



# At a Glance

## Why We Did This Review

We reviewed pre-award activities for multiple award contracts at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Computer Center. The review was conducted in response to an Office of Inspector General hotline complaint. The complaint alleged that:

- The NCC did not provide a fair opportunity to all vendors in a recent request for proposal for the acquisition of information technology equipment.
- EPA contractor personnel disclosed misleading information to a vendor regarding the outcome of the selection process.

## This report addresses the following EPA Goal or Cross-Cutting Strategy:

- *Strengthening EPA's workforce and capabilities.*

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional and Public Affairs at (202) 566-2391.

The full report is at:  
[www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2013/20130415-13-P-0220.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2013/20130415-13-P-0220.pdf)

## ***Review of Hotline Complaint on EPA's Pre-Award Activities for Multiple Award Contracts at the National Computer Center***

### What We Found

We found no evidence to support allegations made in the complaint. However, we determined that the EPA could improve communications with vendors during pre-award activities. We found instances where there were opportunities to improve communication with vendors that could help thwart misunderstandings and confusion related to the federal acquisition process. Federal guidance recommends that information be communicated to relevant personnel at all levels within an organization, including outside organizations. There was no evidence that the NCC communicated guidelines or regulations related to acquisitions to the hotline complainant (a vendor) during initial pre-award activities. Without communicating guidelines and regulations in initial communications with vendors, misunderstandings and false expectations related to the acquisition process could arise.

### Recommendations and Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the Director, National Computer Center:

1. Develop disclosure language outlining communication protocols between the agency and vendors to include all written communications with vendors during pre-award activities.
2. Distribute a memorandum to managers emphasizing the importance of implementing protocols developed in response to recommendation 1.

The agency agreed with our recommendations and developed a communications protocol and guidelines and communicated those to all NCC staff.