



Highlights of [GAO-12-517](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

Since fiscal year 2005, approximately \$33 billion has been appropriated to DOJ for the administration of more than 200 federal financial assistance solicitations, such as grants, that support criminal justice activities at the state and local levels. Pursuant to section 21 of Public Law 111-139, this report addresses the extent to which (1) overlap exists across DOJ grant programs and if it contributes to the risk of unnecessary duplication in grant awards, (2) DOJ has taken steps to reduce overlap and the potential for unnecessary duplication in its grants awards, and (3) DOJ uses monitoring and assessment to determine grant program effectiveness and uses the results to enhance its grant programs. GAO assessed DOJ's fiscal year 2010 announcements of grant award funding; categorized them according to key justice areas to identify any overlap; and interviewed DOJ officials about their grant making practices, systems, and assessment methods. Further, GAO interviewed officials from 11 states receiving DOJ grants, selected for the levels and types of funding received. Though not generalizable, the interviews provided their perspectives on funding.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends, among other things, that the department assess its grant programs for overlap, ensure its comprehensive study of DOJ grant management systems also includes an analysis of steps necessary to harmonize business processes, and examine its mix of grant monitoring and program assessment activities. DOJ agreed with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-12-517](#). For more information, contact David C. Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or [maurerd@gao.gov](mailto:maurerd@gao.gov).

July 2012

## JUSTICE GRANT PROGRAMS

### DOJ Should Do More to Reduce the Risk of Unnecessary Duplication and Enhance Program Assessment

## What GAO Found

The Department of Justice's (DOJ) grant programs overlap across 10 justice areas contributing to the risk of unnecessarily duplicative grant awards for the same or similar purposes. For example, GAO reviewed all 253 grant award announcements that DOJ's Office of Justice Programs (OJP), the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), and the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office published on their websites for fiscal year 2010 and found overlap across the justice areas. For example, 56 of DOJ's 253 grant solicitations—or more than 20 percent—were providing grant funds for victim assistance and related research. GAO also found instances where applicants used the same or similar language to apply for funding from these overlapping programs. In one example, a grant recipient applied for, and received, funding from both OJP's Internet Crimes Against Children program and the COPS Office's Child Sexual Predator Program to provide training for cyber crime investigations and establish an Internet safety program. In some instances, DOJ may deem it appropriate for distinct grant programs to serve one goal, or for one community or grantee to benefit from multiple streams of grant funding. However, DOJ generally lacks visibility over the extent to which its grant programs overlap and thus is not positioned to minimize the risk of potential, unnecessary duplication before making grant awards.

DOJ has taken some actions that address overlap in its grant programs; for example, by requesting statutory authorization in some instances to consolidate programs that are similar. However, DOJ has not conducted an assessment of its grant programs to systematically identify and reduce overlap. Doing so would enable DOJ to identify program areas where overlap may be desirable and where a consolidation of programs may be more efficient. Further, OJP and OVW use a separate grants management system than the COPS Office uses, limiting their ability to share information on the funding they have awarded or are preparing to award to a recipient. According to COPS Office officials, its mission and grant management processes are unique enough to necessitate a separate system. However, OJP officials told GAO that its system has been and can be modified with minimal investment to accommodate different grant processes. DOJ has initiated a study to assess the feasibility, costs, and benefits of unifying the systems among other options. By ensuring that such a study accounts for the effort necessary to harmonize departmental grant processes, DOJ could ensure that variations in such processes do not encumber system unification.

DOJ's Office of Audit, Assessment, and Management (OAAM) oversees monitoring of grantees' compliance and conducts grant program assessments to gauge program effectiveness. GAO found that OAAM's program assessments yield richer information than its monitoring reports because they identify improvement areas. OAAM officials believe additional assessments could be beneficial. They also said they lacked resources to conduct more, but had not conducted a feasibility analysis to confirm this. By OAAM examining its mix of monitoring and assessment activities, including the costs and benefits of current resource allocations, it could better ensure continuous improvement in grant programs.