

GAO
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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-04-245](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Weed and Seed program, within the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP), aims to prevent and reduce violent crime in targeted neighborhoods, but it cannot optimize its effectiveness without sound management practices. In 1999, GAO made four recommendations to the Executive Office for Weed and Seed (EOWS) to improve the program's management, including (1) developing adequate internal controls to fully document decisions, (2) improving program monitoring, (3) developing criteria for determining when sites have become self-sustaining and when to reduce or withdraw program funding, and (4) developing additional performance measures. GAO did this study to assess progress in implementing these recommendations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Attorney General require the Assistant Attorney General for OJP to ensure that the Executive Office for Weed and Seed fully implement the intent of GAO's previous recommendations.

In commenting on a draft of this report, the Department of Justice agreed to strengthen controls on maintaining documentation and take further steps to define and apply criteria for self-sustainability. Justice believes that the studies currently under way will help develop outcome measures.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-245.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Laurie Ekstrand at (202) 512-8777 or Ekstrandl@gao.gov.

GRANTS MANAGEMENT

Despite Efforts to Improve Weed and Seed Program Management, Challenges Remain

What GAO Found

Despite some progress toward addressing GAO's recommendations aimed at improving program management, GAO's review shows that EOWS has not fully implemented the management improvement recommendations GAO made in 1999. First, although EOWS has revised its internal controls to require that significant qualification and funding decisions be documented and readily available in the central grant files for review, EOWS has not always ensured that its policies and procedures were followed, for the grant files GAO reviewed. Second, EOWS reported taking a number of actions intended to improve program monitoring, such as mandating the timely submission of progress reports and adequate recording of site visits as GAO recommended. Nonetheless, GAO found that while EOWS was able to provide such documentation before its review ended, documentation was not available in some of the central grant files GAO reviewed. Thus, the documentation was not readily available for external reviewers, as required by OJP policies and GAO's internal control standards. Third, GAO found that EOWS still lacks fully developed criteria to determine when sites become self-sustaining and when to reduce or withdraw Weed and Seed funds because of the level of sustainability, even though sustainability is a central goal of the program. At the time of GAO's review, no site's funding had been reduced or withdrawn because of sustainability during the 13 years of the program's existence. Fourth, EOWS has not developed outcome performance measures that can be used to adequately track progress toward program outcomes of the Weed and Seed program. While EOWS has initiated studies on how to develop performance measures, at the time of GAO's review, none of these studies had been completed. Without requirements to monitor improvements and assign accountability, progress will be difficult to achieve.

A sign displayed in front of a school in a Weed and Seed site.



Source: EOWS and GAO.