



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

Federal law (Title 5 United States Code Section 2301, *Merit System Principles*) intends that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) use its workforce efficiently and effectively. From 1982 to 2010, EPA had a position management program that provided a means to ensure compliance with this intent. We reviewed EPA's position management program to evaluate its effectiveness.

Background

Position management provides the operational linkage between human capital goals and the placement of qualified individuals into authorized positions. Over the last 5 years, EPA has averaged a little over 18,000 positions in its organizational structure. Historically, EPA's personnel strength has remained stable regardless of budget increases or decreases.

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

The full report is at:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2011/20110222-11-P-0136.pdf

EPA Needs Better Agency-Wide Controls Over Staff Resources

What We Found

EPA does not enforce a coherent program of position management to assure the efficient and effective use of its workforce. While some organizational elements have independently established programs to control their resources, there is no Agency-wide effort to ensure that personnel are put to the best use. Prior to April 2010, EPA had the *Position Management and Control Manual*, which required an Agency-wide program. However this manual was not enforced and in April 2010 it was cancelled without replacement. According to the cancellation memorandum, the manual was eliminated because Office of Administration and Resources Management (OARM) officials believed EPA had other mechanisms in place to appropriately manage and control its positions. However, the other mechanisms do not provide similar effects, controls, or documentation. Without an Agency-wide position management program, EPA leadership lacks reasonable assurance that it is using personnel in an effective and efficient manner to achieve mission results.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Assistant Administrator for Administration and Resources Management establish an Agency-wide workforce program that includes controls to ensure regular reviews of positions for efficiency, effectiveness, and mission accomplishment.

The Assistant Administrator for Administration and Resources Management neither agreed nor disagreed with the recommendation in his comments. However, the refined local-level workforce plan process could be responsive if EPA established effective oversight and accountability for it. The Deputy Director, Office of Human Resources, stated the Agency would ensure that program and regional offices prepared the local-level workforce plans for use in the budget process. However, OARM did not have the authority to require the program and regional offices to make any staffing changes based upon the results of the local-level workforce plans. OARM does not currently provide the information to the Administrator for decisionmaking purposes, but will provide it if requested. Adequate Agency management controls should ensure the timely and thorough completion of the plans by each regional and program office, and timely distribution to the Administrator and Deputy Administrator to determine whether staffing changes are necessary. The recommendation is unresolved pending the Agency's 90-day response.