



Highlights of [GAO-06-549T](#), testimony before the Special Committee on Aging, U.S. Senate

SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Labor Has Made Progress Implementing Older Americans Act Amendments of 2000, but Challenges Remain

Why GAO Did This Study

The aging of the baby boom generation and increased life expectancy pose serious challenges for our nation. Older adults often must re-enter the workforce in order to remain self-sufficient. The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is the only federal program that is specifically designed to assist low-income older adults by providing part-time community service jobs and training to prepare for employment. Since passage of the 2000 Older Americans Act Amendments (OAA), SCSEP has also increasingly focused on promoting economic self-sufficiency through placement in unsubsidized employment. In 2005, Congress appropriated about \$439 million to serve about 100,000 older workers. Administered by the Department of Labor (Labor), SCSEP is implemented through 69 grantees, including 13 national organizations and 56 state and territorial agencies.

The Chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging asked GAO to (1) determine what effect the OAA Amendments have had on the distribution of SCSEP funds to national and state grantees, (2) describe the progress Labor has made in implementing the enhanced performance accountability system, and (3) identify the challenges faced by national and state grantees in managing the SCSEP program.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-549T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Sigurd R. Nilsen, (202) 512-7215 or nilsens@gao.gov.

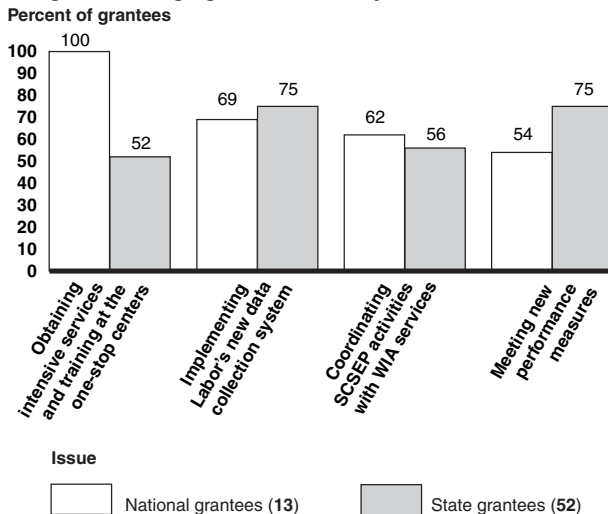
What GAO Found

The 2000 OAA Amendments have had little impact on the distribution of funds between national and state grantees, with national grantees continuing to receive approximately 78 percent of the funding and states about 22 percent. However, the distribution of funding among national grantees has changed substantially as a result of Labor's 2002 open competition for the national grants portion of SCSEP funding.

Labor has taken steps to establish an enhanced performance accountability system for SCSEP, but has yet to implement some features. For example, Labor introduced the new performance measures required by the OAA Amendments, but program year 2005—which ends on June 30, 2006—is the first year that grantees will be held accountable for meeting their goals. Labor has implemented an early version of a data collection system to track grantee performance, but the final Internet-based version is not yet available.

Changes to the SCSEP eligibility criteria and difficulties coordinating with the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) one-stop system have posed challenges to SCSEP grantees. Labor modified some eligibility criteria to target limited program funds to individuals it believes are most in need of SCSEP services. However, grantees expressed concern that these changes had made it more difficult for them to meet their enrollment goals. Finally, GAO found that despite provisions in the OAA Amendments to strengthen connections between SCSEP and WIA, problems persist in coordinating with WIA providers and obtaining intensive and training services for older workers at one-stop centers.

Challenges to Managing SCSEP Cited by Grantees



Source: GAO analysis of survey data.