Why GAO Did This Study

Many state and local government crime labs continue to have backlogs of requests for crime scene DNA analysis, which may include sexual assault kits, despite DOJ awarding nearly $1 billion since 2004 through the CEBR grant program to enhance lab capacity and reduce backlogs. Additionally, questions have been raised about potential improper connections among those who profit from CEBR grants—such as private labs and DNA equipment vendors—and those who advocate for CEBR funding.

This report examines, among other things, (1) what is known about the amount of backlogged DNA evidence at state and local government labs; (2) the extent to which OJP measures CEBR grant performance; and (3) the extent to which OJP has designed controls to identify conflicts of interest related to CEBR grants. GAO reviewed CEBR grantee data on DNA evidence backlogs from 2011-2017 (the most recent years of comparable data). GAO reviewed documentation on CEBR performance and controls related to conflicts of interest, transparency in grantee procurement, and lobbying. GAO also reviewed relevant reports and studies, and interviewed officials from DOJ.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations. OJP should (1) consistently document CEBR goals, (2) revise CEBR performance measures, (3) document its designation of confidential financial disclosure certifiers, and (4) clarify guidance for lobbying requirements for CEBR grantees. DOJ concurred with all four recommendations.

View GAO-19-216. For more information, contact Gretta L. Goodwin at (202) 512-8777 or goodwing@gao.gov.