

EPA OIG Strategic Plan 2024–2028

February 21, 2025 | Report No. 24-N-0059





Abbreviations

CSB	U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
OIG	Office of Inspector General

Cover Image

Denali National Park, Alaska. (EPA image)

Other Images

Photographs in the inside cover, Table of Contents, and on pages 2, 3, and 9 are all EPA images.

Issuance Note

This edition supersedes the *EPA OIG Strategic Plan FY 2024–2028*, dated September 9, 2024.

Are you aware of fraud, waste, or abuse in an EPA or CSB program?

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2024–2028



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Message from the Inspector General

I am pleased to present the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General’s strategic plan for fiscal years 2024–2028. This document provides a five-year roadmap for fulfilling our statutory duty to conduct independent, objective, and evidence-based oversight of the programs and operations of the EPA and the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

With a staff of dedicated oversight professionals, our office is called upon to conduct meaningful oversight of some of the most important and complicated activities of the federal government. Therefore, we must carefully and deliberately focus our resources to ensure effective oversight of two parent agencies made up of thousands of scientists, engineers, analysts, law enforcement agents, attorneys, and others distributed across ten regions, stretching across the globe from the Northern Mariana Islands to Maine and Alaska to Puerto Rico. With the broad mandate of protecting human health and the environment, the public has a significant stake in the work of the EPA and the CSB.

The scope of the EPA’s work, and therefore of our oversight responsibilities, cannot be overstated. The EPA’s everyday work covers myriad environmental challenges, from regulating the manufacture and use of pesticides to cleaning contaminated land and from restoring aquatic ecosystems to conducting leading-edge scientific research. The EPA also administers fee programs, such as the Toxic Substances Control Act Service Fee Fund, that are used to defray program implementation costs. The EPA manages financial assistance programs, such as revolving funds, that provide capitalization grants to states and local governments. For example, the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund have enabled states over the last 37 years to provide nearly \$250 billion in loans and financial assistance to water systems for infrastructure projects. And the EPA regulates a market for renewable fuel credits, known as Renewable Identification Numbers, that recorded approximately \$38 billion in trades in 2022.

We play a vital role in safeguarding public resources and holding wrongdoers accountable, which will be of particular importance over the period of this plan, as it spans several years of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and Inflation Reduction Act supplemental appropriations to the EPA. One of our most significant challenges for years to come will be overseeing the EPA’s IJJA and IRA work in addition to its implementation of projects funded through annual appropriations.

To meet these challenges, we must invest in our office’s most valuable resource—our people—and optimize our processes to empower our people to deliver relevant and high-quality audits, evaluations, and investigations. Our strategic plan outlines how we intend to achieve these goals in keeping with our values of integrity, independence, accountability, and respect.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicole N. Murley".

Nicole N. Murley
Acting Inspector General



Who We Are and What We Do

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General is an independent and objective office that derives its authority from the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, 5 U.S.C. §§ 401–424, which established the OIGs’ duty to conduct oversight of their respective agencies. Since fiscal year 2004, Congress has designated the EPA inspector general to also serve as the inspector general for the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

Our office works to detect and prevent fraud, waste, and abuse to help the Agency protect human health and the environment more efficiently and effectively. Our efforts pursue accountability, promote good governance, and drive positive change. We conduct and oversee audits, evaluations, and investigations; make evidence-based recommendations; and keep the heads of the agencies, Congress, and the public informed about problems and deficiencies, as well as progress on needed

corrective actions. We also operate a hotline that allows anyone to submit information that may lead us to initiate audits, evaluations, inspections, or investigations.

Our values support our mission by setting organizational expectations of integrity, independence, and innovation that motivate our oversight professionals, inspire new processes, and drive continuous improvement at every level. Our goals and objectives, therefore, establish a roadmap that helps us to focus our efforts toward achieving our vision.

This document is only one part of our overall strategic planning process, which is a continuous effort that involves ongoing assessments of our projects and initiatives. This strategic plan describes the principles we expect to employ to focus and frame our work in the future as we adapt to emergent issues and other changing circumstances.





Who We Are and What We Do

OUR MISSION

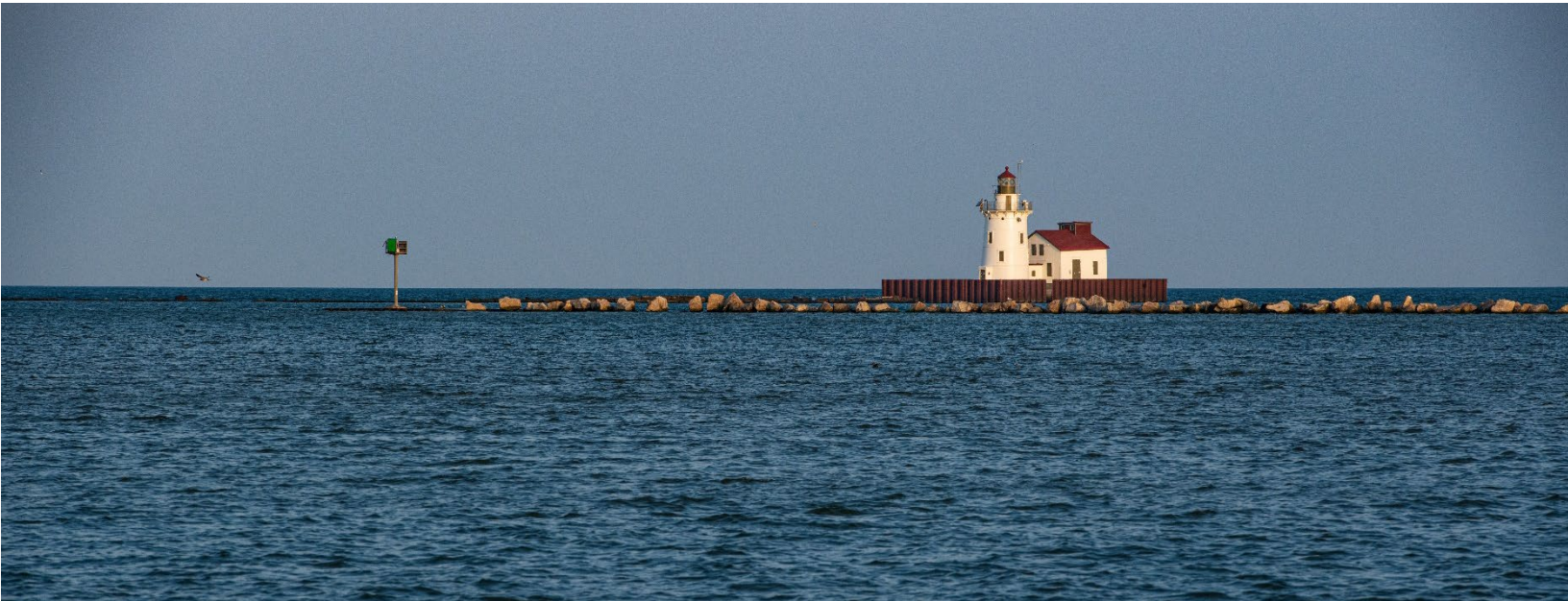


To drive change by fighting fraud, promoting ethical conduct, and recommending improvement in the environmental space.

OUR VISION



Engaged oversight professionals inspiring innovation.



OUR VALUES

These core values guide our conduct and decisions:

- **Integrity.** We protect the integrity of our stakeholders' programs through timely, relevant, and quality oversight, which exemplifies our professionalism and adherence to the highest standards. We are committed to treating others with dignity and respect, whether those we work with or those we oversee.
- **Independence.** We are independent in judgment and action, providing oversight that is free from preference, pressure, and conflicts of interest. Our stakeholders rely on our oversight work, knowing that it is objective and impartial, based on facts and evidence, and free from improper outside influence.
- **Innovation.** We promote efficiency and effectiveness by example, committing ourselves to continuous improvement and the pursuit of creative solutions, driving progress, and fostering a culture of adaptability and resiliency.



Who We Are and What We Do

OUR LINES OF EFFORT

To fulfill our mandate as an independent oversight organization, we operate along the following four core lines of effort:



Audits. We conduct financial and performance audits to assess the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, internal control, and compliance of EPA and CSB programs and business operations. Audits assess program performance and operations, to include the potential for fraud, waste, or abuse; the propriety of grant and contract awards and management; the effectiveness of information technology management; and the possible cost savings and other efficiencies to be realized in various ways.



Evaluations. We review, inspect, and evaluate EPA and CSB programs and offices to assess whether and how they are effectively and efficiently meeting legal, regulatory, congressional, and public requirements and expectations. We also conduct reviews and evaluations to assess how the EPA implements, executes, and enforces new and existing requirements, and the extent to which stakeholders can rely on those requirements. We perform special reviews of significant events and emerging issues of concern that involve suspected violations of law, regulation, policy, or allegations of serious mismanagement.



Investigations. We conduct criminal, civil and administrative investigations of allegations of fraud, waste, or abuse affecting EPA programs and operations, such as financial fraud, cybercrime, laboratory fraud, and theft of EPA property or funds. We refer our findings to the U.S. Department of Justice or other authorities for prosecution or to EPA management for action. We conduct administrative investigations into allegations of senior employee misconduct and complaints of whistleblower reprisal by Agency employees or employees of Agency contractors, subcontractors, grantees, subgrantees, or personal services contractors.



Mission Support. We support and enable OIG operations through personnel management and training, financial management, information technology management, facilities, acquisition and contract management, legal support, editing support, strategic planning, performance tracking, data analysis, and other initiatives.



Strategy Map: Goals and Objectives

PEOPLE



GOAL 1: Be an employer of choice within the oversight community.

- 1.1** Recruit and retain a high-caliber, highly engaged, and dedicated workforce.
- 1.2** Foster a culture that promotes employee well-being, recognition, and empowerment.
- 1.3** Create opportunities for employee growth and advancement within the OIG and the government.

PROCESS



GOAL 2: Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our oversight and business

- 2.1** Encourage creative and innovative approaches to our products.
- 2.2** Leverage new data, technology, and expertise.
- 2.3** Enhance the independence and security of our physical and information technology infrastructures.

PRODUCT



GOAL 3: Deliver high-impact oversight results.

- 3.1** Conduct oversight work that is high-quality, relevant, and objective.
- 3.2** Provide effective and timely follow-up on oversight work.
- 3.3** Strengthen stakeholder communication and engagement.



Invest in Our People

STRATEGIC GOAL



Be an employer of choice within the oversight community.

The success of our oversight mission depends on the collective efforts of our people at every level of the organization. They perform at their best when they have a sense of purpose, commitment to the mission, trust in their leadership, and knowledge that their contributions matter. We ensure that our organization fosters collaboration and communication; provides opportunities for professional development; and rewards performance and results. We thereby not only provide our people with a great place to work, but we inspire their best efforts and attract even more top talent.



Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Recruit and retain a high-caliber, highly engaged, and dedicated workforce.



Attracting and developing the best available oversight professionals who are performance-minded and results-driven will help us meet our workforce needs as

we take on increased oversight work associated with the EPA's annual and supplemental appropriations.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Foster a culture that promotes employee well-being, recognition, and empowerment.



An employee-centered workplace not only enhances employee satisfaction but also drives successful business outcomes because it prioritizes recognition of our

employees' contributions and the efforts of our teams, boosting morale and job satisfaction. Moreover, empowering individuals and teams leads to a more agile, creative, and resilient workforce.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Create opportunities for growth and advancement within the OIG and the government.



A clear path for career progression helps ensure employees commit more fully to their roles and contribute more effectively.

Furthermore, well-trained, experienced staff drives better decision-making, policy implementation, and program management. Ultimately, a culture of growth attracts top talent, positioning the OIG and government as an employer of choice.



Improve Our Processes

STRATEGIC GOAL



Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our oversight and business processes.

The core of our oversight mission involves developing evidence-based findings to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in Agency programs and operations. That requires us to conduct our oversight work to the highest standards of objectivity, accuracy, and relevance. It also means that our own operations should be models of good management. Thus, we seek new ways to achieve better results. We continue to focus on improving our internal programs and operations through our use of software and technology to save time, enable new insights, and facilitate our hybrid work environment. We also seek to further the independence and security of our physical spaces and information technology systems.



Objectives

OBJECTIVE 2.1

Encourage creative and innovative approaches to our products.

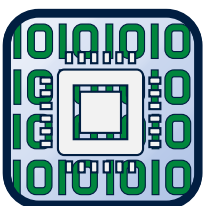


To meet the needs of our stakeholders, we must adapt quickly to a dynamic oversight environment. Encouraging creativity among our staff, which possesses an

unparalleled body of skills and knowledge, will lead to innovative approaches to traditional oversight. It will also ensure that, as an organization, we are more resilient in the face of long-standing resource constraints.

OBJECTIVE 2.2

Leverage new data, technologies, and expertise.



New data provide new insights into processes, relationships, and operations, informing what we conduct oversight of and how we conduct that oversight. New technologies, such as artificial intelligence, will allow us to do

more oversight more efficiently by automating business processes, streamlining workflows, and reducing the completion time of our products. Other new technologies, such as collaboration applications, will also allow us to scale resources for our dynamic organizational demands and support an increasingly dispersed hybrid work environment.

OBJECTIVE 2.3

Enhance the independence and security of our physical and information technology infrastructures.



Collaboration and innovation requires a workplace and an information system that ensures the independence and integrity of our work. Our reliance on information

technology infrastructure for gathering, analyzing, disseminating and storing independent oversight data makes it vital that our networks, systems, and software also be free from outside interference and secured against unauthorized access, loss, or corruption.



Make a Greater Impact

STRATEGIC GOAL



Deliver high-impact oversight results.

Our primary purpose is to detect and prevent fraud, waste, and abuse related to, and promote efficiency and effectiveness in, the EPA’s and CBS’s programs and operations. By fighting fraud and other losses of integrity, we ensure that the EPA and CSB retain the public’s trust. And by promoting efficiency and effectiveness, we help the EPA and the CSB to meet their missions. With such a broad and important mission, we must take a strategic, risk-based approach in conducting oversight. And we must ensure that this oversight meets the highest standards of professionalism and integrity. Doing so will ensure accountability for wrongdoers and address root causes of fraud, waste, and abuse. It will also help drive greater agency improvements, benefiting human health and the environment.



Objectives

OBJECTIVE 3.1

Conduct oversight work that is high-quality, relevant, and objective.



We must conduct our oversight work using processes and procedures that adhere to professional standards and promote objectivity, accuracy, and relevance. Calibrating our oversight efforts will help us deliver products and services that meet exacting standards for quality and timeliness. We must also take a risk-based approach to focusing on the most serious threats to the integrity of the EPA and the CSB.

OBJECTIVE 3.2

Provide effective and timely follow-up on oversight work.



We play a key role in ensuring that the EPA and the CSB economically and effectively use the billions of dollars in federal funds they receive. Therefore, we must remain vigilant in ensuring the agencies address lingering vulnerabilities to taxpayer resources. By

monitoring agency actions taken in response to our oversight, we will ensure that the changes we drive are deep-seated.

OBJECTIVE 3.3

Strengthen stakeholder communication and engagement.



Our work has a meaningful impact on the work of the EPA and the CSB, as well as on those whom the EPA and the CSB protect. We must ensure that our work is accessible and understandable to our stakeholders, whether they are civil servants, members of Congress, prosecutors, recipients of agency funds, or the public. We must also ensure that employees of the EPA and the CSB, and the employees of their contractors and grantees, know of their right to report fraud, waste, and abuse without fear of reprisal.



Reporting Fraud, Waste, or Abuse

EPA OIG HOTLINE

The [OIG Hotline](#) services both the EPA and the CSB. The hotline serves as a confidential channel to which to submit suggestions to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of EPA or CSB programs and operations or to report complaints of violations of law, regulation, or rule by employees, grantees, contractors, and program participants; fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement in EPA or CSB programs and operations; and other criminal or administrative misconduct. Complaints may be submitted by anyone, without fear of reprisal. The best method to submit a complaint is via the online form available on our [website](#).



WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

The role of the EPA OIG whistleblower protection coordinator is to educate Agency employees about prohibitions against retaliation against federal employees for protected disclosures that report on alleged violations of law, rule, or regulation, or instances of fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, or misconduct in government operations. Whistleblower disclosures can save lives or taxpayer dollars, and they play a critical role in keeping our government honest, efficient, and accountable. More information is available by clicking on the whistleblower protection page on our [website](#).





Whistleblower Protection

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

The whistleblower protection coordinator's role is to educate Agency employees about prohibitions against retaliation for protected disclosures and the rights and remedies against retaliation. For more information, please visit the OIG's whistleblower protection [webpage](#).

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