

## Why GAO Did This Study

Originally authorized in 1992, the Troops-to-Teachers program was transferred from Education to DOD in 2013. In 2020, DOD canceled the program due to the realignment of agency resources. In December 2021 federal law directed DOD to reinstate the program, with a sunset date of July 1, 2025. Senate Report 117-39 included a provision for GAO to assess the program.

This report examines (1) the numbers and characteristics of program participants, (2) what is known about participant employment, and (3) how DOD assesses the program's effectiveness and implements its MOA with Education.

GAO analyzed data on program participants for fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2020. GAO interviewed officials from DOD and Education. GAO also interviewed officials from three state grantees with active grant agreements and relatively high numbers of veterans, program participants, and reported hires, and school districts within them having relatively high numbers of high-need schools, among other factors. GAO also reviewed relevant agency documentation and federal laws.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations, that DOD: use performance data to assess program effectiveness; establish a mechanism for reporting data; and fulfill its responsibilities in the MOA with Education. DOD did not concur with two and partially concurred with one of the recommendations. GAO continues to believe the recommendations are warranted as discussed in the report.

View [GAO-23-105992](#). For more information, contact Jacqueline M. Nowicki at (202) 512-7215 or [nowickij@gao.gov](mailto:nowickij@gao.gov).

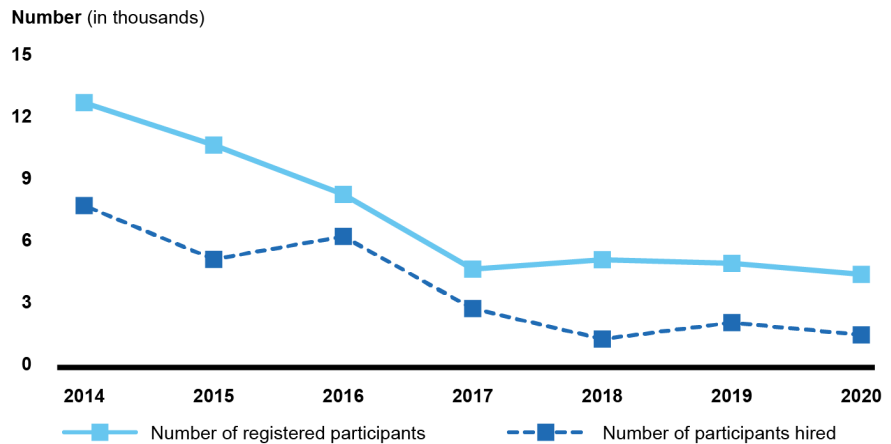
## K-12 EDUCATION

# DOD Should Assess Whether Troops-to-Teachers is Meeting Program Goals

## What GAO Found

Participation in Troops-to-Teachers—a Department of Defense (DOD) program that makes grants to states to help military personnel become teachers—generally declined from fiscal years 2014 through 2020. Reported program hires also dropped from 7,718 to 1,450 during this time (see figure). The program had higher representation of groups typically underrepresented in the K-12 teacher workforce: 72 percent of participants were men and 42 percent were non-White.

**Troops-to-Teachers Program Participants and Hires, Fiscal Years 2014-20**



Source: GAO analysis of Troops-to-Teachers program data. | GAO-23-105992

DOD established a program goal of reducing critical teacher shortages in areas with high-need schools (e.g., those enrolling a higher percentage of low-income students) and in key subjects such as math, science, and special education. However, DOD does not have complete data on the schools and subjects program participants teach because it lost access to the data when it canceled the program in 2020 and shut down its data management system in 2021. However, the program's prior annual reports show, for example, in fiscal year 2017, at least 273 participants taught in a high-need school. In addition, for fiscal year 2018 through fiscal year 2020, a total of at least 155 participants taught science, math, special education, or foreign language in a high-need school.

DOD has collected standardized performance data from grantees through their required annual performance reports since 2019, but has not evaluated the program's effectiveness in the past 5 years. In the absence of a mechanism to report data that will help assess the program's overall performance across grantees, DOD will be limited in its ability to determine if the program is fully achieving its stated goals. Although a statutorily required memorandum of agreement (MOA) states that DOD should meet with and provide program information to the Department of Education (Education), DOD does not currently do either. DOD officials said that reestablishing this relationship would be helpful. Doing so would better position DOD to identify opportunities to enhance the program's potential.