

Why GAO Did This Study

Federally funded employment and training programs play an important role in helping job seekers obtain employment. The Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services (HHS) largely administer these programs. GAO's objectives were to determine: (1) whether the number of federal employment and training programs and funding for them have changed since our 2003 report, (2) what kinds of outcome measures the programs use and what is known about program effectiveness, (3) the extent to which the programs provide similar services to similar populations, (4) the extent to which duplication may exist among selected large programs, and (5) what options exist for increasing efficiencies among these programs. To address these objectives, GAO searched federal program lists, surveyed federal agency officials, reviewed relevant reports and studies, and interviewed officials in selected states.

What GAO Recommends

Labor and HHS should disseminate information about state efforts to consolidate administrative structures and colocate services and, as warranted, identify options for increasing incentives to undertake these initiatives. In their comments, Labor and HHS agreed that they should disseminate this information.

MULTIPLE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

Providing Information on Colocating Services and Consolidating Administrative Structures Could Promote Efficiencies

What GAO Found

Due to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act), both the number of—and funding for—federal employment and training programs have increased since our 2003 report, but little is known about the effectiveness of most programs. In fiscal year 2009, 9 federal agencies spent approximately \$18 billion to administer 47 programs—an increase of 3 programs and roughly \$5 billion since our 2003 report. This increase is due to temporary Recovery Act funding. Nearly all programs track multiple outcome measures, but only five programs have had an impact study completed since 2004 to assess whether outcomes resulted from the program and not some other cause.

Almost all federal employment and training programs, including those with broader missions such as multipurpose block grants, overlap with at least one other program in that they provide similar services to similar populations. These programs most commonly target Native Americans, veterans, and youth, and some require participants to be economically disadvantaged.

Although the extent to which individuals receive the same employment and training services from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Employment Service (ES), and Workforce Investment Act Adult (WIA Adult) programs is unknown, the programs maintain separate administrative structures to provide some of the same services, such as job search assistance, to low-income individuals. Agency officials acknowledged that greater administrative efficiencies could be achieved in delivering these services, but said factors, such as the number of clients that any one-stop center can serve and one-stops' proximity to clients, particularly in rural areas, could warrant having multiple entities provide the same services.

Options that may increase efficiencies include colocating services and consolidating administrative structures, but implementation may pose challenges. While WIA Adult and ES services are generally colocated in one-stop centers, TANF employment services are colocated in one-stops to a lesser extent. Florida, Texas, and Utah have consolidated their welfare and workforce agencies, and state officials said this reduced costs and improved services, but they could not provide a dollar figure for cost savings.

An obstacle to further progress in achieving greater administrative efficiencies is that little information is available about the strategies and results of such initiatives. In addition, little is known about the incentives states and localities have to undertake such initiatives and whether additional incentives may be needed.