



At a Glance

Why We Did This Project

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Inspector General conducted this audit to determine whether (1) the Office of Research and Development oversees and monitors grants awarded to universities in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and procedures, and (2) university grantees are completing agreed-upon work that meets the defined purpose of the grant.

The purpose of post-award monitoring is to conduct oversight and monitor a recipient's performance and management of assistance agreements. There are two main programmatic oversight activities: baseline monitoring and advanced monitoring.

This report addresses the following:

- *Operating efficiently and effectively.*
- *Improving EPA research programs.*

This project addresses a key EPA [management challenge](#):

- *Improving data quality and filling identified data gaps.*

Address inquiries to our public affairs office at (202) 566-2391 or OIG_WEBCOMMENTS@epa.gov.

List of [OIG reports](#).

EPA Needs to Improve Oversight of Research Assistance Agreements

What We Found

Although the ORD has recently made improvements to its oversight of research assistance agreements, we found that project officers did not always complete baseline monitoring accurately or in a timely manner, enforce recipient compliance with progress reporting requirements, or document the review of recipient progress reports.

The EPA's lack of compliance with assistance agreement oversight requirements can put EPA research funds at risk.

In addition, of the 12 sampled assistance agreements, 11 were completed and final reports were submitted. Two of the 11 final recipient reports did not demonstrate that agreed-upon work was completed. Also, we found that the ORD is not consistently posting research assistance agreement results on its website.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We recommend that the assistant administrator for Research and Development:

- Verify that baseline monitoring and post-award monitoring responsibilities are completed accurately and in a timely manner.
- Require that project officers enforce recipient reporting requirements and document reviews of interim and final reports.
- Require that final report reviews include a narrative noting how the project officer determined that results were achieved.
- Verify that the Grantee Research Project Results website is updated and accurate.
- Provide training to all ORD project officers on required post-award monitoring responsibilities.
- Update and correct the Grantee Research Project Results website for missing and inaccurate information.
- Require that all abstracts, report summaries, and publications for all ORD research assistance agreements be placed on the EPA's website.

The EPA agreed with our recommendations and provided acceptable planned corrective actions and estimated completion dates. The recommendations are resolved with corrective actions pending.

Noteworthy Achievement

The ORD's National Center for Environmental Research developed and implemented a final report checklist following discussions with the OIG.