



# Report in Brief

March 08, 2023

## Background

The U.S. Department of Commerce (the Department) and its bureaus are required to comply with federal law to secure information technology (IT) systems through the cost-effective use of managerial, operational, and technical controls.

Active Directories—critical components of IT infrastructure—maintain logical structures, known as domains, to manage network resources, including network users, workstations, servers, printers, databases, and system configurations. Across the Department, there are more than 100 Active Directory installations of varying sizes. Active Directories contain sensitive information.

We previously conducted audits of Active Directories at three Department bureaus: United States Patent and Trademark Office, Census Bureau, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. We found similar deficiencies at all three bureaus, resulting in Active Directories being susceptible to cyberattacks.

Although each bureau has since taken action to implement our recommendations, we are publishing this capstone report to better inform the Department of the recurring issues we observed in these audits.

## Why We Did This Review

Our objective was to identify the remaining Department Active Directories, which have not been reviewed by the Office of Inspector General (OIG), and summarize past OIG work related to the management of Active Directories.

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

### Capstone Report: Effective Reviews Are Needed to Enhance the Security Posture of the Department's Active Directories

OIG-23-013-A

## WHAT WE FOUND

We found the following:

- I. A lack of adequate Active Directory security reviews caused similar issues across multiple Department bureaus.
- II. The Department does not have a policy for regular Active Directory security reviews.

Additionally, we noted that bureau Active Directories were using outdated password settings that conflict with zero trust requirements (we discuss this in an “Other Matter” section of the report).

## WHAT WE RECOMMEND

We recommend that the Deputy Secretary of Commerce:

- I. Direct the Department's Chief Information Officer to establish a Department-wide policy for periodic reviews of Active Directories to include frequency of review and use of specialized tools.