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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-347](#), a report to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2000, Congress created general aviation entitlement grants to provide funding up to \$150,000 per fiscal year to individual general aviation airports. These grants fund capital improvements and repair projects. GAO was asked to (1) assess the amount of funding airports used, (2) identify the types of projects undertaken, and (3) convey suggestions made by interested parties to improve the grants in preparation for the reauthorization of the legislation in 2003.

AVIATION FINANCE

Implementation of General Aviation Entitlement Grants

What GAO Found

By the end of fiscal year 2002, most fiscal year 2001 general aviation entitlement grant funds had been accepted by the airports to which they were apportioned. However, less than half of the fiscal year 2002 entitlement grant funds had been accepted by those airports at the end of fiscal year 2002. The remaining portions of unused entitlement funds for the 2 fiscal years were carried over to use in the following years—up to 3 years. In both fiscal years, the percentage of entitlement grant funds accepted varied widely by state. Larger general aviation airports accepted a greater percentage of their entitlement grants than small airports for both fiscal years.

In fiscal 2001, general aviation airports used these funds primarily to undertake landing area construction projects—runways, taxiways, and aprons. In addition, the airports used the funds to undertake pavement maintenance; airfield lighting, weather observation systems, and navigational aids; and planning projects. These four categories constituted over 75 percent of all projects undertaken with these funds.

While most state aviation officials, selected airport managers, and FAA officials we spoke with indicated these entitlement grants were useful, they also suggested some changes. The most common concerned the amount of funding. Several state aviation officials and some selected airport managers indicated that the \$150,000 annual maximum amount per airport was not adequate to complete projects. However, state officials expressed concerns that increasing the entitlement amount could hinder the states' ability to address their own aviation priorities because any increase would proportionately decrease the states' apportionments. The majority of the selected airport managers indicated that, without these grants, their airports would have been unable to undertake the projects. Other suggestions concerned increasing the amount of time to use the grants, broadening the categories of eligible projects, and using an alternative to FAA's National Plan of Integrated Airports Systems as the basis for funding eligible projects.

A general aviation aircraft in flight over a general aviation airport runway.



Source: Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-347.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Gerald Dillingham at (202) 512-2384 or www.dillingham@gao.gov.