



# At a Glance

## The EPA's Pollution Prevention Grant Results Aligned with Program Goals, but a Supervisory Verification Process Is Needed

### Why We Did This Audit

#### To accomplish this objective:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General conducted this audit to determine whether the EPA accurately reports the environmental results from the pollution prevention grant program and whether those results demonstrate alignment with goals established for the program.

To conduct this audit, we reviewed 20 pollution prevention grants that had results reported in fiscal years 2018 or 2019.

Pollution prevention, also referred to as source reduction, is any practice that reduces, eliminates, or prevents pollution at its source. Through its pollution prevention program, the EPA awards grants to help businesses with source reduction activities. In fiscal years 2018 through 2021, pollution prevention program funds were used to award 89 grants totaling \$18,697,623. The pollution prevention program, within the Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, implements the Pollution Prevention Act. The Act requires the EPA to establish means for measuring the effectiveness of the pollution prevention grants.

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

- *Operating efficiently and effectively.*

#### To address this top EPA [management challenge](#):

- *Mitigating the causes and adapting to the impacts of climate change.*

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### What We Found

The EPA environmental results and monetary benefits of all 20 grants we reviewed aligned with the goals of the pollution prevention, or P2, program: conserve natural resources, decrease releases of toxics to the environment, and increase cost savings for businesses and others.

The EPA accurately reported results for 18 of these 20 grants, which means that the results were free from errors that would misrepresent the grant results. For the two remaining grants, the EPA did not include the results or inaccurately reported the results in its documentation. Therefore, the EPA could not demonstrate all the environmental results and monetary benefits of the two grants. In addition, we also found two examples in which the EPA did not consistently report P2 grant results across its different reporting documentation; for example, in these two instances, we found that the results the EPA reported in its quality assurance review documentation were inaccurate or missing from its reporting summary spreadsheets.

We reviewed P2 program guidance and found that it does not describe a process for supervisors to verify the reported grant results before the Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics staff incorporates them into public reports. A supervisory verification process could help detect missing or inaccurate grant results. Without a supervisory verification process, the program may report inaccurate P2 grant results to the public. For example, the program may publish inaccurate information on the EPA website, in program justifications, and in public outreach materials. Inaccurate environmental results and monetary benefits of the grants could lead to uncertainty about the achievement of program goals. The fact that the P2 program received \$100 million in Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding from fiscal years 2022 through 2026 heightens the importance of this issue.

**The EPA's P2 grant results aligned with program goals, but without a supervisory verification process, the program may report inaccurate grant results to the public.**

### Recommendation and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention establish guidance for a process in which the supervisors at the Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics verify the accuracy of their staff's quality assurance review work prior to publishing pollution prevention grant results. The Agency agreed with our recommendation and provided an acceptable planned corrective action with an estimated completion date. We consider the recommendation resolved with corrective action pending. The Agency also provided technical comments, which we considered and incorporated as necessary.