



# At a Glance

## Audit of the EPA's Grants Workforce Planning

### Why We Did This Audit

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General conducted this audit to determine whether the EPA's grants workforce planning efforts are in accordance with federal requirements and address the workload for grants administered under annual and supplemental appropriations.

The EPA awards approximately half of its average annual budget of about \$9.2 billion as grants to states, local governments, and other eligible entities. Since fiscal year 2022, the EPA has also received around \$103 billion in supplemental appropriations via the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. In May 2025, the EPA was managing 8,581 grants valued at around \$78.3 billion, which included about \$60.2 billion awarded from the supplemental appropriations. In July 2025, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act rescinded unobligated EPA funds associated with the Inflation Reduction Act.

Workforce planning consists of planning for and managing current and future workforce needs based, in part, on workload analyses. Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-22-12 strongly encourages agencies to strategically plan for workforce needs to implement Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act grant programs. The Office of Management and Budget did not provide similar guidance for the Inflation Reduction Act.

#### To support this EPA mission-related effort:

- *Operating efficiently and effectively.*

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### What We Found

The EPA lacks a plan to address its grants workforce needs and the challenges associated with the volume of grants awarded through annual and supplemental appropriations. From 2018 through May 2025, the EPA's supplemental appropriations increased the number and value of grants that the Agency manages by about 56 percent and 338 percent, respectively. While the EPA conducted agencywide workforce planning in accordance with federal requirements, it did not conduct specific grants workforce planning. Different program offices and regions across the EPA manage the workforce planning process, including hiring and staffing, in a decentralized manner.

Furthermore, the workload benchmarks that the EPA uses to gauge workloads for grant specialists and project officers—the grants workforce—may be outdated. The number of grants managed by the grants workforce varied from 2018 through 2025, with grant specialists in several regions frequently above their 60-grant benchmark and project officers in all program offices and regions consistently within their three- to 19-grant benchmark. These established benchmarks are based on a 2005 study, but federal requirements for grants management have changed since then to focus on enhanced results-oriented accountability for grants and to clarify requirements for agencies and recipients. In addition, the Agency's workload analyses may not comprehensively reflect the duties of the grants workforce. For example, the workload analyses do not account for the work performed prior to the grant being awarded or for the work required to close out grants. Finally, there is no formally documented process for conducting and communicating the results of these analyses.

Decentralized processes and limited resources impact how the Agency conducts workforce planning. According to the Agency, competing priorities as well as limited staff and time hampered its ability to develop an agencywide grants workforce plan, establish a written process for the workload analyses, and perform an updated benchmark study for the grants workforce.

**Without workforce planning for the EPA's grants workforce, the Agency risks mismanaging annual and supplemental appropriations and not complying with grants management requirements, which in turn leaves the EPA's grants-based programs vulnerable to fraud, waste, and abuse and imperils the Agency's mission.**

### Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We make four recommendations to the EPA, including that it (1) develop an agencywide grants workforce plan, (2) reassess and revise the benchmarks for the grant specialist and project officer workloads, (3) document the process used for conducting the workload analyses, and (4) develop a communication strategy to share the workload analyses results with EPA staff involved in grants workforce planning. The Agency agreed to implement corrective actions that meet the intent of Recommendations 3 and 4. Recommendation 3 is resolved with corrective actions pending. Corrective actions for Recommendation 4 have been completed. The Agency disagreed with Recommendations 1 and 2; those recommendations are unresolved with resolution efforts in progress.