



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

In 2005, EPA's Office of Administration and Resources Management introduced new policies to improve EPA's ability to demonstrate grant results. We sought to determine how these policies compare with techniques used by leading nongovernmental organizations.

Background

EPA historically faced challenges demonstrating grant program impacts on human health and the environment. As recently as 2004, Congress, the Government Accountability Office, and the EPA Office of Inspector General expressed concerns about the Agency's ability to demonstrate the results of the \$4 billion per year it grants to States, localities, tribes, nonprofits, and other organizations.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional and Public Liaison at (202) 566-2391.

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2005/20050602-2005-P-00016.pdf

EPA's Efforts to Demonstrate Grant Results Mirror Nongovernmental Organizations' Practices

What We Found

EPA recently took steps to improve its ability to demonstrate results from grants. In 2005, EPA instituted Results and Pre-Award policies intended to (1) ensure clear links between grant results and EPA goals, and (2) enhance oversight of grantee qualifications and performance. We found the practices required by these policies generally consistent with practices of leading nongovernmental organizations that fund environmental projects and emphasize grantee performance measurement. We identified nongovernmental organization techniques that EPA could consider to augment its policies.

What We Suggest

We suggest that EPA:

- Track implementation of the Results and Pre-Award Policies to ensure that EPA staff and grantees follow the policies and better demonstrate grant results.
- Adopt the technique of providing sample logic models that lead grant applicants toward established environmental and human health improvement goals.
- Consider providing an online resource for grantees that provides training, examples, and a question and answer bulletin board, as recommended by the Office of Water. This one-stop resource could provide grantees with extensive information about how to meet results reporting requirements.
- In order to ensure that grant dollars fund projects with a high chance of success, EPA could include grantees' past performance as a ranking criterion when competing discretionary grants and selecting successful applicants.
- Conduct a retrospective evaluation of a sample of EPA grant results to provide the Agency with valuable information about how grant dollars contributed in the past to environmental and human health improvements.

EPA agreed with our suggestions, but recommended conducting a retrospective evaluation in 3 or 4 years, once the new results policy has been implemented, rather than engaging in a retrospective evaluation now.