

GAO@100 Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-22-104313](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

During the 2020 federal elections, the EAC administered \$400 million in grant funds provided by the CARES Act to help states prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CARES Act included a provision for GAO to report on its ongoing monitoring and oversight efforts related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report (1) describes information that the EAC provided to state and local election officials for conducting elections during the pandemic, (2) describes how the EAC administered CARES Act grant funding, and (3) examines the extent to which the EAC assessed its CARES Act grants administration. GAO reviewed information on the EAC's website on conducting elections during the pandemic and interviewed EAC officials regarding processes for developing and distributing this information. GAO obtained and reviewed the EAC's data on CARES Act grant expenditures, grant guidance for states on expending and reporting funding, and materials the EAC used to review state reports. GAO also interviewed EAC officials regarding grant administration procedures.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the EAC assess its administration of CARES Act grants to document any lessons learned and, to the extent practicable, implement applicable lessons. The EAC identified ongoing and planned steps to assess and implement lessons learned from its administration of CARES Act grants.

View [GAO-22-104313](#). For more information, contact Rebecca Gambler at (202) 512-8777 or gablerr@gao.gov.

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ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

Assessment of Lessons Learned Could Improve Grants Administration

What GAO Found

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC)—established to serve as a national clearinghouse of information on election administration, among other responsibilities—shared information on a range of topics to help state and local election officials conduct elections during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, it shared information on in-person voting, absentee/mail voting, and contingency planning. It also established National Poll Worker Recruitment Day and developed graphics as part of a related public awareness campaign (see fig.).

U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) National Poll Worker Recruitment Day Graphic



Source: EAC. | [GAO-22-104313](#)

The EAC administered CARES Act grants by obligating funds and overseeing how states spent the funds, in part by reviewing states' grant reports to check how states spent funds to respond to the pandemic. It also reported information to Congress on how states spent approximately \$326 million in grant funds, and to a committee overseeing the response to the pandemic on the specific activities undertaken by states using these funds.

The EAC identified and addressed some issues with its administration of CARES Act grants. For example, while administering CARES Act grants, the EAC revised required grant reporting forms to more clearly align with requirements and to address difficulties some states were having with narrative questions on the forms. The EAC and GAO identified other issues with administration of the grants. For example, GAO found issues with how states and the EAC categorized expenditures involving nearly 20 percent of the total reported spending nationwide. As a result, in the EAC's annual grant expenditure report to Congress, states' expenditures for similar or the same items or activities could be included under multiple categories, making it difficult to consistently determine, by category, how states spent the grant funds.

However, the EAC has not yet assessed its administration of CARES Act grants and documented lessons learned. According to EAC officials, assessing the administration of these grants could identify lessons learned beyond those that officials identified while administering the grants. Additionally, the EAC could document and implement any lessons learned. This could help improve the EAC's administration of ongoing or future grant programs, particularly in the event of a future emergency.