EPA GRANTS TO TRIBES

Additional Actions Needed to Effectively Address Tribal Environmental Concerns

What GAO Found

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded over $985 million to Indian tribes through 43 different grant programs from fiscal years 2014 through 2019, according to agency data from EPA’s Integrated Grants Management System. For example, EPA awarded grants for the Indian Environmental General Assistance Program—which assists tribes in developing their environmental programs—and for programs to prevent air and water pollution directly to tribes.

Tribes used EPA grants to support a variety of activities. For example, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe in Colorado told GAO it has used EPA grant funding to monitor methane emissions and help reduce this greenhouse gas. The equipment on the tribe’s vehicle, shown below, identifies methane leaks from broken pipes. The Jicarilla Apache Nation in New Mexico uses an EPA grant to educate its community and others across the country about the dangers of radon—a naturally occurring radioactive gas that can cause cancer—and how to mitigate exposure. Jicarilla Apache officials told GAO that radon exposure is a priority for the tribe because of above-average cancer rates.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making five recommendations to EPA, including that EPA update guidance on PPGs. EPA agreed with three recommendations and disagreed with two, noting that it believes it has already taken actions that address these recommendations. GAO continues to believe the recommendations are warranted, as discussed in the report.

View GAO-21-150. For more information, contact J. Alfredo Gomez at (202) 512-3841 or gomezj@gao.gov or Anna Maria Ortiz at ortiza@gao.gov.