EDUCATION'S DATA MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

Significant Progress Made, but Better Planning Needed to Accomplish Project Goals

What GAO Found

Through its Performance-Based Data Management Initiative (PBDMI), Education has consolidated and defined much of the data it anticipates collecting under a unified system. Education reports that many data definitions have been agreed to and data redundancies eliminated. PBDMI officials also said that to date, however, it has not been able to resolve all remaining differences among the program offices that manage many of the different data collections.

PBDMI officials have conducted extensive outreach to the states to advance the initiative. The outreach to states involved regional conferences, two rounds of site visits, and according to officials, $100,000 in grants to most states to help offset their costs. State data providers responding to our survey expressed general satisfaction with the department's outreach, but some were not optimistic that the initiative would ease their reporting burden or enhance their own analytic capacity. The states were not able to produce enough data during test submissions in 2003 and 2004 to enable data quality verification or phasing out the department's multiple data collections. With regard to the lack of sufficient data from many states, Education officials said some lack the technical capacity needed to produce new performance data requirements. State data providers reported having competing demands for their time and resources, given other federal initiatives.

Education officials have decided to proceed with the undertaking and have developed a draft interim strategy for moving forward. But they currently have no formal plan for how they would overcome obstacles such as the lack of state data and other technical and training delays to the initiative.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that Education (1) develop a strategy to help states provide quality data, (2) develop a process within the department to resolve critical, outstanding issues, and (3) develop a clear plan for completing final aspects of PBDMI, including specific time frames and indicators of progress toward the initiative's goals. Education agreed with our recommendations.


To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact David Bellis at (415) 904-2272 or bellisd@gao.gov.