



# At a Glance

## Why We Did This Project

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) performed this audit to determine whether the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) took action to complete OIG recommendations regarding the preservation of email and text messages, and the improvement of the agency's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) process. We followed up on actions the agency took to address the 13 recommendations from the following prior reports:

- 1) [No. 13-P-0433](#), *Congressionally Requested Inquiry Into the EPA's Use of Private and Alias Email Accounts*.
- 2) [No. 14-P-0262](#), *Briefing Report: Review of EPA's Process to Release Information Under the Freedom of Information Act*.
- 3) [No. 17-P-0062](#), *Congressionally Requested Audit: EPA Needs to Improve Processes for Preserving Text Messages as Federal Records*.

## This report addresses the following:

- *Operating efficiently and effectively.*

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List of [OIG reports](#).

## Follow-Up Audit: EPA Took Steps to Improve Records Management

### What We Found

The EPA completed all corrective actions for 13 past audit recommendations related to its records management and FOIA practices. Two recommendations from Report No. 17-P-0062, *Congressionally Requested Audit: EPA Needs to Improve Processes for Preserving Text Messages as Federal Records*, with corrective action completion dates of September 30, 2018, were completed by the established milestone dates during our audit.

**The EPA's FOIA guidance needs updating to comply with federal requirements.**

In Report No. 14-P-0262, we recommended that the EPA create an agencywide FOIA policy and procedure. On September 30, 2014, the EPA's Chief Information Officer (CIO) issued agencywide directives in the form of a FOIA policy (CIO 2157.1) and a FOIA procedure (CIO 2157-P-01.1), which satisfied the intent of the original recommendation.

While the EPA completed corrective actions on all of the past recommendations, the FOIA statute changed in 2016 and the EPA updated its FOIA regulations in June 2019. Consequently, the EPA's FOIA policy and procedure again require management review to determine whether updates are needed.

### Recommendation and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend in this report that the General Counsel issue an updated agency Freedom of Information Act policy and procedure. The agency agreed with the OIG's findings and recommendation. Management stated it updated the agency's FOIA regulations on June 26, 2019, and plans to issue a new FOIA policy and procedure. The agency provided us with December 5, 2019, as the planned completion date for issuing the FOIA policy and procedure updates. We consider the recommendation resolved with corrective actions pending.