GAOHighlights

Highlights of GAO-22-105720, a statement for the record to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government helps veterans pursue education and employment skills in order to succeed in the civilian workforce. Congress instructed VA to develop a pilot program to provide tuition and other financial support to eligible veterans who enroll in high-technology education programs through eligible training providers. In response, VA created VET TEC, which is authorized for 5 years from April 2019, when the first contract was issued.

In addition, Congress included a provision for GAO to assess certain aspects of VET TEC. In response, GAO began work to assess VET TEC.

This statement is based on preliminary observations from GAO's ongoing review and focuses on VA's efforts to design and pilot VET TEC. To develop these preliminary findings, GAO reviewed relevant VA documents and interviewed VA officials knowledgeable about the VET TEC pilot, as well as two VET TEC training providers. In addition, VA's efforts were compared to GAO's leading practices for effective pilot design.

View GAO-22-105720. For more information, contact Dawn Locke at (202) 512-7215 or locked@gao.gov.

February 2, 2022

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT

Preliminary Observations on VA's Technology Education Pilot Program

What GAO Found

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is conducting a pilot program, called Veterans Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC), that provides tuition and housing assistance to eligible veterans who enroll in a training program offered by a VA-approved provider. Although VET TEC started in April 2019, GAO's preliminary observations indicate that VA has not yet implemented most leading practices for effective pilot program design with the exception of communicating with stakeholders (see figure).

Figure: Leading Practices for Effective Pilot Design

Establish well-defined, appropriate, clear, **Objectives** and measurable objectives. Articulate assessment methodology detailing type and source of information necessary to evaluate pilot; and methods for Assessment collecting that information, including timing and frequency. Develop a plan that defines how the information **Evaluation** collected will be analyzed, to evaluate the pilot's implementation and performance. Assess scalability of pilot design to inform a decision Scalability on whether and how to implement a new approach in a broader context. Appropriate two-way stakeholder communication and Stakeholder input should occur at all stages of the pilot. Relevant communication stakeholders should be identified and involved.

Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105720

Specifically, VA does not have documented, measurable objectives for the program. As such, VA cannot yet determine an assessment methodology or evaluation plan to measure performance of the pilot. While VA officials said that they plan to formally evaluate VET TEC towards the end of the pilot, they did not provide specific information about what the evaluation will entail. In addition, VA is not well positioned to assess the scalability of the program because VA officials may not have a complete picture of veteran or training provider demand for VET TEC.

GAO's preliminary observations found that VA has taken steps to implement one leading practice by communicating with stakeholders, including training providers, veterans, and employers. In ongoing work, GAO plans to further examine VA's efforts to design and implement the VET TEC pilot in accordance with leading practices and will make recommendations for improvement, as appropriate.