

A report to congressional committees.

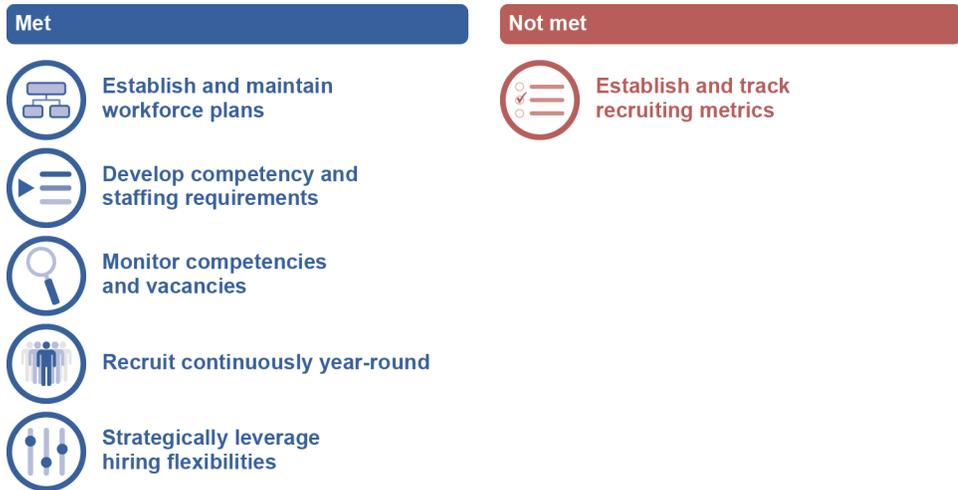
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## What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) identified over \$400 million in fiscal year 2025 for the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program. JROTC aims to develop citizenship, service to the United States, and personal responsibility in students. In 2025, there were more than 6,000 JROTC instructors across all 50 states and in DOD schools overseas.

The military services met five out of six leading practices for recruiting JROTC instructors such as monitoring instructor vacancies and recruiting year-round, but did not consistently establish or track metrics. Establishing standardized metrics would better position the military services to evaluate the effectiveness and the success of JROTC recruiting efforts across the entire JROTC program.

### Assessment of How Military Services Met Leading Practices for Recruiting Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) Instructors



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) information; GAO (icons). | GAO-26-107709

Neither DOD nor the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are positioned to determine the effectiveness of the new JROTC instructor pay scale on JROTC instructor recruiting and retention without a plan and metrics to evaluate its effectiveness. For example, JROTC instructors GAO spoke to or surveyed had mixed opinions about the new JROTC pay scale, including concerns that the pay scale was lower than the legacy pay scale in their high cost of living areas. Defining metrics to evaluate the new pay scale would provide the military services with improved oversight and visibility about the effectiveness of the new pay scale in supporting JROTC program goals, to include recruiting and retaining JROTC instructors.

## Why GAO Did This Study

The military services—Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard—under DOD and DHS are responsible for recruiting and certifying JROTC instructors. Legislation expanded eligibility requirements for JROTC instructors in fiscal year 2023 and modified the JROTC pay system in fiscal year 2024 to help the military services address challenges recruiting JROTC instructors.

The Senate Report 118-58 accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 includes two provisions for GAO to review the JROTC program. This report evaluates the extent to which 1) the military services followed leading practices for recruiting; and 2) the new JROTC instructor pay scale supports recruitment and retention needs, among other issues.

GAO interviewed agency officials and reviewed DOD and military service policy and guidance for the JROTC programs. GAO also conducted a survey of 95 JROTC instructors and received 46 responses for a response rate of 47 percent. The results of this survey are not generalizable. GAO also interviewed JROTC instructors at 28 high schools that were selected based on military service and geographic representation.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making seven recommendations, including that the military services develop an evaluation plan for JROTC instructor recruiting efforts and that DOD and DHS update guidance to better evaluate the effects of the new JROTC instructor pay scale on recruitment and retention. DOD did not comment. DHS concurred with GAO's recommendations.