



December 2021

DRUG CONTROL GRANTS

ONDCP Should Document Its Process for Identifying Duplication, Overlap, and Fragmentation



A Century of Non-Partisan Fact-Based Work

GAO@100 Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-22-104666](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

According to the most recent provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a predicted record high of about 100,300 drug overdose deaths occurred during the 12-month period ending in April 2021. The federal drug control budget for fiscal year 2021 was nearly \$36 billion and the federal government has enlisted more than a dozen agencies to address drug misuse and its effects. ONDCP is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the nation's national drug control policy and leading the national drug control efforts.

The SUPPORT Act included a provision for GAO to examine ONDCP's tracking of federally funded drug control grants. This report addresses the extent to which ONDCP (1) took steps to provide the public with information on federal drug control grants, (2) took steps to identify barriers when applying for drug control grants, and (3) facilitated federal efforts to identify DOF in drug control grants.

To answer these questions, GAO analyzed ONDCP documents on its efforts to identify drug control grants, any barriers to these grants, and its DOF assessments. GAO also analyzed information that ONDCP posted publicly on the 46 drug control grant programs it identified. In addition, GAO interviewed ONDCP officials about these efforts.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that ONDCP document its process or procedures to identify DOF in drug control grants, and ensure that it includes certain elements, such as how grants are selected for review. ONDCP concurred with the recommendation.

View [GAO-22-104666](#). For more information, contact Triana McNeil at (202) 512-8777 or mcnelt@gao.gov

December 2021

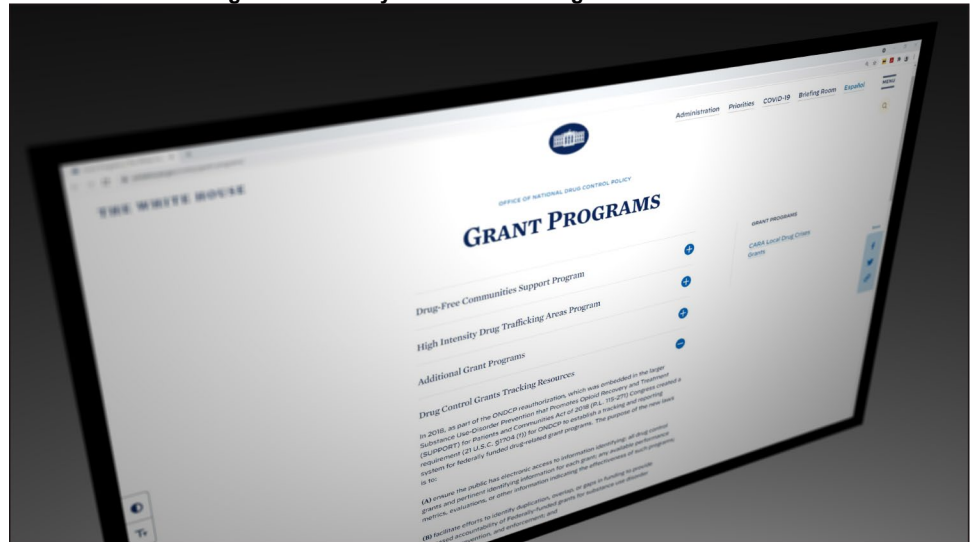
DRUG CONTROL GRANTS

ONDCP Should Document Its Process for Identifying Duplication, Overlap, and Fragmentation

What GAO Found

As the lead for the nation's drug control efforts, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) posted drug control grant information to its website and is taking steps to ensure it is complete. Specifically, ONDCP collects grant information from relevant federal agencies on an annual basis. For 2020, ONDCP posted this information, which included grant funding opportunities, past awards, and performance information on the grant programs. However, GAO identified at least seven drug control grant programs with publicly available grant performance information that were not posted. Subsequently, ONDCP reviewed and posted the additional information and plans to take steps to validate the completeness of the performance information going forward.

Office of National Drug Control Policy Website with Drug Control Grant Resources



Source: Office of National Drug Control Policy. | GAO-22-104666

ONDCP also requires relevant federal agencies to annually report barriers that potential grantees face when applying for drug control grants. ONDCP collected this information in November 2020, and officials stated that they plan to share this information with agencies to help the agencies reduce any systemic barriers.

ONDCP officials stated they met the Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities Act (SUPPORT Act) requirement to facilitate the identification of duplication, overlap, and fragmentation (DOF) among drug control grants by assessing for DOF during their annual budget review process. However, we could not verify ONDCP's actions to assess for DOF because ONDCP has not documented its process. Federal standards for internal controls call for documentation to demonstrate the design, implementation, and operating effectiveness of an entity's internal control system. Documenting the process for identifying DOF will help ONDCP ensure that it retains organizational knowledge and can communicate and demonstrate the effectiveness of its internal control system to identify DOF.

Contents

Letter		1
	Background	5
	ONDCP Posted Drug Control Grant Information on Its Website	8
	ONDCP Identified Barriers Grant Applicants Face and Plans to Share Corrective Actions	15
	ONDCP Has Not Documented Its Duplication, Overlap, and Fragmentation Review Process	16
	Conclusions	19
	Recommendation for Executive Action	19
	Agency Comments	19
Appendix I	Comments from the Office of National Drug Control Policy	21
Appendix II	GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments	22
Related GAO Products		23
Table		
	Table 1: Examples of Reported Grant Barriers and Corresponding Corrective Actions National Drug Control Agencies Reported Taking to Address Them	15
Figures		
	Figure 1: Definitions of Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication	8
	Figure 2: Screenshot of Grants.gov Prefiltered Search for Active Drug Control Grant Opportunities	11
	Figure 3: Screenshot of USASpending.gov Prefiltered Search for Past Awarded Drug Control Grant Opportunities	12

Abbreviations

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DOF	duplication, overlap, and fragmentation
ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy
SUPPORT Act	Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities Act

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December 8, 2021

The Honorable Gary C. Peters
Chairman
The Honorable Rob Portman
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
The Honorable James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform
House of Representatives

Drug misuse—the use of illicit drugs and the misuse of prescription drugs—has been a persistent and long-standing public health issue in the United States. It has resulted in significant loss of life and a negative effect on society and the economy, including billions of dollars in costs related to health care, criminal justice, reduced workplace productivity, education, and human services. These costs are borne by individuals who misuse drugs, as well as their families and employers; private businesses and nonprofit organizations; and federal, state, and local governments. In recent years, the federal government has spent billions of dollars—including funding for grants—and has enlisted more than a dozen agencies to address drug misuse and its effects. For instance, the federal drug control budget for fiscal year 2021 was nearly \$36 billion with broad involvement across federal agencies.

In March 2020, we determined that national efforts to prevent, respond to, and recover from drug misuse is an area that will be included on our 2021 High Risk List.¹ The opioid crisis has been considered a public health emergency since its declaration in October 2017 by the then Acting Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported a concerning acceleration of the increase in drug overdose deaths from March 2020 to

¹Our High Risk list, updated at the start of each new Congress, is a list of programs and operations that are “high risk” because they are vulnerable to waste, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement, or in need of transformation. For more information about the High Risk List, see <https://www.gao.gov/high-risk-list>.

May 2020, coinciding with the implementation of widespread mitigation measures for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Moreover, according to the most recent provisional data available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics, a predicted record high of about 100,300 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States during the 12-month period ending in April 2021.² This represents about a 29 percent increase compared with the 12-month period ending in April 2020.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), a component of the Executive Office of the President, is responsible for coordinating and overseeing the implementation of the nation's national drug control policy and leading the national drug control efforts, including coordinating with National Drug Control Program agencies.³ ONDCP's mission is to reduce substance use disorder and its consequences by coordinating the nation's drug control policy through the development and oversight of the National Drug Control Strategy and the National Drug Control Budget.⁴

The Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities Act (SUPPORT Act) generally requires the ONDCP Director or the head of an agency designated by the ONDCP Director, in coordination with the Secretary of

²The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics provisional counts are adjusted to account for reporting delays. Provisional data are underreported, due to incomplete data. These data represent the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's predicted number of overdose deaths. Opioid-related overdose deaths made up three-quarters of the approximately 100,300 total drug overdose deaths.

³21 U.S.C. § 1702. Pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 1701(11), the term "National Drug Control Program agency" generally means "any agency (or bureau, office, independent agency, board, division, commission, subdivision, unit, or other component thereof) that is responsible for implementing any aspect of the National Drug Control Strategy, including any agency that receives Federal funds to implement any aspect of the National Drug Control Strategy." There are nearly 20 National Drug Control Program agencies, as identified by ONDCP that have responsibilities for drug prevention, treatment, and law enforcement activities.

⁴According to ONDCP, the National Drug Control Strategy uses the latest evidence and research to promote public health and public safety approaches that address substance use disorder, reduce the consequences associated with it, and help Americans recover from substance use disorder. The National Drug Control Budget means funding reported in the ONDCP *National Drug Control Strategy: Budget and Performance Summary*. We have previously assessed ONDCP's National Drug Control Strategy; see GAO, *Drug Control: The Office of National Drug Control Policy Should Develop Key Planning Elements to Meet Statutory Requirements*, [GAO-20-124](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 18, 2019).

Health and Human Services, track federally funded drug control grants, among other things.⁵ In particular, the SUPPORT Act requires the ONDCP Director, or the head of an agency designated by the ONDCP Director, in coordination with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, to track federally funded grant programs to:

- ensure the public has electronic access to information identifying (1) all drug control grants and pertinent identifying information for each grant; and (2) any available performance metrics, evaluations, or other information indicating the effectiveness of such programs;
- identify barriers that may impede applicants in the grant application process; and
- facilitate efforts to identify duplication, overlap, or gaps in funding to provide increased accountability of federally funded grants for substance use disorder treatment, prevention, and enforcement, among other things.⁶

Pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 1704(f)(4), we examined ONDCP's implementation of this tracking of federally funded drug control grants. This report examines the extent to which ONDCP has (1) taken steps to provide the public with information on federally funded drug control grants, including available performance information; (2) taken steps to identify barriers that applicants face in applying for drug control grants; and (3) facilitated federal efforts to identify duplication, overlap, or fragmentation in drug control grants.

To address the first objective, on the extent to which ONDCP took steps to provide the public with information on federally funded drug control grants, we reviewed ONDCP documents, including guidance for National Drug Control Program agencies to report drug control grants to ONDCP. We also met with ONDCP officials to further understand ONDCP's processes and procedures for tracking grants and making information public, as well as ONDCP's methodology for determining which grants it provides information on to the public and its plan for keeping this information current. We assessed the extent to which ONDCP posted information on its website about drug control grants, including any available performance information, as required by the SUPPORT Act. Our

⁵Pub. L. No. 115-271, § 8217, 132 Stat. 3894, 4119-4125 (Oct. 24, 2018). See 21 U.S.C. § 1704(f).

⁶See 21 U.S.C. § 1704(f).

review included the 46 grant programs ONDCP identified in November 2020. We also assessed the grant information that ONDCP posted publicly on its website against applicable key practices for transparently reporting government data.⁷

To address the second objective, on the extent to which ONDCP took steps to identify barriers that applicants face in applying for drug control grants, we reviewed ONDCP guidance to National Drug Control Program agencies for reporting barriers and information that ONDCP received from these agencies on grant barriers and corrective actions. We categorized the grant barriers based on information that agencies included in their 2020 grant tracking reports. We also met with ONDCP officials to further understand how ONDCP gathered information on identified grant barriers and plans to use that information to help agencies address any grant barriers that may impede applicants from applying for drug control grants.

To address the third objective, on the extent to which ONDCP facilitated federal efforts to identify duplication, overlap, or fragmentation (DOF) in drug control grants, we reviewed ONDCP documentation related to processes for tracking grants and its budget review process, which ONDCP officials told us is their primary mechanism to identify DOF. We examined information that ONDCP received from National Drug Control Program agencies on ways to reduce DOF in drug control grants. We

⁷GAO, *Open Data: Treasury Could Better Align USAspending.gov with Key Practices and Search Requirements*, [GAO-19-72](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 13, 2018). We determined that one of the five key practices—“Engage with users”—did not apply because ONDCP is not the owner or administrator of specific data or webpages that ONDCP provides links to on its own website. Rather, ONDCP compiled grant information on its website from other entities. We found the remaining four key practices—(1) Provide free and unrestricted data; (2) Provide data in useful formats; (3) Fully describe the data; and (4) Facilitate data discovery for all users—were applicable. Additionally, two actions within the “Fully describe the data” practice did not apply because ONDCP is not the owner or administrator of specific data or webpages. We focused on the information on ONDCP’s website because this was within ONDCP’s control. As such, other websites, such as National Drug Control Program agency websites with performance information, were not included in our assessment of key practices. We compared the available and past grant information that ONDCP posted on its website with the applicable key practices for transparently reporting government data. We used the following definitions to evaluate what ONDCP posted against the key practices: (1) generally aligned—ONDCP took steps to provide the public with drug control grant information that aligned with all or most of the applicable actions within a key practice; (2) partially aligned—ONDCP took steps to provide the public with drug control grant information that aligned with some of the applicable actions within a key practice; and (3) not aligned—ONDCP took steps to provide the public with drug control grant information, but those steps did not align with any of the applicable actions within a key practice.

also met with ONDCP officials to further understand the steps they take to facilitate the identification of DOF among drug control grants, including using their budget process. We compared ONDCP's management of its DOF assessment with federal standards for internal control related to documentation.⁸ These control standards state that documentation is required to demonstrate the design, implementation, and operating effectiveness of an entity's internal control system.⁹

We conducted this performance audit from January 2021 through December 2021 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

U.S. Drug Control Policy

ONDCP was established by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 as a component of the Executive Office of the President, and its Director is to assist the President in the establishment of policies, goals, objectives, and priorities for the National Drug Control Program.¹⁰ ONDCP is responsible for the development of the National Drug Control Strategy and for working with National Drug Control Program agencies to develop and implement U.S. drug control policy across the federal government.¹¹ Federal drug control efforts span a range of activities across National Drug Control Program agencies, including efforts to prevent illicit drug use and prescription drug misuse, treat drug use disorders, enforce drug laws,

⁸GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO-14-704G](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 2014).

⁹Specifically, these control standards state that effective documentation assists in management's design of internal control by establishing and communicating the who, what, when, where, and why of internal control execution to personnel. Further, documentation also provides a means to retain organizational knowledge and mitigate the risk of having that knowledge limited to a few personnel, as well as a means to communicate that knowledge, as needed, to external parties, such as external auditors.

¹⁰Pub. L. No. 100-690, 102 Stat. 4181. See 21 U.S.C. § 1703(b)(1).

¹¹The President is required to submit to Congress a National Drug Control Strategy no later than the first Monday in February following the year in which the term of the President commences, and every 2 years thereafter. The last strategy was issued in February 2020. See 21 U.S.C. § 1705(a)(2).

and stop the importation of illicit drugs into the United States. We have reported more detailed information on the development and implementation of U.S. drug control policy.¹² For example, in December 2019, we found that ONDCP had not developed and documented key planning elements to help it meet new requirements for the National Drug Control Strategy and recommended they do so. In June 2021, ONDCP took actions to address this recommendation.¹³

Grants are one way the federal government addresses national priorities by leveraging nonfederal parties, including state and local governments, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations. Drug control grants, as defined by ONDCP, are funding opportunities, either discretionary or nondiscretionary, whose parent programs are part of budgets submitted to ONDCP for the National Drug Control Budget.

ONDCP's Drug Control Budget Review and Certification Process

The Director of ONDCP is also responsible for developing a consolidated National Drug Control Program budget proposal for each fiscal year, which is designed to implement the National Drug Control Strategy and inform Congress and the public about total federal spending on drug control activities.¹⁴ As part of this effort, ONDCP is to collaborate with National Drug Control Program agencies to develop methodologies for their drug control budget submissions to ONDCP. Specifically, agencies are to quantify their financial commitment to drug control activities using a variety of methods and data, such as grants data, to estimate the drug-related portion of their budget. The Director of ONDCP is then required to review each National Drug Control Program agencies' drug budget proposal; determine whether each budget proposal is adequate to implement the objectives of the National Drug Control Strategy with respect to the department, agency, or program; and submit certain

¹²For example, see [GAO-20-124](#); GAO, *Drug Misuse: Sustained National Efforts Are Necessary for Prevention, Response, and Recovery*, [GAO-20-474](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 26, 2020); and GAO, *Drug Policy: Preliminary Observations on the 2019 National Drug Control Strategy*, [GAO-19-370T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 7, 2019). Our Related Products at the end of this report includes additional reports on U.S. drug policy, ONDCP, and drug control grant programs.

¹³[GAO-20-124](#).

¹⁴21 U.S.C. § 1703(c).

information to the appropriate congressional committees on the National Drug Control Program agencies' budget proposal, among other things.¹⁵

Duplication, Overlap, and Fragmentation

As previously mentioned, the SUPPORT Act generally requires the Director of ONDCP to facilitate efforts to identify duplication, overlap, or gaps for federally funded drug control grant programs.¹⁶ We have previously reported on federal programs across the government with fragmented, overlapping, or duplicative goals or actions and ways to reduce costs or boost revenue and we continue to do so annually.¹⁷ In doing so, we developed and use standard definitions for duplication, overlap, and fragmentation, as shown in figure 1. Additionally, we have developed a guide for analysts and policymakers to help them identify and evaluate instances of DOF and to identify options to reduce or better manage associated negative effects.¹⁸ For example, DOF could potentially result in inefficiencies or other negative effects, such as beneficiaries receiving similar benefits from multiple programs and wasteful spending.

¹⁵See 21 U.S.C. § 1703(c)(2)-(3). Additionally, see [GAO-20-124](#) for more information.

¹⁶See 21 U.S.C. § 1704(f)(1)(B).

¹⁷GAO, *Duplication & Cost Savings* (Washington, D.C.) accessed September 13, 2021, <https://www.gao.gov/duplication-cost-savings>.

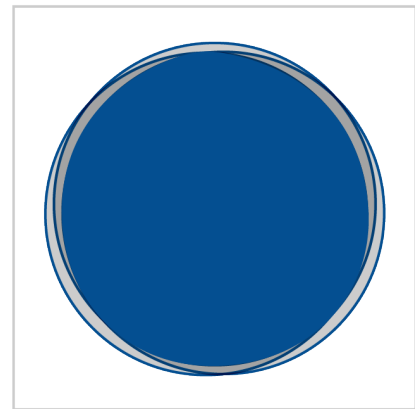
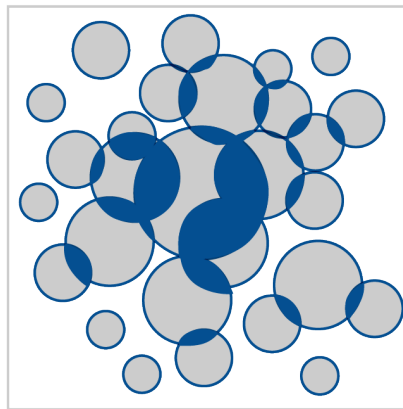
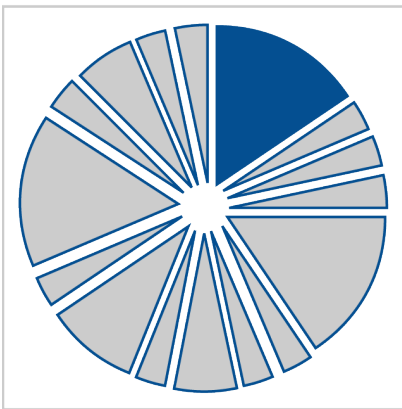
¹⁸GAO, *Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication: An Evaluation and Management Guide*, [GAO-15-49SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 14, 2015).

Figure 1: Definitions of Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication

Fragmentation refers to those circumstances in which more than one federal agency (or more than one organization within an agency) is involved in the same broad area of national need and opportunities exist to improve service delivery.

Overlap occurs when multiple agencies or programs have similar goals, engage in similar activities or strategies to achieve them, or target similar beneficiaries.

Duplication occurs when two or more agencies or programs are engaged in the same activities or provide the same services to the same beneficiaries.



Source: GAO. | GAO-22-104666

ONDCP Posted Drug Control Grant Information on Its Website

ONDCP Posted Grant Information That Generally Aligned with Key Practices for Transparently Reporting Data

ONDCP posted drug control grant information to its website that generally aligned with key practices for transparently reporting government data. In October 2019, ONDCP established guidance for National Drug Control Program agencies to identify and report information on drug control

Grants.gov and USASpending.gov

- Grants.gov is a website the public can use to search and apply for federal grant opportunities. An agency will publish funding opportunity announcements on Grants.gov, as required by Office of Management and Budget guidance. These announcements generally include information such as eligible applicants, a description of the grant, the name of the agency administering the grant, the date the announcement was posted, and the date applications are due.
- USASpending.gov is a website accessible to the public that lists information about federal spending, such as grant amounts, as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 and amended by the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014. Federal agencies submit grant and other award data at least twice a month to be published on USASpending.gov. The website generally includes information such as the grant award identification number, the recipient, and the award amount.

Sources: Grants.gov and USASpending.gov. | GAO-22-104666

grants to ONDCP annually through a “grant tracking report.”¹⁹ More specifically, ONDCP required the agencies to provide a complete list of all drug control grants, including unique assistance listing numbers assigned to each grant, program names, and whether the notification and award of each grant was made available on Grants.gov or USASpending.gov.²⁰ (For more information about Grants.gov and USASpending.gov, see sidebar.)

Additionally, ONDCP required the agencies to report performance metrics, evaluations, and any other information that documents the effectiveness of the grants or activities. ONDCP officials told us they require annual reporting to ensure they capture all updates or changes to drug control grants at least once a year, though they also asked agencies to report updates to them as they occur.

ONDCP first collected the grant tracking reports in November 2020 from the seven National Drug Control Program agencies that administered drug control grants.²¹ ONDCP then posted grant information on the prior presidential administration’s website. In January 2021, this website was archived, and ONDCP began revising its website to reflect the change in priorities of the new administration. In August 2021, in response to the

¹⁹ONDCP officials told us they initially coordinated with the National Drug Control Program agencies, particularly the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services, to develop an approach to address the SUPPORT Act grant tracking requirements in the most efficient manner, leveraging existing systems. ONDCP then developed the guidance to the agencies for reporting grant information, in which ONDCP defined federally funded grant programs as any grant-making program included in the National Drug Control Program budget. Additionally, ONDCP defined drug control grants as funding opportunities, either discretionary or nondiscretionary, whose parent programs are part of budgets that are included by ONDCP in the National Drug Control Program Budget (which may also include cooperative agreements).

²⁰Assistance listing numbers were formerly known as Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance numbers. Assistance listings provide a full listing, with detailed public descriptions of federal programs that provide grants, loans, scholarships, insurance, and other types of assistance awards. Each listing is assigned an assistance listing number—a unique, 5-digit number. According to ONDCP officials, assistance listings and Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance numbers are synonymous and may be used interchangeably.

²¹In addition to these seven National Drug Control Program agencies, ONDCP also administers drug control grants. In 2020, these seven agencies and ONDCP administered 46 drug control grant programs.

SUPPORT Act's grant tracking provisions, ONDCP updated its website²² to include the following drug control grants tracking resources:

- **Available grants.** ONDCP created a prefiltered link to Grants.gov that is filtered to include real-time active funding opportunities for drug control grants (see fig. 2).²³
- **Past grants.** ONDCP created a prefiltered link to USASpending.gov that is filtered to include previously awarded drug control grants (see fig. 3).²⁴
- **Performance information.** ONDCP consolidated links to National Drug Control Program agency websites that contain performance information for past grants, and made the list available on the ONDCP website.

The prefiltered links to Grants.gov and USASpending.gov include all the assistance listing numbers for the grants identified by National Drug Control Program agencies through the November 2020 grant tracking reports submitted to ONDCP.²⁵ ONDCP officials said they will update these prefiltered links as they become aware of new or changed grant information.

²²Office of National Drug Control Policy, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/grant-programs/>. According to ONDCP officials, the White House Office of Digital Strategy is responsible for updating all websites for Executive Offices of the President, including ONDCP's website.

²³Office of National Drug Control Policy, accessed September 28, 2021, [see link](#).

²⁴Office of National Drug Control Policy, accessed September 28, 2021, [see link](#).

²⁵The information available on these links changed from what was posted under the prior administration. For example, our review of the information posted previously found one drug control grant that was not listed on the link to Grants.gov but was identified in an agency's grant tracking report. We asked ONDCP about this missing information, and officials stated that it was inadvertently omitted, and the link on ONDCP's website now includes that grant.

Figure 2: Screenshot of Grants.gov Prefiltered Search for Active Drug Control Grant Opportunities

Unique assistance listing numbers for grant programs, previously known as Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) numbers.

The screenshot shows the Grants.gov search results page. On the left, the 'BASIC SEARCH CRITERIA' section includes a 'Keyword(s):' field, an 'Opportunity Number:' field containing 'CFDA: 97.067, .93.087, .93.193, .93.993', and a 'SEARCH' button. Below this, the 'OPPORTUNITY STATUS' section has checkboxes for 'Forecasted (14)', 'Posted (284)', 'Closed (164)', and 'Archived (3,269)'. The 'FUNDING INSTRUMENT TYPE' section has checkboxes for 'All Funding Instruments', 'Cooperative Agreement (66)', 'Grant (231)', and 'Other (1)'. The 'ELIGIBILITY' section is partially visible. On the right, the search results are displayed in a table with columns: Opportunity Number, Opportunity Title, Agency, Opportunity Status, Posted Date, and Close Date. The table shows 1-25 of 298 matching results. The first row is RFA-DA-22-003, titled 'Elucidating the Effects of ART on Neuronal Function in the Context of SUD and HIV (R01 - Clinical Trials Not Allowed)'. Other rows include O-BJA-2021-33002, PAR-21-250, RFA-DA-22-011, RFA-DA-22-009, RFA-DA-22-017, and O-BJA-2021-40001.

Source: Grants.gov via the Office of National Drug Control Policy. | GAO-22-104666

Figure 3: Screenshot of USASpending.gov Prefiltered Search for Past Awarded Drug Control Grant Opportunities

Unique assistance listing numbers for grant programs, previously known as Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) numbers.

Award ID	Recipient Name	Start Date	End Date	Award Amount (Total Award Obligations to Date)	Description
BC8T010062	HEALTH CARE SERVICES, CALIFOR...	10/1/2017	9/30/2020	\$509,489,185	SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION & TRE
NU380T000288	NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR THE ...	8/1/2018	7/31/2023	\$325,870,336	CATEGORY C: COMMUNITY-BASED ORGA
BC8T010051	STATE HEALTH SERVICES, TEXAS D...	10/1/2017	9/30/2020	\$290,048,628	SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION & TRE
2009SST90041	HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERG...	8/1/2009	11/30/2013	\$270,837,464	HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM
2009SST90019	OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES	8/1/2009	9/31/2014	\$262,986,312	HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM
2008GET80006	OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES	9/1/2008	12/31/2012	\$260,612,664	FY 2008 HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT P
EMW2015SS00004	HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERG...	9/1/2015	8/31/2018	\$259,260,543	HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM
EMW-2019-SS-00011	HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERG...	9/1/2019	8/31/2022	\$258,936,821	HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM
EMW-2018-SS-00013	HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERG...	9/1/2018	8/31/2021	\$258,615,186	HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM
EMW-2017-SS-00037	HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERG...	9/1/2017	8/31/2020	\$256,875,000	HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM
ENW2014SS00005	HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERG...	9/1/2014	8/31/2016	\$256,196,542	HOMELAND SECURITY C

Source: USASpending.gov via the Office of National Drug Control Policy. | GAO-22-104666

We compared the available and past grant information ONDCP posted on its website with applicable key practices for transparently reporting government data and found the content ONDCP posted in August 2021 related to drug control grants generally aligned with the following key practices:

- **Provide free and unrestricted data (generally aligned).** ONDCP provides free and unrestricted drug control grant information by directing users to open and free webpages, such as Grants.gov and USASpending.gov.
- **Provide data in useful formats (generally aligned).** ONDCP directs users to drug control grant information on sites where users may view detailed, disaggregated, and machine-readable drug control grant data users may download in bulk and into subsets, such as by fiscal year, by agency, or by assistance listing numbers.

-
- **Fully describe the data (generally aligned).** ONDCP discloses the sources of drug control grant information by directing users to various websites in which the users can see sources, such as what agency posted the grant, and how ONDCP filtered the websites. For example, as previously mentioned, ONDCP takes users to Grants.gov and USASpending.gov via links, which ONDCP filtered to show drug control grants.²⁶ These websites also have information about data sources and quality. Additionally, ONDCP officials said Grants.gov and USASpending.gov representatives did not raise any data quality issues in their early discussions with them.
 - **Facilitate data discovery for all users (generally aligned).** ONDCP helps users easily navigate to find drug control grant information by optimizing the search function and ensuring the most important information is visible with the prefiltered links it posted to Grants.gov and USASpending.gov. Additionally, these sites state that they are centralized data repositories to help users find grant data across federal grant-making agencies. Finally, as of August 2021, ONDCP's website is clear and direct, and the drug control grant tracking content is written in plain language.

ONDCP Posted Most Grant Performance Information and Is Working to Ensure It Is Comprehensive

While the available and past grant information ONDCP posted on its website generally aligned with key practices, ONDCP is taking steps to ensure the grant performance information it posted is complete. ONDCP officials stated they utilized the performance information that National Drug Control Program agencies reported to them in the November 2020 grant tracking reports to determine what information to post. However, we identified some publicly available grant performance information that was not included in the information ONDCP posted on its website for public access.²⁷ For example, we identified at least seven drug control grant programs that had publicly available performance information posted on their respective agency websites but were not included in the information

²⁶ONDCP officials stated that some National Drug Control Program agencies have been reporting grant awards to USASpending.gov further back than others. Thus, there may be some variation in how far back some grant awards go, despite all the fiscal year boxes being selected.

²⁷Our analysis reviewed information reported to ONDCP, as well as National Drug Control Program agency websites up through November 2020. Not all of the 46 grant programs reported performance information to ONDCP or had such information on their agency website. If agencies posted grant performance information after November 2020, we did not consider it missing because it was publicly available after ONDCP's initial annual collection of grant tracking reports.

that ONDCP posted in August 2021.²⁸ ONDCP officials were unaware there was available drug control grants performance information excluded from what they posted. ONDCP officials noted this was the first time they were executing their grant tracking reports and that they could improve their collection of information. Additionally, these officials stated that they rely on the information provided by the National Drug Control Program agencies.

As a result of our work, ONDCP is taking steps to ensure it collects and posts complete performance information. In August 2021, we provided ONDCP with the grant performance information we had identified that had been excluded from the information posted on its website. ONDCP officials stated that they reviewed the information and reached out to National Drug Control Program agencies to verify that the missing information should have been included. ONDCP posted the available performance information for drug control grants in October 2021, as appropriate.²⁹

Going forward, ONDCP officials said they will conduct research on publicly available performance information for a sample of drug control grants each year to validate the completeness of reporting by National Drug Control Program agencies. ONDCP officials also stated that they will consider revising their guidance, as appropriate, if they determine additional clarification is needed in future years. Additionally, ONDCP established a Federal Drug Control Grants Working Group—comprised of ONDCP and National Drug Control Program agencies—and officials stated that they plan to leverage this group to help secure complete drug control grant information from the National Drug Program

²⁸In April 2021, ONDCP officials provided us with consolidated grant performance information that officials stated they intended to post to their website. We reviewed this information and identified at least 10 drug control grant programs that had publicly available performance information posted on their respective agency websites but were not included in the content ONDCP provided to us. While verifying hyperlinks were active, ONDCP officials stated that they identified additional grant performance information that ONDCP ultimately posted to its website in August 2021. This included three of the 10 grant programs' performance information we had identified as missing in our initial review. However, at the time, ONDCP was still missing performance information for seven of the 10 programs we identified in our initial review.

²⁹ONDCP officials stated they plan to focus on available performance information on government websites.

agencies.³⁰ Taking these planned additional actions will help ONDCP ensure it has complete performance information to post for public access.

ONDCP Identified Barriers Grant Applicants Face and Plans to Share Corrective Actions

ONDCP requires National Drug Control Program agencies to report barriers that potential grantees face when applying for grants in the grant tracking reports the agencies submit to ONDCP annually. While the SUPPORT Act requires the Director of ONDCP to identify any barriers, ONDCP took this requirement a step further by also requiring agencies to include information on corrective actions they have taken to address the barriers identified, if applicable.³¹

Four of the seven National Drug Control Program agencies identified barriers and corrective actions in the information they provided to ONDCP in 2020. In table 1, we categorized them into four types of barriers and identified examples of the specific barriers identified and the corrective actions taken.

Table 1: Examples of Reported Grant Barriers and Corresponding Corrective Actions National Drug Control Agencies Reported Taking to Address Them

Grant barrier categories	Examples of grant barriers identified	Examples of corrective actions taken
Grantee resource constraints	Potential applicants not having enough expertise or time to fulfill the application requirements	An agency streamlined the competitive application process, which they reported resulted in fewer application requirements.
Navigating Grants.gov	Potential applicants having challenges with maneuvering and uploading application forms to Grants.gov	An agency created guidance and provided technical assistance to help applicants fill out applications.
Grant requirements	Grant program restricting the population the grant funds can serve or requiring a signed memorandum of understanding before the grant is awarded	An agency required the memorandum of understanding be signed after grants are awarded rather than before.
COVID-19	Potential applicants unable to apply due to the need to address changing circumstances caused by COVID-19	An agency opened a second application window that gave applicants additional time to apply.

Source: GAO analysis of Office of National Drug Control Policy information. | GAO-22-104666

³⁰ONDCP officials established the group to improve communications and ensure completeness in meeting the statutory reporting requirements. ONDCP officials said that they plan on having the working group meet twice a year. Further, officials stated that they plan to use the working group to discuss lessons learned from the first year of executing the grant tracking system as well as discussion and feedback from the agencies on how to make the grant information more useful to the applicants and general public.

³¹Pub. L. No. 115-271, § 8217, 132 Stat. 3894, 4119-4125 (Oct. 24, 2018). See 21 U.S.C. § 1704(f)(1)(C).

Note: Three National Drug Control Program agencies reported grantee resource constraints-related barriers. One agency reported a Grants.gov-related barrier. Two agencies reported grant-specific-related barriers. Two agencies reported COVID-19-related barriers.

ONDCP has plans to share information on grant barriers with National Drug Control Program agencies to reduce any systemic barriers that have been identified and to share best practices on how to address them. Specifically, ONDCP plans to use its newly established Federal Drug Control Grants Working Group to discuss grant barrier information in the tracking reports among the participants, as well as corrective actions agencies took to address barriers. According to ONDCP officials, the Federal Drug Control Grants Working Group's first meeting took place in August 2021, and they discussed the extent to which National Drug Control Program agencies know what barriers grant applicants face when applying as well as how to address these issues.³² In addition, ONDCP officials told us they plan to assess the grant barriers identified, and how to help the agencies address them, in the fiscal year 2023 National Drug Control Budget.³³

ONDCP Has Not Documented Its Duplication, Overlap, and Fragmentation Review Process

ONDCP officials stated that they met the SUPPORT Act requirement to facilitate the identification of DOF among drug control grants by assessing for DOF during ONDCP's annual budget review process.³⁴ However, we could not verify ONDCP's actions to assess for DOF because ONDCP has not documented its process. According to these officials, assessing drug control grants for DOF is within their role because ONDCP is the coordinating agency for drug control efforts and is best positioned to do this. For instance, ONDCP officials stated that while some National Drug Control Program agencies may conduct DOF assessments of their own grants, ONDCP has visibility into all drug control programs across all the National Drug Control Program agencies.

³²ONDCP officials told us that more than 70 officials from National Drug Control Program agencies, in addition to ONDCP budget and grant program staff, participated in the first meeting of the Federal Drug Control Grants Working Group. Interagency representation included officials from AmeriCorps and the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and Labor.

³³ONDCP officials said that they could provide guidance to the National Drug Control Program agencies on reducing barriers, if needed, through their annual budget review guidance, as they have done in the past.

³⁴Pub. L. No. 115-271, § 8217, 132 Stat. 3894, 4119-4125 (Oct. 24, 2018). See 21 U.S.C. § 1704(f)(1)(B).

During their annual budget review process, ONDCP officials stated that their budget staff coordinates the review of the National Drug Control Program agencies' budget proposals for the upcoming fiscal year. An agency's drug control budget proposal includes documentation that agencies are required to submit to ONDCP, such as budget submissions and funding priorities. ONDCP officials stated that while some drug control grants may be specifically delineated in agencies' budget submissions, other grants could be a portion of a larger agency program.³⁵ ONDCP officials told us they conduct a review of each agency's budget proposal that is then shared among multiple budget, performance, policy, and program staff for coordination within ONDCP. According to these officials, this allows them to see if there may be potential DOF among proposed programs.

ONDCP analysts are to record the results of their budget reviews, utilizing a template. In August 2021, ONDCP added a column in the template for analysts to report if they have identified potential DOF associated with programs or activities supporting a particular drug control funding priority. ONDCP officials stated that although they just recently added this column to be used for their fiscal year 2023 budget review, their prior reviews of budgets still included a DOF assessment, primarily for new or changed programs. ONDCP officials stated that if they were to identify any potential DOF, they would discuss that with the National Drug Control Program agencies.

Furthermore, officials told us that they have been considering DOF during the budget review process since fiscal year 2015. ONDCP officials stated they began considering DOF in response to a recommendation in our prior work.³⁶ In a 2013 report, we recommended that ONDCP assess the extent of overlap and potential for duplication across federal programs engaged in drug abuse prevention and treatment activities and identify opportunities for increased coordination. In response, ONDCP conducted

³⁵Specifically, ONDCP officials stated that their budget review looks at funding for proposed grant programs and not funding opportunities for grant programs that have already been appropriated.

³⁶GAO, *Office of National Drug Control Policy: Office Could Better Identify Opportunities to Increase Program Coordination*, [GAO-13-333](#) (Washington D.C.: Apr. 25, 2013).

a onetime DOF assessment for all drug control agency activities and grants engaged in drug abuse prevention and treatment activities.³⁷

In addition to the actions ONDCP officials stated that they take during the budget review process, ONDCP also asked National Drug Control Program agencies to identify ways to potentially reduce DOF in drug control grants in the 2020 grant tracking reports.³⁸ In response, some agencies reported ways they assess for DOF at the departmental level. For example, one agency reported that it does this with internal stakeholders and external federal partners to reduce or eliminate any DOF. ONDCP officials also explained that they plan to use the Federal Drug Control Grants Working Group as a forum for assisting ONDCP in examining DOF issues raised by National Drug Control Program agencies.

While these actions may provide some benefits for reducing DOF, we were unable to evaluate ONDCP's process for assessing DOF, specifically for drug control grants, since ONDCP has not documented its process. During their budget review, ONDCP officials told us that they leverage our *Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication Management Guide* to assess for DOF.³⁹ The guide uses standard definitions and

³⁷Specifically, ONDCP reviewed the authorizing language, grant solicitations, and agency performance reporting for agency activities to determine who the program or agency activity serves and what services were being provided. This review included 130 agency activities and grants, as well as 30,000 grant awards. ONDCP reported that it found almost no duplication within these programs at that time but did find that some programs could benefit from additional coordination. ONDCP reported its methodology and results in its Fiscal Year 2015 Budget and Performance Summary (Office of National Drug Control Policy, *Fiscal Year 2015 Budget and Performance Summary: Companion to the National Drug Control Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: July 2014)). Officials said that they do not have the resources to do this detailed or extensive DOF assessment each year but have considered DOF during their budget review process since conducting that assessment.

³⁸ONDCP officials stated that they made this question optional in the 2020 grant tracking report because it was intended to prompt agencies to think about any ways to identify DOF issues. These officials stated that since this was their first year using the grant tracking report, they anticipate the report, as well as the associated guidance, will be revised in future iterations and that this question will no longer be listed as optional but will be required.

³⁹Determining whether DOF exists among programs is a key step in identifying opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness. To do this, one or more approaches or organizing principles should be used to guide the identification of programs to include in a DOF review. Possible approaches include those that focus on services (what the program intends to provide to beneficiaries), as well as beneficiaries and target populations (those who receive benefits, services, or products from a program). For more information, see [GAO-15-49SP](#).

states that analysts should select an approach for the identification of programs to include in a DOF review and identify the factors to focus on, such as services, beneficiaries, and target populations. However, ONDCP does not document the process, including how analysts are to use the DOF guide. ONDCP officials stated that this was because they rely on internal experts to consider DOF during their budget review. Federal standards for internal controls call for documentation to demonstrate the design, implementation, and operating effectiveness of an entity's internal control system. Specifically, these standards state that documentation provides a means to retain organizational knowledge and mitigate the risk of having that knowledge limited to a few personnel, as well as a means to communicate that knowledge, as needed, to external parties, such as external auditors. Documenting the process for identifying DOF will help ONDCP ensure that it retains organizational knowledge and can communicate and demonstrate the effectiveness of its internal control system to identify DOF.

Conclusions

Drug misuse has been a persistent and long-standing public health issue, which ONDCP has estimated cost the federal government \$36 billion in fiscal year 2021, including costs for drug control grants. In light of this spending, determining what drug control grants are available and whether DOF exists across federal agencies that fund them is essential. As a coordinating agency for drug control efforts, ONDCP took actions to make consolidated information available to the public on available and past grants. Although not documented, officials also reported having a process to assess for DOF among drug control grants. Documenting the process for identifying DOF will help ONDCP ensure that it retains organizational knowledge and can communicate and demonstrate the effectiveness of its internal control system to identify DOF.

Recommendation for Executive Action

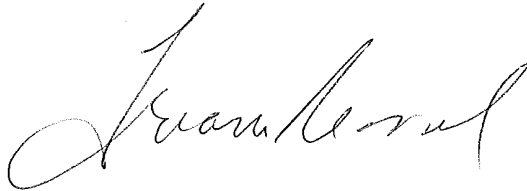
The Director of ONDCP should document its process or procedures to identify DOF among drug control grants, including ensuring that the documentation details standard definitions; how specific grants are to be selected for each review; and what factors are to be assessed, such as services, beneficiaries, and target populations. (Recommendation 1)

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to ONDCP for comment. In its comments, reproduced in appendix I, ONDCP concurred with our recommendation.

We are sending this report to the appropriate congressional committees and to the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. In addition, this report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <https://gao.gov>.

If you or your staff members have any questions about this report, please contact Triana McNeil at (202) 512-8777 or mcneilt@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix II.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Triana McNeil". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "M".

Triana McNeil
Director, Homeland Security and Justice

Appendix I: Comments from the Office of National Drug Control Policy



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY
Washington, D.C. 20503

November 17, 2021

Triana McNeil
Director, Homeland Security and Justice
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. McNeil:

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) hereby provides our response to the draft final report entitled, *Drug Control Grants: ONDCP Should Document Its Process for Identifying Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation*, GAO-22-104666. ONDCP has no objection to any of the factual information contained in the report. We believe that the report provides an accurate characterization of how ONDCP carries out its drug control grant tracking responsibilities under the SUPPORT Act. See 21 U.S.C. § 1704(f).

ONDCP appreciates the fact that GAO acknowledges our compliance with SUPPORT Act requirements for establishing a tracking system for federally funded drug control grants. We also appreciate the fact that GAO recognized steps ONDCP has taken to implement GAO recommendations related to development of the National Drug Control Strategy. ONDCP concurs with the draft report's recommendation that we document our process and procedures for identifying Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation among drug control grants. ONDCP will take appropriate action to implement this recommendation.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment. Feel free to contact Robert Kent, General Counsel, at (202) 881-8815 or Robert.A.Kent@ondcp.eop.gov if you would like to further discuss this matter.

Respectfully,

Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, MBA
Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy

Appendix II: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Triana McNeil, (202) 512-8777 or McNeilT@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Tracey Cross (Assistant Director), Kelsey Hawley (Analyst-in-Charge), Billy Commons, Michele Fejfar, and Kristiana D. Moore made key contributions to this report. Also contributing to the report were Benjamin Crossley, Thomas James, Shannin O'Neill, William Simerl, Justin Snover, and Adam Vogt.

Related GAO Products

Border Security: CBP Has Taken Actions to Help Ensure Timely and Accurate Field Testing of Suspected Illicit Drugs. [GAO-21-286](#). Washington, D.C.: April 26, 2021.

Synthetic Opioids: Considerations for the Class-Wide Scheduling of Fentanyl-Related Substances. [GAO-21-499](#). Washington, D.C.: April 12, 2021.

High Risk Series: Dedicated Leadership Needed to Address Limited Progress in Most High-Risk Areas. [GAO-21-119SP](#). Washington, D.C.: March 2, 2021.

Drug Misuse: Most States Have Good Samaritan Laws and Research Indicates They May Have Positive Effects. [GAO-21-248](#). Washington, D.C.: March 29, 2021.

Substance Use Disorder: Reliable Data Needed for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant Program. [GAO-21-58](#). Washington, D.C.: December 14, 2020.

Drug Misuse: Agencies Have Not Fully Identified How Grants That Can Support Drug Prevention Education Programs Contribute to National Goals. [GAO-21-96](#). Washington, D.C.: November 18, 2020.

Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs: Views on Usefulness and Challenges of Programs. [GAO-21-22](#). Washington, D.C.: October 1, 2020.

Grants Management: Agencies Provided Many Types of Technical Assistance and Applied Recipients' Feedback. [GAO-20-580](#). Washington, D.C.: August 11, 2020.

Native American Youth: Agencies Incorporated Almost All Leading Practices When Assessing Grant Programs That Could Prevent or Address Delinquency. [GAO-20-600](#). Washington, D.C.: August 6, 2020.

Homelessness: Better HUD Oversight of Data Collection Could Improve Estimates of Homeless Population. [GAO-20-433](#). Washington, D.C.: July 14, 2020.

Bureau of Prisons: Improved Planning Would Help BOP Evaluate and Manage Its Portfolio of Drug Education and Treatment Programs. [GAO-20-423](#). Washington, D.C.: May 26, 2020.

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Juvenile Justice Grants: DOJ Should Take Additional Actions to Strengthen Performance and Fraud Risk Management. [GAO-20-202](#). Washington, D.C.: December 18, 2019.

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Drug Policy: Assessing Treatment Expansion Efforts and Drug Control Strategies and Programs. [GAO-19-535T](#). Washington, D.C.: May 9, 2019.

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