EPA Established a Web Management Program, but Improvements Are Needed in Deploying Web Analytics

What We Found

The EPA has established a program to manage its public websites and digital services in accordance with federal laws and policies outlined in Office of Management and Budget M-17-06. The EPA has developed a digital strategy, governance structure, Web Council, and policy, as well as procedures and standards, but it has not deployed the required web analytics tracking code for 14 of the 308 public websites that provide essential environmental information to communities. The required code captures website traffic data, such as the number of visitors, the type of web browser used, the length of time visitors remain on each webpage, the documents downloaded from a webpage, and the visitors' locations.

> **Without fully implementing web analytics, the EPA could be without vital usage information to meet the needs of the public, regulatory agencies, industries, and other stakeholders when conveying environmental issues.**

This occurred because the EPA has not (1) identified a responsible office for maintaining an accurate listing of all EPA public websites and (2) established a process to validate that program offices and regions have deployed the required tracking code on all EPA public websites.

Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-17-06 and Agency web analytics procedures require deploying a federally required tracking code on all public websites. The lack of web analytics on the EPA's public websites could result in the loss of valuable web traffic metrics necessary to improve the communication of vital EPA environmental data to the public.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the assistant administrator for Mission Support (1) identify a single responsible office to create and maintain a list of all the EPA's public websites and (2) develop and implement a process, including identifying a responsible office, to periodically validate that the required tracking code is deployed on all public websites.

The EPA agreed with Recommendation 1 and provided alternative language for Recommendation 2. We agreed with the Agency's suggestion and updated Recommendation 2. We consider these recommendations resolved.

Noteworthy Achievement

During the audit, we identified broken links in six of the ten websites we reviewed. We notified the Agency of these issues, and Agency personnel indicated that actions were taken to fix the broken links. We revisited the websites and verified that the Agency fixed the links.