

## Why GAO Did This Study

From fiscal years 2002 through 2011, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) distributed approximately \$20.3 billion to four grant programs: the State Homeland Security Program, Urban Areas Security Initiative, Port Security Grant Program, and Transit Security Grant Program. These programs are intended to enhance the capacity of state and local first responders to prevent, respond to, and recover from a terrorism incident. GAO was asked to evaluate the extent to which: (1) overlap and other factors among these programs could impact the risk of duplication; (2) mechanisms exist that enhance coordination and reduce the risk of duplication and how they are being implemented; and (3) DHS has implemented performance measures to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs. To address these objectives, GAO reviewed grant guidance and funding allocation methodologies. GAO also interviewed DHS officials, and grant administrators in five urban areas—selected because they receive funding from all four grant programs in this review—about grant processes and program challenges, among other things.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DHS: (1) collect project information with the level of detail needed to identify any unnecessary duplication; (2) explore opportunities for enhanced internal coordination in grant administration; and (3) revise its plan to ensure the timely implementation of performance measures to assess the effectiveness of these grants. DHS concurred with all recommendations.

View [GAO-12-303](#). For more information, contact David C. Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or [MaurerD@gao.gov](mailto:MaurerD@gao.gov).

## HOMELAND SECURITY

# DHS Needs Better Project Information and Coordination among Four Overlapping Grant Programs

## What GAO Found

Multiple factors contribute to the risk of duplication among four FEMA grant programs that GAO studied—the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP), Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI), Port Security Grant Program, and Transit Security Grant Program. Specifically, these programs share similar goals, fund similar projects, and provide funds in the same geographic regions. Further, DHS's ability to track grant funding, specific funding recipients, and funding purposes varies among the programs, giving FEMA less visibility over some grant programs. Finally, DHS's award process for some programs bases decisions on high-level, rather than specific, project information. Although GAO's analysis identified no cases of duplication among a sample of grant projects, the above factors collectively put FEMA at risk of funding duplicative projects. FEMA officials stated that there is a trade-off between enhancing management visibility and reducing administrative burden, but also recognized that FEMA should use more specific project-level information for award decisions and have taken initial steps towards this goal. For example, FEMA is considering how to better use existing grant information and has also begun to phase in a grants management system that includes an explicit goal of collecting project-level information. However, FEMA has not determined all of its specific data requirements. As FEMA determines these requirements, it will be important to collect the level of information needed to compare projects across grant programs. Given the limitations in currently collected information, FEMA would benefit from collecting information with greater detail as this could help FEMA better position itself to assess applications and ensure that it is using its resources effectively.

FEMA, as well as state and local stakeholders, have taken steps to improve coordination in administering the four programs, but FEMA could take further action. For example, FEMA does not internally coordinate application reviews across the four programs. Specifically, the programs are managed by two separate FEMA divisions which review grant applications for each program separately and there is no process in place to ensure that application information is shared among the programs during this process. Thus, it is difficult for FEMA to identify whether grant monies are being used for the same or similar purposes. FEMA could benefit from further examining its internal grant coordination process, while considering the large volume of grant applications it must process.

FEMA introduced some performance measures for the UASI and SHSP programs in 2011 that add value, but these measures do not assess program effectiveness. FEMA has efforts under way to develop outcome measures—that will focus on program effectiveness—for each of the four grant programs in this review, but has not completed these efforts. Further, the FEMA project plan that guides these efforts does not provide information on what measures will be implemented for each grant program and when this will occur. A revised project plan that includes more specific schedule information and accurate implementation timelines could help guide these efforts. DHS also has several efforts under way to measure the collective effectiveness of its grant programs in achieving shared program goals, but these efforts are recent and ongoing. Thus, it is too soon to evaluate the extent to which these initiatives will provide FEMA with the information it needs to determine whether these grant programs are effectively improving the nation's security.