

Why GAO Did This Study

In today's interconnected world, many career fields—such as diplomacy, national security, and business—need individuals with knowledge about world languages and cultures. To address these areas of needed expertise—both at the federal level as well as in the education, business, and nonprofit sectors—the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, authorized the FLAS and NRC grant programs. GAO was asked to review how these programs support employment in areas of need.

Among other issues, this report addresses how selected grantee universities describe encouraging employment in areas of need in their grant applications, and what Education's most recent survey of FLAS graduates shows about respondents' employment outcomes.

GAO reviewed relevant application narratives from a non-generalizable sample of 27 NRC grantee universities (25 of which were also FLAS grantees) and grouped employment activities described by grantees into nine categories. These grantees comprised about 23 percent of all fiscal year 2022 NRC and FLAS grantee universities. GAO also analyzed the results from Education's 2019 survey of FLAS graduates, the most recent available. Due to the differences in the structure of the FLAS and NRC programs, Education does not administer a similar survey to NRC grantees. In addition, GAO reviewed relevant federal laws and regulations and program documents, and interviewed officials from Education.

View [GAO-23-105971](#). For more information, contact Melissa Emrey-Arras at (617) 788-0534 or emreyarrasm@gao.gov.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Employment Information for Key Grant Programs that Foster Expertise in World Languages and Cultures

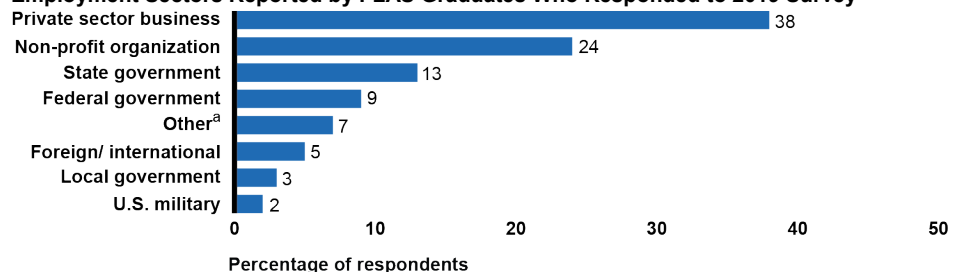
What GAO Found

The Department of Education's Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship and National Resource Center (NRC) grant programs fund education in the languages and cultures of world areas (e.g. Africa, East Asia) in different ways. While the FLAS program provides universities with grants that they then use to fund fellowships for individual students, the NRC program supports the operation of academic centers at the university level. NRCs fund activities such as curriculum development, language instruction, and outreach to community partners (e.g., government agencies or K-12 schools). GAO reviewed descriptions in applications from 27 grantee universities about how their NRC and/or FLAS grants would encourage employment in areas of need and identified the following activities as the most common:

- Helping students develop skills in languages (23 of 27), such as Arabic or Chinese, that are needed in the federal government or other sectors.
- Offering career services (21 of 27), such as hosting workshops about job-seeking skills (e.g., resume writing) and publicizing relevant internships.
- Helping students develop knowledge about world areas (21 of 27), such as equipping them with cultural competencies to navigate the global economy.
- Collaborating with community partners (20 of 27), such as helping to develop a Global Workforce Skills Certificate for community colleges.

Because FLAS awards fellowships to individuals, Education periodically surveys program graduates about their employment. GAO analyzed responses from the most recent survey (1,991 respondents who graduated between 2010 and 2018 out of 4,728 survey recipients). Of the 1,260 respondents who reported their employment sector, more reported that they worked in the private or non-profit sectors than in government (see figure below). About 46 percent of 1,881 survey question respondents reported that they had consulted or volunteered in one of a variety of employment sectors, most commonly for a domestic (about 10 percent) or international (about 8 percent) non-profit organization.

Employment Sectors Reported by FLAS Graduates Who Responded to 2019 Survey



Source: GAO analysis of 2019 Department of Education survey data about Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) graduates. | GAO-23-105971

Note: The percentages are approximate and add up to more than 100 due to rounding. Of the 1,991 respondents, 1,260 answered the survey question about employment sectors.

^aEducation did not define the "other" category in its FLAS survey.