Why GAO Did This Study

In the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Congress required the U.S. Department of Education (Education) to make education reform grants to states. Education subsequently established the Race to the Top (RTT) grant fund and awarded almost $4 billion to 12 states related to developing effective teachers and leaders, improving the lowest-achieving schools, expanding student data systems, and enhancing standards and assessments.

This report, prepared in response to a mandate in the act, addresses (1) actions states took to be competitive for RTT grants; (2) how grantees plan to use their grants and whether selected nongrantees have chosen to move forward with their reform plans; (3) what challenges, if any, have affected early implementation of states' reform efforts; and (4) Education's efforts to support and oversee states' use of RTT funds.

GAO analyzed RTT applications for 20 states, interviewed state officials, visited 4 grantee states, analyzed states' planned uses of grant funds, and interviewed Education officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Education (1) facilitate information sharing among grantees on additional promising practices and (2) provide nongrantee states with related information. Education agreed with the first recommendation and partially agreed with the second; GAO modified that recommendation to clarify how Education can provide that information to nongrantee states.

View GAO-11-658 or key components. For more information, contact George A. Scott at (202) 512-7215 or scottg@gao.gov.