

Highlights of [GAO-12-260](#), a report to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

### Why GAO Did This Study

The nation's reliance on imported oil, rising energy costs, and fossil fuels' potential contribution to climate change have renewed the federal focus on renewable energy. Many federal agencies support renewable energy activities, raising congressional concerns about the number and roles of agencies implementing such efforts. Currently, there is no comprehensive inventory of federal renewable energy initiatives, making it difficult to identify potential fragmentation or duplication.

GAO was asked to (1) identify agencies' renewable energy-related initiatives and (2) examine the federal roles agencies' initiatives supported. GAO collected data from agencies' budget documents, strategic plans, websites, and through agency data requests and interviews with officials from most of the 24 federal agencies subject to the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990. These 24 agencies accounted for roughly 98 percent of all federal outlays in 2009. GAO developed an inventory of agencies' renewable energy initiatives, including initiatives for which renewable energy was the focus, as well as initiatives for which it was part of a broader effort. GAO focused on developing this inventory, and as such, did not evaluate initiatives based on financial support or other factors.

This report contains no recommendations. In response to the draft report, Commerce agreed with the overall findings as they relate to the Department, while Homeland Security neither agreed nor disagreed with GAO's findings. The other agencies provided technical or clarifying comments, which GAO incorporated as appropriate, or had no comments.

View [GAO-12-260](#). To view an e-supplement with data on all initiatives, see [GAO-12-259SP](#). For more information, contact Frank Rusco at (202) 512-3841 or [ruscof@gao.gov](mailto:ruscof@gao.gov).

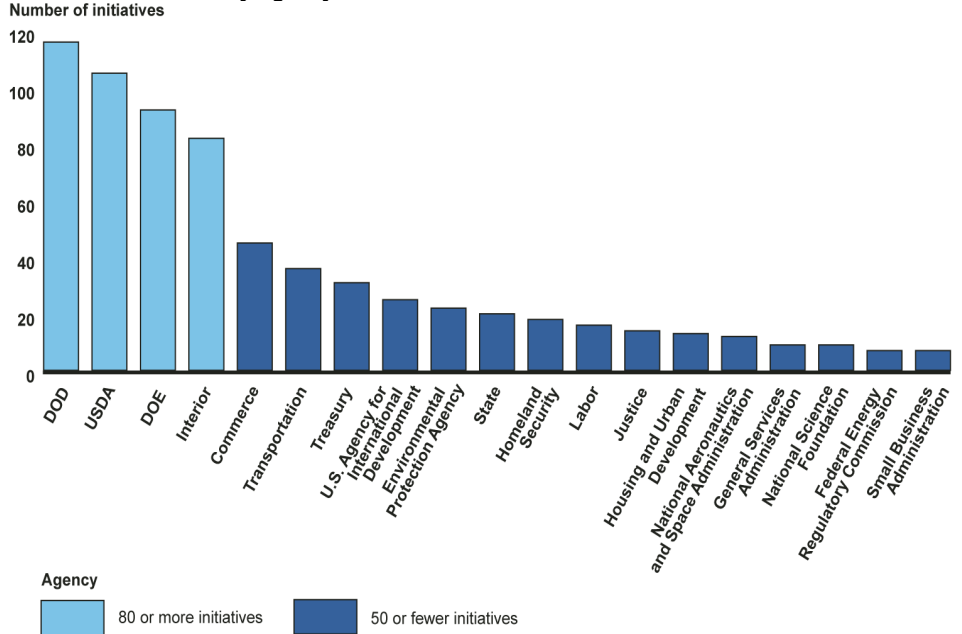
## RENEWABLE ENERGY

### Federal Agencies Implement Hundreds of Initiatives

#### What GAO Found

Governmentwide, 23 agencies and their 130 subagencies GAO reviewed implemented nearly 700 renewable energy initiatives in fiscal year 2010. The Departments of Defense (DOD), Agriculture (USDA), Energy (DOE), and the Interior were collectively responsible for almost 60 percent of all initiatives.

**Number of Initiatives by Agency**



Source: GAO analysis of agencies' data.

Note: Data for DOD include five components—the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and other DOD components that report to the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

The initiatives supported a range of renewable energy sources, and the most commonly supported sources were bioenergy, solar, and wind. Also, the initiatives supported a range of public and private sector recipients, but the large majority provided support to the private sector. Many initiatives supported multiple renewable energy sources and types of recipients, while many others targeted support to one source or recipient. Agencies' renewable energy efforts increased in recent years as a result of the provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and other factors, but the level of future efforts is less certain with the expiration of these provisions and budget constraints.

Across agencies, more than 80 percent of initiatives span four key federal roles—supporting research and development; using renewable energy in vehicle fleets and facilities; providing incentives for commercialization and deployment; and regulation, permitting, and ensuring compliance. Certain agencies led efforts in each federal role: DOE, DOD, and USDA for research and development; DOD, the General Services Administration, and DOE for fleets and facilities; Treasury and USDA for commercialization and deployment; and Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency for regulation, permitting, and compliance.