



At a Glance

The EPA's Fiscal Year 2025 Top Management Challenges

What Are Management Challenges?

The Reports Consolidation Act of 2000 requires each inspector general to prepare an annual statement summarizing what the inspector general considers to be "the most serious management and performance challenges facing the agency" and to briefly assess the agency's progress in addressing those challenges.

To identify these top challenges for fiscal year 2025, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General considered the body of our work, as well as our objective and professional observations, work conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, Congress's interests, and Agency documentation and statements.

Our [report EPA's Fiscal Year 2024 Top Management Challenges](#), published November 2023, identified seven top management challenges facing the Agency. For fiscal year 2025, we retained all seven of these challenges and added a new challenge related to the Agency's recruiting and retention efforts. In total, we identified eight top management challenges.

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[List of OIG reports.](#)

What We Found

We identified eight top management challenges for the EPA for fiscal year 2025:

- 1. Mitigating the causes and adapting to the impacts of climate change.** The EPA has prioritized addressing climate change as a core aspect of its mission to protect human health and the environment. It therefore needs to continue efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote resiliency and adaptation, address cumulative and disparate impacts, and develop international partnerships.
- 2. Integrating and implementing environmental justice.** Achieving environmental justice remains a whole-of-government focus and necessitates that the EPA harness agencywide coordination and make cross-program decisions that weigh cumulative risks and impacts to the communities that the Agency serves.
- 3. Safeguarding the use and disposal of chemicals.** The public must be able to trust the EPA's ability to identify the risks of using chemicals, including pesticides, and to provide safeguards for and verification of proper disposal, management, or remediation of toxic substances.
- 4. Promoting ethical conduct and protecting scientific integrity.** To ensure public trust and program integrity, the EPA's decision-making and program implementation must be grounded in sound scientific principles and its employees, especially its senior officials, must adhere to rigorous ethical standards.
- 5. Managing grants, contracts, and data systems.** Effective management of grants, contracts, and related data is critical to reducing the risk of fraud, waste, abuse, and noncompliance with funding requirements, especially as the risks increase with the influx of \$100 billion in supplemental appropriations under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and Inflation Reduction Act.
- 6. Maximizing compliance with environmental laws and regulations.** The EPA's monitoring and enforcement activities remain below ten-year averages, while the Agency's ability to maximize compliance faces difficulties related to variations in permitting, management of delegated state programs, incorporation of environmental justice concerns, and uncertainties that may result from recent court decisions.
- 7. Overseeing, protecting, and investing in water and wastewater systems.** The EPA has oversight responsibility for strengthening and securing the cyber and physical infrastructure at tens of thousands of public drinking water systems and publicly owned wastewater treatment systems. This critical infrastructure faces various threats from cyberattack, theft, vandalism, and other risks that can affect public health and leave communities vulnerable to the loss of clean water and drinking water.
- 8. Recruiting and retaining staff for new and existing programs.** The EPA faces difficulties recruiting and retaining the number and caliber of employees it needs to accomplish its mission. The recent influx of supplemental appropriations underscores the Agency's need to complete workforce planning and support human capital development to maintain and grow its workforce so it can implement existing and new programs.

We have identified these as the most serious management and performance challenges facing the EPA. They represent vulnerabilities to waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement, or the most significant barriers to the EPA accomplishing its mission.