



At a Glance

Audit of the EPA's Brownfields Program Management and Funding Allocations

Why We Did This Audit

To accomplish this objective:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General conducted this audit to determine how the EPA has managed its Brownfields Program and allocated funds under the program since enactment of the Brownfields Utilization, Investment, and Local Development Act of 2018. That Act required the OIG to submit a report to Congress that describes the EPA's management of its Brownfields Program, including the allocation of funds.

Congress formally established the EPA's Brownfields Program by amending the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act in 2002. This Act defines a brownfield site as "real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant."

The Brownfields Utilization, Investment, and Local Development Act of 2018 amended the Brownfields Program.

To support this EPA mission-related effort:

- *Cleaning up and revitalizing land.*

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[List of OIG reports.](#)

What We Found

The EPA's Brownfields Program is managed through the Office of Land and Emergency Management's Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization. The program uses funds appropriated annually by Congress to award competitive grants and offer technical assistance to state, local, and tribal governments; nonprofit organizations; and other tax-exempt organizations under section 104(k) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act. The EPA also awards noncompetitive grants and technical assistance to states and tribes under section 128(a) of the Act.

Brownfields funding recipients use EPA grants and technical assistance to conduct site assessments and cleanups, create brownfields inventories, develop site reuse plans, and conduct other brownfields activities. The Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization distributes funds to the regions, which, in turn, award and monitor the grants.

We found that the EPA provided approximately \$1.26 billion in brownfields grant funding from fiscal year 2017 through 2023. Nearly 93 percent of the total grant funding during this period was allocated to competitive assessment, revolving loan fund, and cleanup grants and to noncompetitive section 128(a) state and tribal response grants. The EPA distributed its brownfields grant funding through the ten EPA regional offices and its headquarters. Grant recipients in EPA Region 1 received the most funding, followed closely by recipients in EPA Region 5. The EPA's brownfields funding allocations for FY 2023 were more than 200 percent higher than the average funding allocations from FY 2017 through 2021 because of increased program funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

We make no recommendations in this report because of the descriptive nature of our audit objective. However, we identified two areas that may warrant management attention and further research:

- Data inaccuracies in the EPA's Grants Research Information Portal database, which could limit EPA staff's ability to accurately monitor and report on grant funds using the database.
- Increased grant funding due to Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act appropriations, which could pose challenges for EPA oversight of grant funds and associated results. The EPA will have to monitor a higher number of brownfields projects—including larger, more complex projects—for years after FY 2026 while not receiving additional Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act appropriations to fund regional oversight staff.

Cleaning up and reinvesting in brownfield sites can reduce public health and environmental risks; increase local tax bases; facilitate job growth; and reduce development pressures on green, noncontaminated spaces and working lands.