



# At a Glance

## Why We Did This Review

We sought to determine what progress the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) made in completing its corrective action plan to close out the Agency-level weakness on data standards.

## Background

In fiscal year 2005, EPA recognized data standards as an Agency-level weakness, and the Office of Environmental Information developed a corrective action plan to address this weakness. EPA's corrective action plan was based on completing three concurrent courses of action. These actions include (1) communicating with EPA program offices on the need to implement data standards more fully, (2) tracking program implementation of data standards, and (3) verifying progress in implementing data standards.

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

The full report is at:  
[www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2012/20120605-12-P-0519.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2012/20120605-12-P-0519.pdf)

## ***EPA Data Standards Plan Completed But Additional Steps Are Needed***

### What We Found

Although EPA completed the steps listed in its corrective action plan to close out the Agency-level weakness on data standards, the actions taken were either incomplete or lacked steps to help management determine the overall effectiveness of the Agency's implementation of data standards. In particular, we determined that EPA:

- Developed a data standards training program. However, management took no steps to identify who needed the training, track whether the appropriate personnel took the training, or obtain feedback from staff on the training to ascertain the training's effectiveness.
- Created data standards report cards. However, these report cards are inaccurate because EPA offices did not update the system used to create the report cards. Also, the report card format is such that management could not clearly see whether individual offices were in compliance with data standards.
- Completed two conformance reviews to determine system compliance with the data standards. However, management made no plans to conduct additional reviews.

### What We Recommend

Based on our on-going discussions with EPA officials, we modified the draft report recommendations to be consistent with the new strategy EPA plans to take to implement data standards. As such, among other recommendations, we recommend that the Assistant Administrator for Environmental Information:

- Update the data standards guidance available to EPA offices.
- Implement a new data standards communication plan.
- Provide specific instructions to EPA offices for updating the Registry of EPA Applications and Databases.
- Create a high-level data standards report card for senior executives.
- Develop a new strategy for ensuring compliance with data standards.

### Planned Agency Corrective Actions

The Agency concurred with the recommendations and provided a complete corrective action plan to address our revised recommendations.