



**United States
Environmental Protection Agency**

FISCAL YEAR 2025

**Justification of Appropriation
Estimates for the
Committee on Appropriations**

Tab 02: Cross-Agency Strategies

**Environmental Protection Agency
FY 2025 Annual Performance Plan and Congressional Justification**

Table of Contents – Cross-Agency Strategies

Cross-Agency Strategy 1: Ensure Scientific Integrity and Science-Based Decision Making 2

Cross-Agency Strategy 2: Consider the Health of Children at All Life Stages and Other Vulnerable Populations 4

Cross-Agency Strategy 3: Advance EPA’s Organizational Excellence and Workforce Equity 6

Cross-Agency Strategy 4: Strengthen Tribal, State, and Local Partnerships and Enhance Engagement 9

Cross-Agency Strategy 1: Ensure Scientific Integrity and Science-Based Decision Making
Deliver rigorous scientific research and analyses to inform evidence-based decision making.

EPA's ability to protect human health and the environment depends on the integrity and quality of the information, data, and evidence that secure the scientific foundation for agency decision making. Identifying and implementing effective strategies, including strategies to adapt to the changing climate, advance environmental justice and equity, and protect children at all life stages, require that decisions be grounded in the best available science and evidence. EPA's Cross-Agency Strategy 1 in the *FY 2022 – 2026 EPA Strategic Plan* is strengthening scientific integrity, advancing the delivery of rigorous and independent scientific evaluation and analyses, and grounding EPA's actions in the best available science.

Cross-Agency Strategy 1, Ensure Scientific Integrity and Science-Based Decision Making is directly supported by the following long-term performance goals in the *FY 2022 – 2026 EPA Strategic Plan*:

- By September 30, 2026, increase the annual percentage of Office of Research and Development (ORD) research products meeting partner needs to 95 percent from a baseline of 93 percent in FY 2021.¹
- By September 30, 2026, implement 131 actions for scientific integrity objectives that are certified by Deputy Scientific Integrity Officials in each EPA program and region.

Science touches all parts of EPA and plays an integral role in informing a range of environmental decisions. EPA program and regional offices support this strategy through a commitment to science as foundational to decision making, scientific integrity, rigorous quality assurance, appropriate peer review, the timely release of scientific information, and transparency in decision making.

As part of this commitment, the Agency is ensuring an effective scientific integrity program. Scientific integrity results from adherence to professional values and practices when conducting, communicating, supervising, developing, and implementing science. It ensures objectivity, clarity, reproducibility, and utility, and it safeguards against bias, fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, outside interference, censorship, and inadequate procedures and information security. EPA will advance and strengthen a culture of scientific integrity across the Agency by ensuring adherence to the scientific and ethical standards outlined in EPA's Scientific Integrity Policy.² In FY 2023 the Agency continued work on the final updated Scientific Integrity Policy planned for release in mid-2024, using a White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) framework report published in January 2023. The draft policy has undergone formal consultation with tribes, engagement with and comment by EPA employee unions, and significant legal review. The Agency completed a training video on scientific integrity at EPA that will be distributed throughout the Agency with the updated Scientific Integrity Policy. Employees, contractors, and officials have access to the Scientific Integrity Official and staff and a network of Deputy Scientific

¹ ORD is tracking environmental justice and climate products as annual performance goals. Please see the annual performance plan table in the President's Budget (<https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/cj>) for more information.

² EPA's Scientific Integrity Policy (<https://www.epa.gov/scientific-integrity/epas-scientific-integrity-policy>)

Integrity Officials on whom they can rely for advice or to report allegations of a loss of scientific integrity.³

Along with the Agency's ongoing efforts to ensure scientific integrity is part of the culture, EPA's research and science programs support this Cross-Agency Strategy through the delivery of rigorous scientific research and analyses. The primary mission of the Agency's Office of Research and Development and Regional Lab Enterprise is to provide leading-edge research to meet near-term and long-term science needs of the Agency and inform EPA decisions. This research portfolio also supports the needs of tribal, state, and community partners. In FY 2023, 96 percent of research products met partner needs, exceeding the FY 2023 annual target of 94 percent and improving on the FY 2022 result of 94 percent (partner satisfaction is evaluated through an annual survey that engages key users of ORD products to assess scientific rigor, relevance, and timeliness of product delivery). Scientific research and development will support: 1) tackling the climate crisis by addressing the causes and consequences of climate change and developing more resilient communities; 2) addressing current, emerging, and long-term water resource challenges; 3) developing scientific and technical approaches to enhance the Agency's ability to evaluate chemicals and their risks; 4) accelerating the pace of cleanups at contaminated sites so they can be returned to beneficial use; 5) revitalizing and protecting the most vulnerable communities and groups; and 6) conducting environmental risk assessments to better inform policies for protecting human health, particularly for children at all life stages. The Agency's regional laboratories provide essential expertise and scientific data for a wide array of statutory areas needed to make local decisions. In FY 2025, regional laboratories will analyze scientific data to inform immediate and near-term decisions on environmental conditions, emergency response, compliance, and enforcement.

In FY 2025, the Agency will continue critical research on the highest priority issues. EPA will focus on addressing lead issues associated with Superfund sites and childhood lead exposure. The Agency also will continue to emphasize per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) research to increase understanding of PFAS exposures, human health and ecological effects, and technologies for reducing PFAS in the environment. In addition, the Agency will continue to advance the Administration's science-based approach to improve wildfire readiness by enhancing wildfire data and communications related to air quality and helping communities become "smoke ready."

³ The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 promotes a culture of evaluation and continuous learning that ensures agency decisions are made on the best available evidence including developing an Evaluations and Other Evidence-Building Activities Policy (Evaluation Policy). EPA's Evaluation Policy includes many elements that are related to EPA's Scientific Integrity Policy including principles of independence, objectivity, transparency, and rigor. Please see (<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-05/epa-evaluation-evidence-building-policy.pdf>) for more information.

Cross-Agency Strategy 2: Consider the Health of Children at All Life Stages and Other Vulnerable Populations

Focus on protecting and improving the health of children at all life stages and other vulnerable populations in implementing our programs.

EPA's programs will apply and promote the use of science, policy, partnerships, communications, and action to protect children at all life stages and other vulnerable populations from adverse health effects resulting from exposure to pollution and the impacts of climate change. EPA also will take actions to protect children and other vulnerable populations in underserved communities where socioeconomic determinants of health exacerbate the harm caused by these environmental stressors.

Children's environmental health recognizes the effect of the environment on children's growth, wellness, development, and risk of disease. EPA actions will be informed by two important considerations: first, the scientific understanding of childhood as a sequence of life stages, and second, the recognition that protecting children's health is necessary to protect human health, because every adult was once a child. The effects of early life exposures may become apparent during childhood or may not arise until adulthood or in later generations.

Cross-Agency Strategy 2, Consider the Health of Children at All Life Stages and Other Vulnerable Populations is directly supported by the following long-term performance goal in the *FY 2022 – 2026 EPA Strategic Plan*:

- By September 30, 2026, assess and consider environmental health information and data for children at all life stages for EPA actions that concern human health.

To best protect children's environmental health at all life stages and vulnerable populations, EPA will identify, assess, develop, and promote the use of science to support its policies, decisions, and actions, including regulations and voluntary programs. EPA also will ensure that agency toxicity, exposure, and risk assessments consider all relevant and available science to address the unique vulnerabilities of children and vulnerable populations, including disproportionate impacts related to race, ethnicity, income, existing health problems, or other social determinants of health.

In FY 2025, EPA's Children's Health Program will continue its core work to:

- Coordinate and advance the protection of children's environmental health across EPA by assisting with development of regulations, improving risk assessment and science policy, implementing community-level outreach and education programs, and tracking indicators of progress on children's health.
- Coordinate two plenary meetings of the Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee,⁴ including delivery of expert responses to additional charge questions related to high priority children's environmental health issues.
- Follow up on recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences, which highlighted the latest scientific advancements and challenges to protecting children's

⁴ For additional information, please visit: <https://www.epa.gov/children/chpac>.

health from social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors.⁵

- Continue to implement the *EPA Policy on Children's Health* to ensure that EPA consistently and explicitly considers early life exposures and lifelong health in all human health decisions.⁶
- Support health care professionals via the Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units to better address risks from childhood exposures, particularly in communities with environmental justice concerns.
- Improve EPA's ability to monetize the economic benefits to children's health of environmental rules. Through a cooperative agreement between EPA and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), OECD will develop willingness to pay values and assist EPA in developing non-cancer dose response curves to quantify children related health endpoints that are not currently included in EPA benefit-cost analyses. As a result, EPA will improve substantially its ability to communicate to the public the impact of its regulations.

To continue to implement Executive Order (EO) 13045: *Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks* in FY 2025 EPA also will:

- Partner with the Department of Health and Human Services to lead the cross-federal President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children. The focus of this work will be on protecting children from adverse consequences of climate change and disasters, addressing disparities in asthma among children, and reducing childhood lead poisoning.⁷
- Take actions to protect children in underserved communities who suffer disproportionately from the effects of pollution exposures exacerbated by socio-economic determinants of health. For example, the Children's Health Program will continue to identify and communicate indicators to better reflect social determinants of health and account for disparities as part of efforts to enhance America's Children and the Environment (ACE), a set of national indicators on the environment and children's health. The Children's Health Program will also work to consider cumulative impacts in agency decision making, bridge the discussion to cumulative risk, and work to incorporate susceptibility and vulnerability at each stage of the risk assessment process.

⁵ For additional information, please visit: <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/25466/vibrant-and-healthy-kids-aligning-science-practice-and-policy-to>.

⁶ For additional information, please visit: <https://www.epa.gov/children/childrens-health-policy-and-plan>.

⁷ For additional information, please visit: <https://ptfcehs.niehs.nih.gov/>.

Cross-Agency Strategy 3: Advance EPA’s Organizational Excellence and Workforce Equity

Foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce within an effective and mission-driven workplace.

To support its mission to protect human health and the environment, EPA will make significant progress in FY 2025 to advance organizational excellence and workforce equity. The Agency will strengthen workforce planning of mission-critical positions and support succession management for the next generation of the EPA staff and managers while emphasizing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). EPA will modernize information technology (IT) systems, support employee-friendly work policies, and transition to a paperless work environment. EPA will continue to focus on implementing efficient and effective processes across the full range of agency efforts, using proven continuous improvement techniques and training to equip staff to solve problems and enhance our ability to accomplish our mission. Additionally, EPA will continue to safeguard against cybersecurity risks to protect agency assets and infrastructure from potentially malicious attacks. Further, EPA will be a leader in the federal government in advancing the sustainability of facilities and operations while developing resiliency to respond to the risks of climate change. EPA will continue to eliminate barriers to its procurement processes through greater diversification of the Agency’s vendor base, increasing engagement and technical assistance, and enhancing the Agency’s contracts with new vendors, including with small and underserved businesses, and targeting businesses located in Historically Underutilized Business Zones (HUBZones)⁸. EPA will continue to provide resource stewardship to ensure that all agency programs operate with fiscal responsibility and management integrity, financial services are efficiently and consistently delivered nationwide, and programs demonstrate results.

Cross-Agency Strategy 3, Advance EPA’s Organizational Excellence and Workforce Equity is directly supported by the following long-term performance goals in the FY 2022 – 2026 EPA Strategic Plan:

- By September 30, 2026, EPA will be in full compliance with the five high-priority directives in Executive Order 14028 - *Improving the Nation’s Cybersecurity*.
- By September 30, 2026, award 4 percent of EPA contract spending to small businesses located in Historically Underutilized Business Zones (HUBZones) compared to the FY 2018-2020 average annual baseline of 2.2 percent.
- By September 30, 2026, initiate all priority climate resiliency projects for EPA-owned facilities within 24 months of a completed facility climate assessment and project prioritization.
- By September 30, 2026, EPA will achieve the highest Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Maturity Level of “Leading and Sustaining” as defined by the November 2021 *Government-wide Strategic Plan to Advance DEIA in the Federal Workforce* and achieve all EPA goals identified in the Agency’s Gender Equity and Equality Action Plan.
- By September 30, 2026, automate all priority internal administrative processes.

⁸ For additional information, please consult the Small Business Administration’s HUBZone Program webpage: <https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-assistance-programs/hubzone-program>.

- By September 30, 2026, automate the major EPA permitting programs.
- By September 30, 2026, improve 1,000 operational processes.

In FY 2025, EPA will continue to implement the Agency's DEIA Strategic Plan to advance progress towards ensuring equitable recruiting, hiring, promotion, retention, professional development, performance evaluations, pay and compensation policies, reasonable accommodations access, training policies and practices, and maintaining a workforce representative of the American public that promotes a culture of inclusion and accessibility within the Agency. This will be executed by undertaking an evidence-based and data-driven approach to determine whether, and to what extent, agency practices result in inequitable employment outcomes, and whether agency actions may help to overcome systemic societal and organizational barriers. By the end of FY 2026, EPA will achieve the highest maturity level as defined by the November 2021 Government-wide Strategic Plan to Advance DEIA in the Federal Workforce.⁹

In FY 2025, EPA will continue to make progress towards equity goals by eliminating barriers in its procurement processes and increasing the amount of spending on small and disadvantaged businesses. EPA will continue to provide technical assistance to small business vendors on navigating federal contracting requirements and to ensure that new EPA procurements are accessible in scope and requirements for small businesses to successfully compete. This work will yield an increase in contract spending awarded to small and disadvantaged businesses, including those located in HUBZones.

In FY 2025, in line with OMB Memoranda M-23-15 - *Measuring, Monitoring, and Improving Organizational Health and Organizational Performance in the Context of Evolving Agency Work Environments*, EPA will continue to implement, and update as necessary, its Work Environment Plan in a manner that emphasizes meaningful in-person work and advances organizational health and performance. EPA will continue to assess and implement any necessary investments in information technology and real property necessary to implement its Work Environment Plan. EPA also will continue to support front-line supervisor training for managing individuals and teams working in hybrid environments and effectively delivering results to customers and stakeholders. EPA will continue to support a data-driven culture which routinely uses performance measures for measuring, monitoring, and improving organizational health and organizational performance.

In FY 2025, EPA will continue to pursue IT systems and infrastructure modernization, innovation, and automation of internal administrative forms and processes to achieve a paperless work environment. To support the Agency's Cybersecurity posture, EPA will continue to accelerate cloud adoption. In addition, EPA will continue to increase adoption of Multifactor Authentication, encryption for agency systems and data, and adoption of a Zero Trust Architecture, and will meet advanced logging requirements to accomplish Executive Order (EO) 14028: *Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity*.

In FY 2025, in support of EO 14008: *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*, EPA will complete climate resiliency assessments at three EPA-owned facilities. These assessments will

⁹ For more information, please refer to: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Strategic-Plan-to-Advance-Diversity-Equity-Inclusion-and-Accessibility-in-the-Federal-Workforce-11.23.21.pdf>.

include identifying potential projects the Agency can implement to increase facility resiliency against the impacts of climate change, such as roofing stability, building envelope, and emergency power projects. Following completion of a climate assessment, EPA will initiate four high-priority projects within 24 months. Further, EPA will continue progress towards achieving carbon-pollution free energy use and net-zero emissions in line with Administration sustainability goals.

In FY 2025, the Agency will continue to modernize its financial systems to gain greater efficiencies by improving accounting systems and retiring legacy systems. OCFO is reducing duplicative and manual work by automating and modifying business processes and enhancing the ability to generate automated reports. Robotics Process Automation (BOTS) will be a part of the overall strategy to reduce manual work, decrease error, and improve efficiency. In FY 2025, EPA will continue to expand and enhance easy-to-use dashboards to manage resources and track performance. Additionally, the Agency will leverage senior staff engagement in continuous improvement through nearly 100 executive-sponsored improvement projects annually. EPA also is applying continuous improvement tools and initiatives to support Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act implementation with an emphasis on improving processes related to hiring and grants.

In FY 2025, EPA will continue to automate the Agency's major permitting programs.¹⁰ Automation of permit processes will reduce processing time on issuing permits, decrease the time between receiving monitoring data and engaging in enforcement actions, and foster transparency by allowing communities to search, track, and access permitting actions easily. Further, permit automation will enable the integration of climate change and environmental justice considerations into permit processes and ensure that they are addressed within the terms and conditions of the permit. For the regulated community, permit automation will allow for a simplified, streamlined, and transparent permitting process that will result in time and costs savings. For communities and stakeholders, permit automation can empower communities, especially communities with environmental justice concerns, to actively participate in the permit decision-making process and post-permit related compliance.

¹⁰ EPA identified a universe of 13 eligible processes. Broad statutory frameworks for the permitting programs are found in Sections 165, 173, and 502 of the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 7475, 7503, and 7661a); Section 402 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1342); Section 3006 of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (42 U.S.C. § 6926), and Section 1422 and Section 1425 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 300h and 300h-4).

Cross-Agency Strategy 4: Strengthen Tribal, State, and Local Partnerships and Enhance Engagement

Collaborate and engage effectively with Tribal Nations in keeping with the Federal Government's trust responsibilities, state and local governments, regulated entities, and the public to protect human health and the environment.

Protecting human health and the environment is a shared responsibility of EPA and its tribal, state, and local government partners. EPA also has a historic and fundamental trust responsibility with tribal governments. Environmental outcomes are best achieved through collaborative and effective partnerships across all levels, successful oversight of federally delegated programs, and robust engagement with non-governmental organizations, national and community groups, stakeholders, and the public, built on a foundation of public trust and transparency. Through a renewed focus on fostering intergovernmental relationships, improving on-the-ground community engagement, delivering high-impact environmental education programs, and increasing public trust and transparency, EPA will forge stronger partnerships. As a result, EPA will be better positioned to advance durable solutions to its most pressing challenges and ensure the equitable protection of all communities, including those who have historically been underserved and overburdened.

Cross-Agency Strategy 4, Strengthen Tribal, State, and Local Partnerships and Enhance Engagement is directly supported by the following long-term performance goals in the *FY 2022 – 2026 EPA Strategic Plan*:

- By September 30, 2026, consider tribal treaty rights as part of all EPA tribal consultations that may affect tribal treaty rights.
- By September 30, 2026, eliminate the backlog of overdue Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) responses, compared to the FY 2021 baseline of 1,056.

Since disproportionate impacts of environmental pollution occur in tribal communities, EPA is committed to strengthening its relationship with tribes. EPA will strive to meet its federal trust responsibility and work to integrate consideration of tribal treaty and reserved rights early into decision making and regulatory processes. As of June 2023, 100 percent of tribal consultations occurring from FY 2022 onward that may have affected tribal treaty rights had considered those rights, as outlined in the long-term performance goal stated above.

The early, meaningful, and substantial involvement of EPA's co-regulator partners is critical to the development, implementation, and enforcement of the environmental programs in Indian country. With a renewed focus on climate, environmental justice, and children's health, EPA will emphasize frequent and early communication as a keystone of its partnership with tribal and state co-regulators. EPA must thoughtfully consider co-regulator concerns and existing regulatory programs to develop effective and lasting solutions to our most pressing environmental challenges.

In FY 2025, EPA will continue to support the Agency's web-based Tribal Consultation Opportunities Tracking System, a publicly accessible database used to communicate upcoming and current EPA consultation opportunities to tribal governments. The system provides a management, oversight, and reporting structure that helps ensure accountability and transparency. In addition, EPA will implement the revised EPA Consultation Policy and new Implementation

Guidance to improve consultation practices to ensure early and meaningful engagement in conformance with Executive Order 13175, *Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments*.

In FY 2025, EPA will continue to enhance transparency, build public trust in agency actions, and support public participation by strengthening its implementation of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). In FY 2023 the Agency reduced the backlog of overdue FOIA requests by nearly 26 percent. EPA received more than 6,600 FOIA requests but closed more than 6,800 requests. The Agency will work to increase processing speed and to apply appropriate technologies to ensure it supports the timely searching and collection of information for purposes of responding to FOIA requests and other information needs in a cost-effective and sustainable manner. In addition, EPA procured and launched a new FOIA recordkeeping and processing software solution that replaced FOIA online at the beginning of FY 2024.