

Additional Collaboration with Other Agencies Could Reduce Risks Associated with Overlap

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A report to congressional committees

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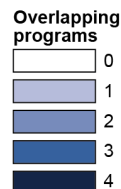
What GAO Found

Federal support for economic development is fragmented. GAO identified 140 federal economic development programs administered by 13 agencies. GAO surveyed these programs, 131 of which reported total obligations of about \$60 billion in fiscal year 2024.

Further, these programs overlap. To assess overlap, GAO reviewed four selected Economic Development Administration (EDA) programs and 29 selected economic development programs administered by other federal agencies. All 29 programs overlapped with at least one of the EDA programs in at least one of three aspects—activities, beneficiaries, or purpose. Further, 20 programs overlapped with at least one of the EDA programs in all three aspects.

Selected EDA and Other Federal Economic Development Programs with Overlap in Activities, Beneficiaries, and Purpose, as of May 2026

Agency (number of overlapping programs)	EAA	Public Works	Tech Hubs	Build to Scale
Department of Agriculture (4)				
Department of Defense(1)				
Department of Energy (1)				
Department of Health and Human Services (1)				
Department of Housing and Urban Development (3)				
Department of Interior(1)				
Department of Transportation (4)				
Environmental Protection Agency (1)				
National Science Foundation (1)				
Small Business Administration (3)				



EAA: Economic Adjustment Assistance EDA: Economic Development Administration

Source: GAO analysis of agency information and survey responses. | GAO-26-107826

Note: Using survey responses from federal officials, GAO compared the four selected EDA programs with 29 selected federal economic development grant programs to determine whether they reported funding one or more of the same activities, serving similar beneficiaries, or having similar purposes.

Overlap can create both benefits and challenges. For example, communities can use similar programs in different phases of projects but may find it difficult to navigate requirements across multiple agencies. Agencies can share expertise in overlapping programs but may find it challenging to avoid duplicative funding.

EDA's actions to manage the effects of overlap between programs have been limited. Of the 29 programs noted above, five reported collaborating with EDA in fiscal year 2024, the last full year at the time the survey was developed. In addition, EDA asks applicants to report funding from other federal agencies, but it does not verify the accuracy of this information prior to awarding funding.

The Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended, requires EDA to coordinate with other federal agencies carrying out economic development activities. EDA officials said their current approaches meet this requirement. But most of EDA's efforts to collaborate with other agencies are inactive and EDA does not have plans to resume them. Coordinating with other agencies on programs that overlap with EDA programs would help EDA limit the risk of duplicating efforts and avoid wasting resources. Further, incorporating GAO's leading practices for interagency collaboration would help EDA better leverage the benefits of overlap, such as shared resources and information, with other agencies.

Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government supports economic development grant programs to help regional and local communities improve job opportunities and promote economic growth. EDA is the only federal agency focused solely on economic development. The Senate Appropriations Committee report accompanying the Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2024, includes a provision for GAO to evaluate potential overlap and duplication among EDA grants and other federal grant programs.

This report examines (1) fragmentation of federal economic development programs across agencies and overlap in activities and beneficiaries; (2) overlap and duplication among selected EDA grant programs and other selected federal grant programs; and (3) EDA actions to manage the effects of overlap among selected grant programs.

GAO identified federal economic development programs using assistance listing data from SAM.gov. GAO reviewed the four EDA programs that received the most funding in fiscal years 2023 and 2024 and selected and surveyed 30 other programs with similar purposes to the EDA programs. Among the 29 programs that responded, GAO evaluated overlap and duplication with the four EDA programs. GAO also interviewed organizations representing grantees and economic developers and officials from EDA and eight other agencies.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that EDA resume and improve its interagency collaboration efforts to manage the risks and leverage the benefits of overlap with other federal economic development programs. EDA agreed with GAO's recommendation.