

# Better Management of Teacher Aid Programs Needed to Improve Participant Outcomes

GAO-15-314 1.2.2

Business Operations

Action Description: After completing our analysis, we will use the results to identify and implement or propose programmatic or policy initiatives to increase the percentage of grant recipients who successfully complete the service obligation.

Responsible manager: Business Operations John Kane

CAP due date: 6/30/2017

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**RESPONSE:** The Study referenced in our Action Description provided insight into potential operational roadblocks faced by Grant participants; specifically difficulty in successfully certifying and re-certifying for the program.

- Among the TEACH Grant recipients who reported that they were unlikely to complete service requirements, unsure of their likelihood to complete their service requirements, or that their TEACH Grants had already converted to loans, the most frequently factor they cited leading to conversion of grants to loans with 44% reported that failing to certify annually was an influential factor.

For those TEACH Grant recipients who identified the failure to certify as a factor for converting, the most frequently cited reason was not knowing the process for annual certification or forgetting about annual certification (38 percent of the TEACH Grant converters indicated that they did not know the process for annual certification, and 20 percent indicated that they forgot about the annual certification).

To address certification issues FSA will replace the existing single certification form (which attempts to cover all certification requirements for both completers and non-completers) with three separate certification forms: one for the initial 120-day certification requirement; one for non-completers to cover the required 1-year certification; and one for completers to cover the annual certification requirement. Our program observations/reviews have shown that some of the problems we're seeing result from the fact that the current single certification form is too complicated or confusing because it attempts to capture very different requirements for different populations.

Three separate certification forms have been drafted to capture the following conditions:

- Initial Certification – this is the “120-day” certification that is sent to all TEACH Grant recipients (both completers and non-completers)
- A “Subsequent” certification for grant recipients who did not complete the program for which they received a TEACH Grant (calling this a “subsequent” certification instead of an “annual” certification, because “annual” implies something that is done every year – but for non-completers, there will be no further certifications if they don’t meet one of the applicable requirements within one year of leaving school without completing the program)
- An “Annual” certification for grant recipients who completed the program for which they received a TEACH Grant.

Once these forms have cleared a review and clearance process, including OPE, OGC, and OMB; a communications plan will be implemented to all interested parties to ensure that the change is well documented and that there is sufficient guidance in place.