



At a Glance

Why We Did This Project

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted this audit to determine whether internal controls for the Senior Environmental Employment (SEE) program cooperative agreements provide reasonable assurance that the agency is complying with the Environmental Programs Assistance Act (P.L. 98-313) and EPA guidance and policies.

According to the EPA, the SEE program provides opportunities for workers at least 55 years old to assist the EPA on federal, state and local environmental projects, including pollution prevention, abatement and control. Also, workers can assist with administrative, clerical, technical and professional support.

This report addresses the following:

- *Operating efficiently and effectively.*

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EPA Needs to Improve Oversight of the Senior Environmental Employment Program

What We Found

The EPA's oversight of SEE cooperative agreements needs to be improved. Specifically, we found that the EPA did not:

- Timely comply with requirements to document SEE program monitoring reviews.
- Document oversight of SEE organizations' quarterly reports or communications with the SEE organizations.
- Provide adequate communications or guidance for SEE monitors regarding their responsibilities.
- Update the 2010 pay scale that established the worker (SEE enrollee) minimum and maximum hourly wages.

The SEE program can reduce the risk of fraud, waste and abuse and make the program more efficient through additional controls.

These findings resulted from factors such as EPA project officers having difficulties with the Grantee Compliance Database, not realizing that documenting oversight was required, and lack of mechanisms to effectively provide information or review reimbursement paid to grantees.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the Assistant Administrator for Mission Support implement internal controls to verify that required annual baseline monitoring reports are timely placed into the database, develop a mechanism or quality review process for the SEE program manager to verify effective oversight, and implement additional communications and guidance. In addition, we recommend that the Assistant Administrator issue a memorandum to the leadership of program and regional offices that participate in the SEE program to emphasize compliance with guidance and communication provided by the program. Further, we recommend that the Assistant Administrator revise guidance on reviewing and setting wage rates.

The EPA agreed to take corrective actions on all five recommendations and provided planned corrective action dates. The agency's planned corrective actions and completion dates meet the intent of the recommendations. Corrective actions are completed for Recommendation 2 and pending for the other recommendations.