

Highlights of [GAO-13-456T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

From fiscal years 2002 through 2012, the Congress appropriated about \$39 billion to a variety of DHS preparedness grant programs to enhance the capabilities of state and local governments to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks and other disasters. DHS allocated more than \$21.3 billion through four of the largest preparedness programs—the Port Security Grant Program, the State Homeland Security Program, the Transit Security Grant Program, and the Urban Areas Security Initiative.

In February 2012, GAO identified factors that contribute to the risk of FEMA potentially funding unnecessarily duplicative projects across the four grant programs. In March 2011, GAO reported that FEMA has faced challenges in developing and implementing a national preparedness assessment, which inhibits its abilities to effectively prioritize preparedness grant funding. This testimony updates GAO's prior work and describes DHS's and FEMA's progress over the past year in (1) managing preparedness grants and (2) measuring national preparedness by assessing capabilities. This statement is based on prior products GAO issued from March 2011 to February 2012 and selected updates in March 2013. To conduct the updates, GAO analyzed agency documents and interviewed FEMA officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO has made recommendations to DHS and FEMA in prior reports. DHS and FEMA concurred with these recommendations and have actions underway to address them.

View [GAO-13-456T](#). For more information, contact David C. Maurer at (202) 512-8777 or maurerd@gao.gov.

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NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS

FEMA Has Made Progress in Improving Grant Management and Assessing Capabilities, but Challenges Remain

What GAO Found

Officials in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)—a component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—have identified actions they believe will enhance management of the four preparedness programs GAO analyzed; however, FEMA still faces challenges. In February 2012, GAO found that FEMA lacked a process to coordinate application reviews and made award decisions with differing levels of information. To better identify potential unnecessary duplication, GAO recommended that FEMA collect project-level information and enhance internal coordination and administration of the programs. DHS concurred. The fiscal year 2013 President's Budget, proposed the establishment of the National Preparedness Grant Program (NPGP), a consolidation of 16 FEMA grant programs into a single program. However, Members of Congress raised concerns about the NPGP and have not approved the proposal. As a result, FEMA officials reported that the agency was drafting new guidance for the execution of the NPGP based on pending Congressional direction on fiscal year 2013 appropriations. If approved, and depending on its final form and execution, the NPGP could help mitigate the potential for unnecessary duplication and address GAO's recommendation to improve internal coordination. In March 2013, FEMA officials reported that FEMA intends to start collecting and analyzing project-level data from grantees in fiscal year 2014; but has not yet finalized data requirements or fully implemented the data system to collect the information. Collecting appropriate data and implementing project-level enhancements as planned would address GAO's recommendation and better position FEMA to identify potentially unnecessary duplication.

FEMA has made progress addressing GAO's March 2011 recommendation that it develop a national preparedness assessment with clear, objective, and quantifiable capability requirements and performance measures; but continues to face challenges developing a national preparedness system that could assist FEMA in prioritizing preparedness grant funding. For example, in March 2012, FEMA issued the first *National Preparedness Report*, which describes progress made to build, sustain, and deliver capabilities. FEMA also has efforts underway to assess regional, state, and local preparedness capabilities. In April 2012, FEMA issued guidance on developing Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessments (THIRA) to self-assess regional, state, and local capabilities and required states and local areas receiving homeland security funds to complete a THIRA by December 2012. However, FEMA faces challenges that may reduce the usefulness of these efforts. For example, the *National Preparedness Report* notes that while many programs exist to build and sustain preparedness capabilities, challenges remain in measuring progress over time. According to the report, in many cases, measures do not yet exist to gauge performance, either quantitatively or qualitatively. Further, while FEMA officials stated that the THIRA process is intended to develop a set of national capability performance requirements and measures, such requirements and measures have not yet been developed. Until FEMA develops clear, objective, and quantifiable capability requirements and performance measures, it is unclear what capability gaps currently exist and what level of federal resources will be needed to close such gaps. GAO will continue to monitor FEMA's efforts to develop capability requirements and performance measures.