.

In April 2018, AAA made recommendations in two reports to improve the contract oversight and return on investment of the Army's marketing and advertising program. Further, in May 2018 and October 2018, respectively, the Army and OPM made recommendations to improve the workforce practices and organizational structure of the program.

The John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 included a provision for GAO to review the actions taken to implement AAA's recommendations and the effects of these actions on AMRG's leadership, workforce and business practices, and return on investment.

This report assesses the extent to which the Army has taken steps to address recommendations (1) from AAA to improve the contract oversight and measurement of the effectiveness of the Army's marketing and advertising program and (2) from the Army and OPM to improve the workforce practices and organizational structure of the marketing and advertising program.

GAO analyzed Army marketing and advertising data from fiscal year 2018; reviewed marketing and advertising plans and guidance; conducted focus groups with AMRG personnel; interviewed cognizant officials; and compared the Army's efforts to GAO-identified best practices.

The Army provided technical comments, which GAO incorporated as appropriate.

View [GAO-20-93](#). For more information, contact Elizabeth Field at (202) 512-2775 or [fielde1@gao.gov](mailto:fielde1@gao.gov).

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## ARMY MARKETING

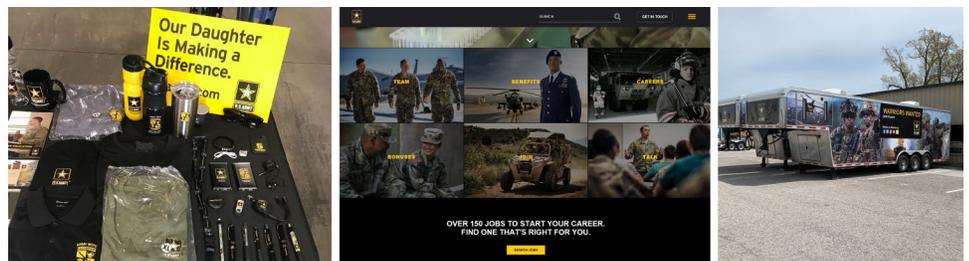
### The Army Has Taken Recent Actions That Could Improve Program Oversight, Effectiveness, and Workforce Practices

#### What GAO Found

The Army has recently taken steps to improve the oversight of its primary marketing and advertising contract and measurement of the effectiveness of its marketing and advertising program in response to two U.S. Army Audit Agency (AAA) reports. In April 2018, AAA found that the Army Marketing and Research Group (AMRG)—the component responsible for conducting the Army's national-level marketing and advertising program—did not fully evaluate the performance of its contracted advertising agency or track the effectiveness of its marketing and advertising efforts. GAO found that AMRG has taken or is taking actions to address AAA's recommendations:

- **Contract Oversight.** AMRG has developed processes for overseeing the advertising agency's performance and services. For example, AMRG developed a form program managers use to validate that proposed advertising services are not already provided through other contracts.
- **Program Effectiveness.** AMRG has taken steps in several areas related to revising its strategic marketing goals to support Army recruiting, updating how it assesses marketing and advertising effectiveness, and improving the reliability of data systems. AMRG's steps are consistent with commercial best practices that GAO identified for assessing the effectiveness of advertising, such as identifying outcomes from advertising.

#### Examples of Army Marketing and Advertising Activities, Including Promotional Items, Website, and Mobile Assets



Source: GAO. | GAO-20-93

The Army has also taken steps to improve the workforce practices and organizational structure of its marketing and advertising program in response to two workforce reviews. The two reviews—by an Army organization and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)—found that AMRG, among other things, did not have regular communication throughout its workforce and with its stakeholders, and had a poor workforce climate. AMRG took initial steps to address the reviews' recommendations. The Army then established a new office effective August 2019—the Office of the Chief Army Enterprise Marketing—to replace AMRG and to assume all marketing and advertising activities. Some of the Army's early steps to establish the new office are consistent with key practices for agency reform efforts identified previously by GAO. For example, the Army outlined a three-phased plan with specific tasks and associated dates to fully establish the new office by early 2020 consistent with the key practice to establish implementation goals and a timeline.