



Highlights of [GAO-06-870](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Between January 2004 and December 2005, more than 30,000 mass layoffs involving 50 or more workers occurred in the United States, causing more than 3.4 million workers to lose their jobs. National emergency grants expand services to laid-off workers when other state and federal programs are insufficient to meet their needs. GAO assessed (1) whether Labor has shortened grant award times since GAO's 2004 report and was meeting own timeliness goal, (2) the uniformity of the program data that Labor now collects, and (3) Labor's oversight of national emergency grant projects. To address these objectives, GAO analyzed information for program year 2004 and the first 2 quarters of 2005 and compared it with data collected for program years 2000-2002.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that Labor take steps to (1) extend its electronic application system to capture the entirety of the award process through final approval and issuance of award letters, (2) solicit information from users of the application system to guide future refinements to this system, (3) distribute more complete guidance and tools for monitoring grant projects, and (4) explore cost-effective ways to disseminate information to states and local areas to help them learn about promising practices for managing national grant projects. Labor generally agreed with these recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-870.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Sigurd Nilsen at (202) 512-7215 or nilsens@gao.gov.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY GRANTS

Labor Has Improved Its Grant Award Timeliness and Data Collection, but Further Steps Can Improve Process

What GAO Found

We found that Labor's new electronic application system has, on average, shortened award processing time and most national emergency grants were awarded within Labor's goal of 30 working days as measured by GAO—from the time the application is submitted to the issuance of the award letter. In program year 2004, Labor averaged 25 working days to award grants, in contrast to program years 2000-2002, when it averaged 50 working days. Moreover, in program year 2004, Labor awarded 70 percent of all grants within 30 working days, in contrast to 38 percent for program years 2000-2002. Although Labor has improved the overall timeliness for awards, award times ranged from 1 to 90 working days and varied by type of grant. For example, disaster grants were awarded, on average, in 16 days, but regular grants were awarded, on average, in 45 days. Delays in obtaining funds adversely impacted some grantees' ability to provide services. Also, we found that Labor's electronic application system and its timeliness goal did not capture every phase of the award process. In addition, users of this system reported some technical problems.

Labor has taken steps to improve its two main sources of data for assessing how grant funds are used—the quarterly progress reports and the Workforce Investment Act Standardized Record Data (WIASRD) database. Labor introduced a new electronic quarterly report system in program year 2004. Since then, grantees have generally been submitting uniform and consistent information. Also, our review of available WIASRD data for program year 2004 shows that at least 92 percent of states that received national emergency grants included information on these grants in their WIASRD submissions.

Labor's regional offices oversee each project to track performance and compliance with program requirements by conducting various monitoring activities, including approving program operating plans, reviewing quarterly progress reports, and conducting site visits. However, Labor has not issued complete, program-specific guidance that would standardize monitoring practices across regions, states, and local areas and help ensure consistent practices. In addition, officials in most of the states and local areas we visited said that Labor does not regularly help disseminate information about how states and local areas are managing their national emergency grant projects.

Average Time Taken to Award Grants (Program Years 2000-2002 and 2004)

