

Why GAO Did This Study

The overall goal of technical assistance is to enhance the delivery of agency programs and help ensure grantee compliance. GAO was asked to review issues related to technical assistance for grants at Education, ACF, and ETA.

This report (1) describes how Education, ACF, and ETA provide technical assistance to grantees; and (2) examines to what extent these agencies evaluate the technical assistance. For this review, GAO selected 10 grant programs from the three agencies based on fiscal year 2018 funding information and the purpose of the grant.

GAO reviewed documents and interviewed agency officials about the technical assistance provided, the provider and recipient of technical assistance, and the amount obligated in fiscal year 2018 for the 10 grant programs reviewed. GAO also reviewed documents and interviewed agencies about the extent to which they evaluated technical assistance, whether they gathered feedback from the recipients of technical assistance, and whether feedback was included in the evaluations for the 10 grant programs reviewed.

View [GAO-20-580](#). For more information, contact Michelle Sager at (202) 512-6806 or SagerM@gao.gov.

GRANTS MANAGEMENT

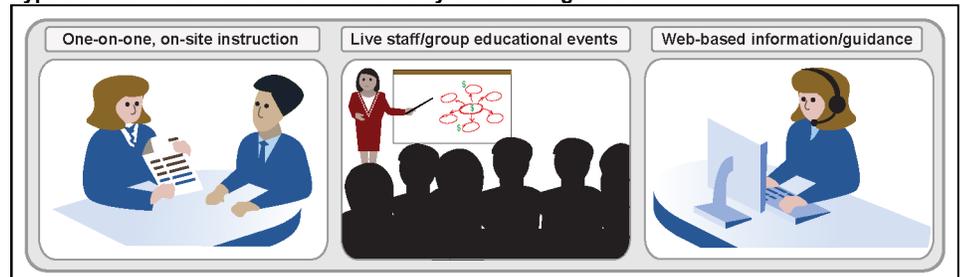
Agencies Provided Many Types of Technical Assistance and Applied Recipients' Feedback

What GAO Found

Technical assistance refers to programs, activities, and services provided by federal agencies to strengthen the capacity of grant recipients and to improve their performance of grant functions. Technical assistance can improve the performance or management of grant program recipients. Technical assistance includes the improvement of grant outcomes, grant management, grantee compliance, project monitoring and evaluation, and interactions with stakeholders.

The technical assistance provided by the selected agencies—the Department of Education (Education), the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA)—is designed to align with the requirements of each agency's grant programs and the individual grantee's needs. The types of technical assistance provided by agencies varied and included a range of delivery methods shown below.

Types of Technical Assistance Provided by Selected Agencies



Source: GAO analysis of information from selected agencies. | GAO-20-580

Education tailors its approach to provide technical assistance to grantees based on recipients' needs and their efforts to obtain technical assistance. According to ACF, some grant programs have extensive, dedicated technical assistance that is grant specific, while other grant programs share technical assistance resources provided by multiple technical assistance centers. ACF's technical assistance can be based on program office oversight of the grantees that includes financial and internal control reviews and site visits. For ETA, state and local grantees administer ETA-funded programs throughout the country and technical assistance plays a role in ensuring these programs' successful implementation. According to ETA officials, technical assistance activities are based on grant program objectives.

The 10 grant programs GAO reviewed evaluated technical assistance, collected feedback from recipients of the technical assistance, and incorporated feedback into technical assistance. For example, a School Safety National Activities evaluation of one of its national centers included targets for multiple performance measures and the actual performance for each measure. These measures included the percentage of milestones achieved and the percentage of technical assistance and dissemination products and services deemed to be high quality by an independent review panel.