

## Why GAO Did This Study

Information sharing among federal, state, and local officials is crucial for preventing acts of terrorism on U.S. soil. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), through its Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A), has lead federal responsibility for such information sharing. GAO was asked to assess (1) actions I&A has taken to enhance the usefulness of intelligence products it provides to state and local partners, (2) other services I&A provides to these partners, and (3) to what extent I&A has defined how it intends to share information with these partners. To conduct this work, GAO reviewed relevant statutes, strategies, best practices, and agency documents; contacted a nongeneralizable sample of 10 fusion centers—where states collaborate with federal agencies to improve information sharing—based on geographic location and other factors; and interviewed I&A officials. This is a public version of a sensitive report that GAO issued in September 2010. Information DHS deemed sensitive has been redacted.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that I&A establish milestones for identifying the information needs of state and local partners, report to these partners on how I&A used feedback they provided to enhance intelligence products, identify and document priority programs and activities related to its state and local mission, and establish time frames for developing additional related performance measures. DHS agreed with these recommendations.

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## INFORMATION SHARING

### DHS Could Better Define How It Plans to Meet Its State and Local Mission and Improve Performance Accountability

## What GAO Found

To enhance the usefulness of intelligence products it provides to state and local partners, I&A has initiatives underway to identify these partners' information needs and obtain feedback on the products, but strengthening these efforts could support the development of future products. As of August 2010, I&A had finalized information needs—which are owned and controlled by the states—for 9 of the 50 states. I&A was working with remaining states to identify their needs, but it had not established mutually agreed upon milestones for completing this effort, in accordance with program management principles. Working with states to establish such milestones and addressing any barriers to identifying their needs could better assist states in the timely completion of this process. In addition, I&A has begun issuing a new customer feedback survey to recipients of its products and plans to begin analyzing this feedback to determine the value of the products, but it has not developed plans to report the results of its analyses to state and local partners. Reporting the results to these partners and actions it has taken in response could help I&A demonstrate that the feedback is important and makes a difference, which could encourage state and local partners to provide more feedback and ultimately make I&A's products and services more useful.

In addition to intelligence products, I&A provides a number of other services to its state and local partners—primarily through fusion centers—that have generally been well received by the center officials GAO contacted. For example, I&A has deployed more than 60 intelligence officers to fusion centers nationwide to assist state and local partners in areas such as obtaining relevant intelligence products and leveraging DHS capabilities to support their homeland security missions. I&A also facilitates access to information-sharing networks disseminating classified and unclassified information, provides training directly to center personnel, and operates a 24-hour service to respond to state and local requests for information and other support.

Historically, I&A has focused its state and local efforts on addressing statutory requirements and responding to I&A leadership priorities, but it has not yet defined how it plans to meet its state and local information-sharing mission by identifying and documenting the specific programs and activities that are most important for executing this mission. Best practices show that clearly identifying priorities among programs and activities is important for implementing programs and managing results. Further, I&A's current performance measures do not allow I&A to demonstrate the expected outcomes and effectiveness of programs and activities that support state and local partners, as called for in program management principles. I&A officials said they are planning to develop such measures, but had not established time frames for doing so. Defining and documenting how I&A plans to meet its state and local information-sharing mission and establishing time frames for developing additional performance measures could better position I&A to make resource decisions and provide transparency and accountability over its efforts.