



# At a Glance

## The EPA Took Additional Actions to Strengthen Controls to Account for and Secure Laptops

### Why We Did This Audit

#### To accomplish this objective:

We performed this audit to determine whether the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency headquarters and select regions have sufficient internal controls to properly account for and secure laptops in their possession to prevent theft and misplacement. We initiated this audit in response to two hotline complaints alleging that 136 laptops were either lost, stolen, or missing within the EPA headquarters Desktop Support Services Division in 2019 and 2020.

As of April 11, 2022, the Agency asset management system showed that the EPA possessed 35,736 laptops with an estimated value of \$56.14 million, averaging \$1,571 per laptop. Because we identified EPA Regions 4 and 6 as the regions having the most laptops and computers, we audited them along with the Desktop Support Services Division. The EPA's *Personal Property Manual*, published in June 2017, establishes roles and responsibilities for personal property management.

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

- Operating efficiently and effectively.

#### To address this top EPA management challenge:

- Managing grants, contracts, and data systems.

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### What We Found

The Desktop Support Services Division and the Region 4 Mission Support Division had sufficient controls to account for and secure laptops within their possession to prevent theft and misplacement. Their controls complied with the EPA's *Personal Property Manual* requirements including implementing controls to properly account for personal property, designating key property personnel to maintain accurate records of laptop inventory, and storing laptops in secure locations.

While the Region 6 Mission Support Division had sufficient controls to secure laptops in its possession, we identified a deficiency in its business practices to sufficiently account for new laptops received. Because of this deficiency, Region 6 did not account for two of 12 laptops that it received in January 2022 for more than 160 days in the Agency asset management system. However, once we brought this issue to the attention of Region 6 property management staff, they took immediate action to implement an additional control to further improve their accountability of new laptops received.

Additionally, the Desktop Support Services Division and the Region 6 Mission Support Division did not have fully developed and Agency-approved operating procedures for personal property management. The *Personal Property Manual* requires all program and regional offices to establish formal processes and controls to ensure that personal property assets are handled according to all laws, regulations, and EPA policy. The manual further requires that the agency property management officer approve each office's personal property operating procedures. As a result of our audit, however, the Desktop Support Services Division and Region 6 subsequently updated their operating procedures and received approval from the agency property management officer.

Because of the corrective actions implemented by the Desktop Support Services Division and Region 6, we make no recommendations in this report. The Office of Mission Support, Region 4, and Region 6 informed us that they would not be providing a written response to our draft report issued on September 25, 2023.

**The EPA must execute processes with controls to enforce its stewardship of laptops and to safeguard against activities that could prevent it from protecting its assets from loss, theft, and mismanagement.**