



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

We conducted this audit to determine whether the results reported for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) brownfields assessment, cleanup, and revolving loan fund grants were timely and accurately reported, and the grants achieved their intended goals in terms of outputs and outcomes. The Recovery Act provided \$100 million for brownfields activities. EPA awarded \$87.3 million in brownfields assessment, cleanup, and revolving loan fund grants to state agencies, tribes, non-profits, local communities and commissions, and other entities. EPA anticipated assessing 500–750 properties, making 500–750 acres ready for reuse, cleaning up 30–50 properties, and leveraging \$450–\$600 million by 2012.

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

- *Cleaning up communities and advancing sustainable development*

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/2012/20120927-12-R-0898.pdf

EPA Can Improve Its Reporting of Dollars Leveraged From the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Brownfields Program

What We Found

EPA project officers verified grant recipient reported outputs and outcomes for Recovery Act brownfields assessments completed, acres ready for reuse, and cleanups completed, but did not always verify dollars leveraged. Dollars leveraged are additional non-EPA resources invested in the project as a result of the use of grant funds. EPA guidance includes requirements for grant recipients to report, and for EPA project officers to review, grant output and outcome information in its on-line data management system—the Assessment, Cleanup and Redevelopment Exchange System (ACRES). However, the guidance does not specify the documentation needed to support dollars leveraged. Recipients were unclear as to what could be counted as dollars leveraged, and some project officers were not aware of the requirement to verify reported dollars leveraged. As a result, EPA's Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization (OBLR) and others may not be able to rely on the dollars leveraged data in ACRES, which is reported to Congress and the public.

OBLR may not meet its Recovery Act dollars leveraged goal. Dollars leveraged may not be realized until after grants are completed, and EPA has to rely on recipients to report this information after their grants are completed, which may be as late as the end of 2014. As a result, the dollars leveraged that EPA reports to Congress and the public may continue to change for several more years.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the Assistant Administrator for Solid Waste and Emergency Response instruct the OBLR Director to create a checklist for grant recipients and project officers that defines dollars leveraged, and identifies specific types of supporting documents needed. We also recommend that the Assistant Administrator instruct the OBLR Director to include a letter in closeout packages reminding recipients of their responsibility to continue to report dollars leveraged as they are realized. EPA agreed with our recommendations and provided intended corrective actions to develop and distribute a checklist and develop a letter for closeout packages. EPA estimated that these corrective actions would be completed by December 31, 2012. The Agency's actions, when implemented, will address the recommendations.

Noteworthy Achievements

The Brownfields program exceeded its Recovery Act goals for properties assessed, cleaned up, and acres made ready for reuse.