



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

To examine management controls, we reviewed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) performance using the Office of Management and Budget's Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART). We specifically sought to determine (1) how EPA scored overall, and (2) if there are areas that require management attention.

Background

PART is a diagnostic tool designed to assess the management and performance of Federal programs. It is used to evaluate a program's overall effectiveness and drive a focus on program results. PART examines performance in four programmatic areas:

1. Program Purpose and Design
2. Strategic Planning
3. Program Management
4. Program Results/Accountability

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

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2007/20070912-2007-P-00033.pdf

Using the Program Assessment Rating Tool as a Management Control Process

What We Found

PART is a good diagnostic tool and management control process to assess program performance and focus on achieving results. However, as currently designed, programs can be rated "adequate" with a PART score of just 50 percent. As a result, EPA programs with low scores in the Program Results/Accountability section are receiving overall passing or adequate scores. This heightens the risk that actual program results may not be achieved, and detracts from PART's overall focus on program results.

Currently, EPA does not have a management control organizational element with overall responsibility for conducting program evaluations. Also, EPA has not allocated sufficient resources to conduct evaluations on a broad scale. PART results show that for nearly 60 percent of its programs, EPA did not conduct independent evaluations of sufficient scope and quality on a regular basis to evaluate program effectiveness and support program improvements. With the difficulty EPA faces in measuring results, coupled with the absence of regular program evaluations, there is a heightened risk that programs may not be achieving their intended results.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) modify the Performance Improvement Initiative criteria to provide an ongoing incentive for program managers to raise Program Results/Accountability PART scores. We also recommend that OMB increase the transparency of PART results scores to demonstrate the relationship between results scores and the overall PART ratings. OMB provided oral and written comments on an earlier discussion draft of the report. Their comments were incorporated into this report. OMB did not provide a written response to the official draft report.

We recommend that the EPA Deputy Administrator increase the use of program evaluation to improve program performance by establishing policy/procedures requiring program evaluations of EPA's programs. We also recommend that the Deputy Administrator designate a senior Agency official responsible for conducting and supporting program evaluations, and allocate sufficient funds/resources to conduct systematic evaluations on a regular basis. On August 23, 2007, EPA responded that it agreed with the recommendations.