

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-13-555](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Labor received \$500 million from the Recovery Act to help create, better understand, and provide training for jobs within the energy efficiency and renewable energy industries, commonly referred to as “green jobs.” Since 2009, Labor has also “greened” existing programs and funded additional green jobs training grants and other efforts.

In light of the amount of funding targeted to green programs within Labor, GAO examined: (1) what is known about the objectives and coordination of Labor’s green jobs efforts, (2) what type of green jobs training grantees provided and how selected grantees aligned their training to meet employers’ green jobs needs, (3) what is known about program outcomes and what challenges, if any, grantees faced in implementing their programs, and (4) what Labor has done to assist and monitor its green jobs grantees. To conduct this work, GAO reviewed relevant federal laws and regulations; surveyed selected offices within Labor using two questionnaires—one for directly-funded green jobs efforts and one for other efforts; interviewed Labor officials and 11 out of 103 green jobs training grantees; and analyzed relevant Labor documents and data.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that Labor identify lessons learned from the green jobs training programs to enhance its ability to implement such programs in emerging industries. Labor agreed with our recommendation.

View [GAO-13-555](#). For more information, contact Andrew Sherrill at (202) 512-7215 or sherrilla@gao.gov.

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EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Labor’s Green Jobs Efforts Highlight Challenges of Targeted Training Programs for Emerging Industries

What GAO Found

Of the \$595 million identified by Labor as having been appropriated or allocated specifically for green jobs activities since 2009, approximately \$501 million went toward efforts with training and support services as their primary objective, with much of that funding provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act). Because the Recovery Act directed federal agencies to spend funds quickly and prudently, Labor implemented a number of high-investment green jobs efforts simultaneously. As a result, in some cases, Recovery Act training programs were initiated prior to a full assessment of the demand for green jobs, which presented challenges for grantees. While Labor’s internal agencies initially communicated with each other and with other federal agencies after the Recovery Act was passed, most Recovery Act grants have ended or are winding down.

Labor created its green jobs definitional framework to provide local flexibility, and grantees we interviewed broadly interpreted Labor’s framework to include any job that could be linked, directly or indirectly, to a beneficial environmental outcome. Labor’s training data show most participants were trained in construction or manufacturing. While the findings of our site visits are not generalizable, all grantees we interviewed said they had worked closely with local employers to align their training program with the green skills needs of local employers. Most grantees we interviewed also told us they had incorporated green elements into existing training programs aimed at traditional skills, such as teaching weatherization as part of a carpentry training program.

The outcomes of Labor’s green jobs training programs remain uncertain, in part because data on final outcomes were not yet available for about 40 percent of grantees, as of the end of 2012. Analysis of grantees with final outcome data shows they collectively reported training slightly more individuals than they had projected, but job placements were at 55 percent of the target. Training-related job placement rates remain unknown because Labor’s Office of Inspector General (OIG) found these data unreliable. Grantees we interviewed were generally positive about Labor’s green job training programs, but most said they had faced challenges during implementation, including: (1) a lack of reliable green jobs labor market information, (2) insufficient time to meet grant requirements, (3) knowledge gaps surrounding green skills and changing energy policies, and (4) difficulty placing participants into green jobs, primarily due to the overall poor economy.

Labor has provided technical assistance and taken steps to monitor green jobs training grantees through on-site monitoring visits and quarterly reviews. During these visits and reviews, Labor officials assessed grantee performance, such as by comparing reported program outcomes, including job placements, to targeted performance levels. However, Labor provided only limited guidance on how to document reported job placements. Labor officials required grantees with lower than projected performance levels to implement corrective action plans. In addition, Labor officials told us they have taken steps to improve the quality of grantee reported data, such as by forming an internal workgroup to identify ways to improve the technical assistance they provide to grantees on reporting performance outcomes.