

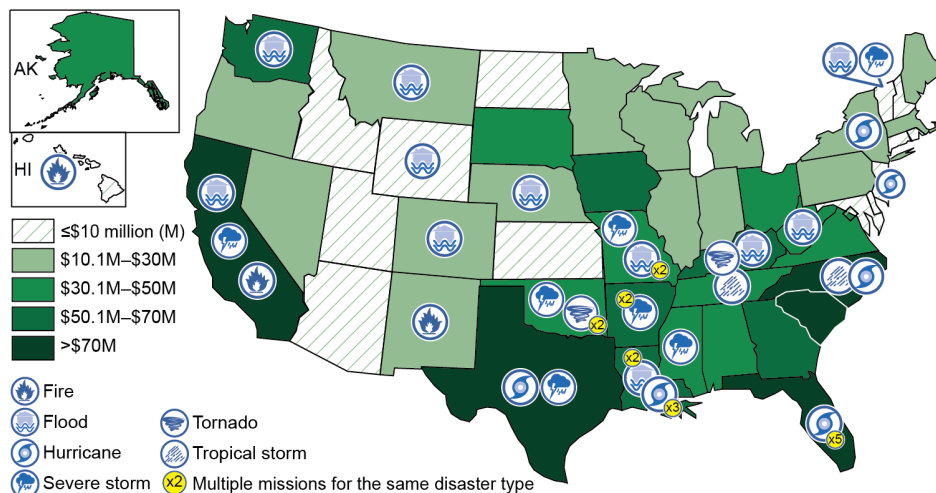
A report to congressional committees.

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What GAO Found

The Economic Development Administration's (EDA) role in disaster recovery involves awarding grants and coordinating federal agencies through the Economic Recovery Support Function (RSF). In fiscal years 2014–2024, EDA awarded about \$2.1 billion in disaster recovery grants, which primarily funded infrastructure and construction projects, such as mitigating flood risks to commercial and industrial areas. In 2013–2025, EDA also coordinated 45 Economic RSF missions following severe storms, floods, and other disasters.

EDA Awarded \$2.1 Billion in Disaster Recovery Grants (Fiscal Years 2014–2024) and Coordinated 45 Economic Recovery Missions (2013–2025)



Sources: GAO analysis of Economic Development Administration (EDA) and Federal Emergency Management Agency data. | GAO-26-107742

EDA has incorporated several leading practices for interagency collaboration to coordinate the Economic RSF, including having clear roles and responsibilities. Stakeholders in disaster-affected communities highlighted the value and recent performance of the Economic RSF but noted challenges in its capacity to provide assistance. EDA is implementing a required disaster recovery office and team that can help address this challenge. However, EDA has not developed a way for the RSF to ensure accountability by monitoring and communicating progress toward its strategic outcomes, such as increasing the capacity of local stakeholders to implement economic recovery strategies. Fully adopting the leading practices would enhance accountability and help demonstrate progress.

EDA's 26 performance measures incorporated several key attributes of successful measures but could not be used to assess whether its disaster recovery work accomplished its intended outcomes. Using measures that better assess the performance of its disaster recovery work would help EDA determine if it has achieved the outcomes Congress intended, such as mitigating flood risk. In addition, the reliability of the measures is unknown because EDA suspended the steps it previously took to validate grantee-reported data on job creation or retention. By resuming procedures to validate these data, EDA would improve confidence that its reported outcomes accurately reflect progress toward agency goals and provide useful information for decision-making.

Why GAO Did This Study

EDA, part of the Department of Commerce, has taken on an increasingly important role in disaster recovery. In fiscal years 2018–2025, Congress provided EDA with \$3.2 billion in disaster supplemental appropriations. Senate Report 118-62 includes a provision for GAO to evaluate EDA's role in disaster recovery.

Among its objectives, this report examines the extent to which EDA's coordination of the Economic RSF has incorporated leading practices for interagency collaboration, how EDA has invested in disaster-affected communities, and the extent to which EDA's performance measures incorporated key attributes of successful measures.

GAO analyzed EDA documentation, performance measures, and data on appropriations, grant awards, disbursements, and RSF missions generally in 2013–2025, as available; interviewed officials from EDA and five other federal agencies; and conducted site visits to seven EDA grant projects. GAO interviewed stakeholders from state and local governments and regional economic development organizations in three disaster-affected communities (Florida, Hawaii, and Oklahoma), selected to reflect variation in disaster type and region.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations, including that EDA implement a way to assess the Economic RSF's outcomes, implement disaster recovery performance measures, and implement procedures to validate grantee-reported performance data. EDA generally agreed with the recommendations.