

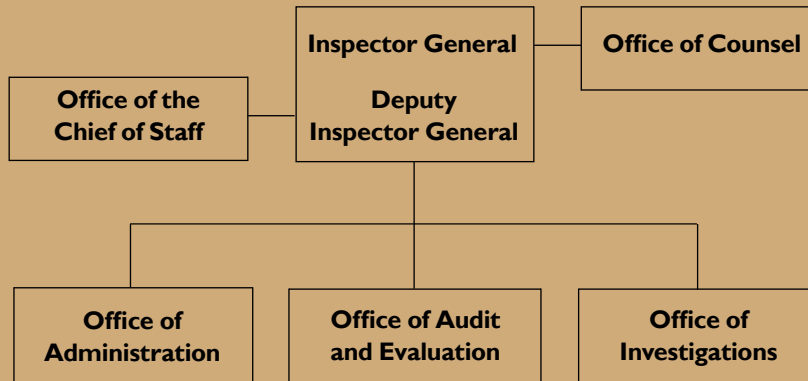
The background of the page is a blue-tinted aerial photograph of a city grid. The grid lines are white and form a complex pattern of squares and rectangles. Overlaid on this grid are several thick, curved, light-blue lines that sweep across the image from the top left towards the bottom right, creating a sense of motion and depth. The overall color palette is monochromatic, consisting of various shades of blue and white.

Semiannual Report to Congress

For the period ending

**September 30,
2024**

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



Oversight Areas

Office of the Secretary
Bureau of Economic Analysis
Bureau of Industry and Security
U.S. Census Bureau
U.S. Economic Development Administration
Economics and Statistics Administration
First Responder Network Authority
International Trade Administration
Minority Business Development Agency
National Institute of Standards and Technology
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Technical Information Service
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
United States Patent and Trademark Office

OIG Main Number

Inspector General 202-793-3331

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**U.S. Department of Commerce
Office of Inspector General**

Semiannual Report to Congress

For the period ending September 30, 2024



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FROM THE ACTING INSPECTOR GENERAL

I am pleased to present the U.S. Department of Commerce (the Department) Office of Inspector General's (OIG's) *Semiannual Report to Congress* for the 6 months ending September 30, 2024. This report summarizes oversight work that we initiated and completed during this semiannual period on important Department programs and operations.

Our Office of Investigations (OI) addressed a wide range of criminal, civil, and administrative issues across the full spectrum of Department activities. In some cases, our work enabled the Department to take action proactively to protect federal resources. In other circumstances, as we describe in more detail in this semiannual report, these efforts helped hold accountable people and entities who engaged in misconduct that varied from a fraudulent procurement scheme to whistleblower retaliation.

To take one example, OI recently completed a joint investigation with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) OIG into allegations that a principal investigator (PI) of a sub-recipient of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA grants and research support agreements failed to disclose his affiliations with and support from the People's Republic of China in connection with his work as PI on three federal research grants. The U.S. Department of Justice reached a settlement agreement to resolve the allegations, in which the sub-recipient agreed to repay the United States more than \$300,000 in grant funds.

Our audit and evaluation work has likewise identified opportunities for the Department to make improvements that will allow it to more effectively protect public resources, ensure the safety and security of its information systems, and fulfill its mission to the American people. For example:

- We audited the National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service's (NESDIS') implementation of a cloud-based common ground system and found inadequacies with NESDIS' penetration testing and the cloud platform on which the system is built.
- We evaluated the United States Patent and Trademark Office's response to an exposure of domicile addresses and found that it did not fully comply with reporting and notification requirements.
- We audited the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network contract's device connection targets and found, among other issues, that First Responder Network Authority did not have adequate methods to measure the contractor's success or remediate performance deficiencies.
- We evaluated the National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST's) Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) Act workforce management and found that NIST surpassed hiring goals for CHIPS but did not develop a comprehensive workforce plan.
- We audited the U.S. Census Bureau's oversight of the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Contract and found that the bureau did not properly administer the contract or monitor the contractor's performance. As a result, the bureau could not

ensure the contractor complied with requirements and could have accepted substandard performance, potentially wasting millions of taxpayer dollars.

For each of these reports—and in our other oversight work—we made actionable recommendations that, if implemented, will help address the weaknesses that we identified and thereby enhance the Department’s ability to fulfill its mission.

Our talented staff deserves the credit for the work set forth in this semiannual report, and I look forward to OIG continuing to identify ways that the Department can improve its programs and operations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill Baisinger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "J".

JILL BAISINGER
Acting Inspector General

HIGHLIGHTS



\$18,756,107.66

Criminal, Civil, &
Administrative
Recoveries

17

Audit, Evaluation, &
Inspection Products



33

Projects in
Progress

12

Investigative Reports



546

Hotline Contacts

COMPLETED WORKS BY OVERSIGHT AREA



DEPARTMENT-WIDE MANAGEMENT

THE DEPARTMENT COMPLIED WITH PAYMENT INTEGRITY INFORMATION ACT REQUIREMENTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023 (OIG-24-020-I)

We conducted this review to determine whether the U.S. Department of Commerce (the Department) complied with the Payment Integrity Information Act of 2019 (PIIA), which is intended to improve efforts to identify and reduce government-wide improper payments. Broadly defined, *improper payments* are those the federal government has made in an incorrect amount or to the wrong recipient. Improper payments can negatively impact the public's trust in the federal government and distract from the benefits of federal programs.

PIIA sets forth requirements for executive agencies, including but not limited to (1) conducting program-specific risk assessments for each program or activity, (2) publishing improper payment estimates for programs susceptible to significant improper payments, and (3) reporting on corrective actions to reduce improper payments.

Our objective was to determine the Department's compliance with PIIA for fiscal year (FY) 2023. We also assessed the Department's efforts related to preventing and reducing improper payments and unknown payments. We concluded that the Department complied with the PIIA criteria for FY 2023 based on our review. We did not identify any actions needed to further improve prevention and reduction measures within the Department.

THE DEPARTMENT CAN IMPROVE PROCESSES TO ENSURE LOCALITY PAY IS ACCURATE (OIG-24-025-A)

We initiated an audit to determine whether the Department ensures employees receive the correct locality pay in accordance with applicable regulations and policy. To address our objective, we assessed the Department's controls and monitoring for establishing and updating locality pay; reviewed documentation supporting employees' locality rates; and reviewed documentation confirming employees complied with their telework agreements. We found that Department personnel did not timely initiate or process changes in employee duty stations and that the Department could not demonstrate that all teleworking employees reported to the office as required by their telework agreements. We issued four recommendations related to tracking in-office work hours for teleworking employees, implementing internal controls, reviewing duty station changes and recovering any excess salary amounts, and ensuring employees are assigned the correct locality pay and telework or remote work status.

BIENNIAL AUDIT OF THE DEPARTMENT'S COMPLIANCE WITH GEOSPATIAL DATA ACT REQUIREMENTS (OIG-24-035-A)

The Geospatial Data Act (GDA) requires inspectors general to audit their department's collection, production, acquisition, maintenance, distribution, use, and preservation of geospatial data not less than once every 2 years. This was our third audit in fulfillment of this requirement. Our objective was to assess the Department's compliance with the 13 covered agency responsibilities in 43 U.S.C. § 2808(a). To meet this objective, we reviewed our audit results from 2020 and 2022 and obtained updated information from the Department for each of the 13 requirements. In addition, we independently tested the Department's geospatial metadata published on Data.gov, the government's open data site. We found that the Department was complying with 12 of the 13 GDA requirements. However, our testing revealed that the Department's geospatial metadata is not always complete. Without ensuring a consistent approach to completing geospatial metadata, the Department's geospatial data stakeholders could face challenges in making the most efficient and effective use of the Department's geospatial data portfolio.

We made a recommendation to coordinate with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Census Bureau (the Census Bureau) to review our test results, determine which missing metadata content is most significant for current users of geospatial data, and develop a plan (with goals and timeframes) to ensure more consistent completion of those fields.

JOINT INVESTIGATION RECOVERS SHIPMENTS FROM FRAUDULENT GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT SCHEME

On June 25, 2024, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) closed a joint investigation into allegations of a fraudulent government procurement scheme. The allegations involved multiple government vendors receiving fraudulent requests for quotes and purchase orders from Nigeria-based individuals impersonating the Department's and other agencies' acquisition and procurement officials. OIG identified 45 previously unknown victims and halted or recovered 27 shipments valued at more than \$2 million. OIG published a fraud alert identifying red flags of the scheme.

WISCONSIN RESIDENT SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR COVID-19 PROGRAM FRAUD

On September 12, 2024, OIG closed a Pandemic Response Accountability Committee Task Force investigation into allegations that a recipient of U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) funds may have misused these funds and made false certifications to SBA. OIG participates in the task force, providing critical support to agencies working together to investigate the significant volume of pandemic-related fraud allegations. The investigation concluded that the recipient falsified information in his application for SBA EIDL funds and attached forged tax documents to justify his business need for the funds. The recipient subsequently used the SBA EIDL funds for unapproved personal expenses. In August 2024, the recipient was sentenced in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin to 12 months and 1 day in prison on one count of wire fraud and one count of

money laundering. The recipient was also sentenced to 5 years of supervised release and ordered to pay restitution of \$149,900.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTOR SETTLES CIVIL FALSE CLAIMS ALLEGATIONS

On September 18, 2024, OIG closed an investigation into allegations that a government contractor knowingly made false claims by allocating indirect costs to government contracts and subcontracts when those costs should have been allocated to commercial or international contracts or treated as unallowable costs. In July 2023, the DOJ reached a settlement agreement pursuant to the Civil False Claims Act requiring the contractor to pay restitution to multiple federal agencies. The restitution included \$257,104 for the false claims loss to the Department.

REVIEWS OF SINGLE AUDITS

Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) (2 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] Part 200) requires non-federal entities that expend \$750,000 or more per year in federal awards to obtain an annual independent financial audit, referred to as a “single audit” (2 C.F.R. § 200.501). We conducted desk reviews on a judgmental sample of single audit reporting packages for which the Department is the cognizant or oversight agency. The objectives of the desk reviews included identifying quality issues that may warrant follow-up work, revisions to the reporting package, or appropriate management official attention. During the desk reviews, we examined the audit reporting packages, which included financial statements, federal award expenditures, and auditors’ reports, but not the auditors’ underlying documentation. We then determined whether the audit met *Uniform Guidance*, generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS) and American Institute of Certified Public Accountants audit standards.

During this period, we conducted desk reviews of 7 single audit reporting packages. The audits covered approximately \$129 million in total federal expenditures, including \$91 million in Department direct expenditures. We found 2 of the 7 audit reporting packages (about 29 percent) fully met federal reporting requirements, whereas the remaining 5 (71 percent) did not meet all requirements.

QUALITY CONTROL REVIEW OF THE PPA, LLP, SINGLE AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND RESEARCH FOUNDATION FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED 2021 (OIG-24-QCR-1)

OIG initiated a QCR of the audit of the University of Rhode Island Research Foundation for the FY ended June 30, 2021. PPA, LLP, performed the single audit. After reviewing PPA’s single audit report and related documentation, we assigned PPA a rating of *fail*. We concluded that PPA’s single audit was not conducted in accordance with applicable standards, specifically the *Generally Accepted Auditing Standards*, GAGAS, and *Uniform Guidance* for federal awards.



BUREAU OF INDUSTRY AND SECURITY

BIS' EXPORT LICENSE APPROVAL PROCESS REDUCES RISK OF THREATS FROM CHINA'S MILITARY-CIVILIAN FUSION STRATEGY, BUT BIS SHOULD TAKE ADDITIONAL STEPS TO MITIGATE RISKS OF UNAUTHORIZED TECHNOLOGY RELEASE TO CHINA'S MILITARY (OIG-24-036-A)

We conducted this audit to assess the adequacy of the Bureau of Industry and Security's (BIS') efforts to reduce the risk of threats from China's Military-Civilian Fusion strategy. We specifically reviewed BIS' process for approving export license applications, as well as its response to a related management alert we issued in October 2023.

Based on our sample of export license applications, we found that BIS' approval process was adequate in reducing the risk of controlled items being inappropriately approved for export to China for potential use to support China's military advancement. However, we also found that BIS, in consultation with other federal agencies, made a policy decision to exclude certain deemed exports and reexports from regulatory licensing requirements. (A deemed export is a release in the United States of technology to a foreign person; the release is "deemed" an export to the person's most recent country of citizenship or permanent residency.)

BIS and the other agencies concluded that subjecting U.S. companies to deemed export licensing requirements could impair U.S. innovation and technological leadership. Although we do not take issue with the decision itself, we focused on the need to appropriately address risks that may result from that decision, such as the release of U.S.-controlled advanced computing and semiconductor manufacturing technology and software source code to China that it could use to enhance its military capabilities. We accordingly recommended that BIS take further action to mitigate this risk.



U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

THE CENSUS BUREAU DID NOT EFFECTIVELY MANAGE AND MONITOR CONTRACTOR PERFORMANCE FOR PAID ADVERTISING IN THE 2020 CENSUS INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS CONTRACT ([OIG-24-021-A](#))

The Census Bureau awarded the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Contract (ICC) in August 2016 as part of a campaign to raise awareness and encourage response during the 2020 census. Our audit objective was to determine whether the bureau effectively managed selected ICC task orders related to paid advertising to ensure the desired outcomes were achieved. We reviewed four task orders, totaling \$436.5 million, related to the strategy, planning, and execution of the ICC's paid advertising component.

Overall, we found the Census Bureau did not properly administer the contract or monitor the contractor's performance in compliance with federal and Departmental regulations and policies. Contracting officers did not ensure that the task orders included the required measurable performance standards for the contractor and the methods for assessing the contractor's performance against the standards. The contracting officers' representatives also did not follow contract procedures for the quality assurance surveillance plans (QASPs), and they did not maintain supporting documentation for paid media invoices totaling \$363 million.

As a result, the Census Bureau could not ensure that the contractor complied with contractual requirements and could have accepted substandard performance, potentially wasting millions of taxpayer dollars. In particular, the \$363 million in payments for media services represent unsupported costs. We issued six recommendations to improve the administration and execution of contracts and task orders.



FIRST RESPONDER NETWORK AUTHORITY

In response to the terror attacks of 9/11, the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority) was established in 2012 as an independent authority within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to oversee the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN), a communications network dedicated to emergency responders and public safety.

In March 2017, FirstNet Authority signed a 25-year contract with AT&T for the construction and operation of the NPSBN. In June 2022, we announced two concurrent audits to determine whether FirstNet Authority is ensuring that AT&T is achieving the desired results for device connection targets and network coverage for each state and territory. We separated these objectives into three different components that include (1) the evolution of the desired results for device connection targets and network coverage as executed through contract modifications, (2) oversight of device connection targets, and (3) oversight of network coverage. This section summarizes those three audits and a related management alert, as well as an unrelated management alert on the February 2024 NPSBN network outage.

MANAGEMENT ALERT: THE NPSBN BAND 14 SIGNAL STRENGTH DOES NOT CONSISTENTLY PROVIDE ADEQUATE BAND 14 SERVICE FOR FIRST RESPONDERS (OIG-24-022-M)

During fieldwork for our audit to determine whether FirstNet Authority is ensuring that AT&T is achieving the desired results for NPSBN coverage for each state and territory, we observed an issue that poses a risk of overstating the coverage area and services the NPSBN provides. FirstNet Authority measures NPSBN Band 14 coverage at a signal strength over 15 times less powerful than the one AT&T uses to report its commercial non-Band 14 network to FirstNet Authority. This could indicate that the total area AT&T reports as Band 14 coverage is overstated, which could adversely impact NPSBN services and ultimately affect public safety users' ability to communicate with each other during emergencies. We believe that management attention is warranted to ensure that the NPSBN provides consistent, reliable service to public safety users. We proposed one action for NTIA and FirstNet Authority to consider in addressing this issue.

FIRSTNET AUTHORITY DID NOT ENSURE THE NATION'S FIRST RESPONDERS' NEEDS WERE CONTINUING TO BE MET TIMELY WHEN MODIFYING KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE NPSBN CONTRACT (OIG-24-024-A)

This report focuses on FirstNet Authority's modifications to the NPSBN contract, to include the rationale behind those changes and whether FirstNet Authority had an effective process for documenting decisions it made concerning those modifications. We found that FirstNet Authority did not consistently adhere to federal and Departmental regulations or demonstrate it received adequate value in return when it changed NPSBN contract requirements.

FirstNet Authority

- accepted AT&T's proposed nationwide coverage metrics and changed connection target requirements, which made it easier for AT&T to achieve milestone compliance and payments;
- delayed and reduced coverage and connection target requirements due to AT&T's nonperformance; and
- modified the payment method to pay AT&T early for coverage completion, despite AT&T's history of coverage problems.

We issued nine recommendations to ensure contract modifications are adequately supported, comply with applicable policies and regulations, and are in the best interests of the government and first responders.

FIRSTNET AUTHORITY'S LACK OF NPSBN CONTRACT OVERSIGHT FOR COVERAGE PUTS AT RISK FIRST RESPONDERS' ABILITY TO SERVE THE PUBLIC EFFECTIVELY (OIG-24-026-A)

This report focuses on FirstNet Authority's oversight of network coverage. We found that FirstNet Authority did not adequately assess AT&T's performance to ensure that it met the desired results for coverage in each state and territory. Specifically, FirstNet Authority did not independently verify AT&T's coverage claims to ensure accuracy before issuing performance-based payments. Consequently, FirstNet Authority cannot be certain that AT&T met network coverage requirements and that the government received the services for which it paid. As a result of the internal control deficiencies regarding the lack of independent verification of coverage claims for performance-based payments, we are questioning those payments as unsupported costs.

We issued five recommendations to improve contract oversight and execution for coverage requirements.

FIRSTNET AUTHORITY'S LACK OF CONTRACT OVERSIGHT FOR DEVICE CONNECTION TARGETS PUTS THE NPSBN AT RISK OF IMPACTING FIRST RESPONDERS' USE OF THE NETWORK (OIG-24-027-A)

This report focuses on FirstNet Authority's oversight of device connection targets. We found that FirstNet Authority did not adequately assess AT&T's performance to ensure it achieved the desired results for device connection targets for each state and territory. Specifically, FirstNet Authority did not

- develop measurable performance standards and methods of surveillance to assess if reported device connections complied with statutory and contract requirements;
- develop an adequate performance metric to accurately measure public safety use and adoption;
- review AT&T's quality control program results or consistently conduct audits of raw data; or

- remediate deficiencies for device connections.

We issued three recommendations to improve contract oversight and execution for device connection targets.

MANAGEMENT ALERT: FEBRUARY 2024 FIRSTNET AUTHORITY'S NATIONWIDE PUBLIC SAFETY BROADBAND NETWORK OUTAGE RAISED A SIGNIFICANT RISK TO THE READINESS OF FIRST RESPONDERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY (OIG-24-030-M)

FirstNet Authority's contract with AT&T requires the NPSBN to be a resilient, secure, and highly reliable broadband service with availability 99.99 percent of the time.

On February 22, 2024, AT&T customers, including NPSBN customers, experienced a nationwide outage of services. According to FirstNet Authority, the NPSBN was affected by the outage for about 3 hours. We met with 10 public safety agencies from fire, police, and emergency medical services disciplines to determine the impact of the outage. Although impacts to public safety agencies across the country varied, 9 of 10 agencies we spoke with were not contacted by AT&T or FirstNet Authority when the outage occurred. We also found that the impacted agencies had to rely on their own contingency plans to maintain communication during the approximately 3-hour NPSBN outage.

Notification of an outage and transparency regarding network performance are essential to maintaining confidence in the NPSBN within the public safety community. Without a reliable communication network during the outage, the safety of our nation's first responders was jeopardized and their ability to perform their critical mission was compromised. We proposed two actions for change to address the concerns presented in this management alert.



MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

MBDA GRANT RECIPIENT FALSIFIED PERFORMANCE DATA

On July 23, 2024, OIG closed an investigation into an allegation that a Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) grant recipient submitted false statements to MBDA when the recipient falsified performance data. OIG substantiated the allegation, and MBDA terminated the award. The grant recipient subsequently submitted a repayment in the amount of \$317,900.



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY

NIST SURPASSED HIRING GOALS FOR CHIPS BUT DID NOT DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE WORKFORCE PLAN (OIG-24-023-I)

Congress passed the Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) Act of 2022 (CHIPS Act) with the goal of helping to rebuild the domestic semiconductor industry and strengthen semiconductor research and development.

The CHIPS Act provides \$50 billion to the Department to support research and development, innovation, and manufacturing related to semiconductors. In addition, the CHIPS Act authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to issue up to \$75 billion in direct loans and loan guarantees.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is overseeing the Department's CHIPS program. NIST established two offices to implement the CHIPS program: the CHIPS Program Office (CPO), responsible for implementing the semiconductor incentives program, and the CHIPS Research and Development Office (CRDO), responsible for programs undertaking research and development activities. The initial CHIPS leadership team was announced in September 2022 and undertook hiring for the two offices.

The objective of our evaluation was to assess NIST's progress in meeting workforce hiring milestones for CPO and CRDO. We found that NIST surpassed its hiring goals for CPO and CRDO but did not develop a comprehensive workforce plan to meet its human capital needs. Without this plan, CPO and CRDO lack assurance that they have adequately aligned their resources to fulfill their mission or identified current and future staffing opportunities and constraints.

We made two recommendations to help NIST meet workforce needs for both the CHIPS program and future hiring efforts.

NIST OVERSTATED MEP'S ECONOMIC IMPACTS TO CONGRESS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS (OIG-24-037-I)

NIST's Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is a national network of 51 MEP Centers—in all 50 states and Puerto Rico—providing any U.S. manufacturer with resources to improve production processes, upgrade technological capabilities, and facilitate product innovation. The MEP mission is to enhance the productivity and technological performance of U.S. manufacturing.

NIST makes federal financial assistance awards in the form of cooperative agreements to state, university, and nonprofit organizations to operate centers. However, renewal funding for each center is contingent, in part, upon successful reviews and evaluations of its operations,

including its performance. NIST principally monitors MEP's performance through economic impact surveys completed by a center's clients. The intent of the survey is to capture quantified impacts on a client's employment, sales, investment, and cost savings that occurred over the last 12 months, as a result of the services received.

NIST uses economic impacts from survey responses not only to monitor center performance but also to gauge MEP's overall success. NIST reports MEP's economic impacts publicly in various ways, including to Congress, which uses the information to make annual funding decisions regarding MEP appropriations.

Our evaluation objective was to determine whether NIST's MEP effectively monitored and evaluated economic impact reporting. We found that NIST's inadequate oversight of the MEP economic impact reporting process resulted in inaccurate and unreliable economic impacts. Specifically, we found that (1) MEP's FY 2022 economic impacts are unreliable, including 48 percent of the total sales reported by centers we reviewed; (2) NIST overstated MEP's return on investment from FYs 2020 to 2023—notably by 34 percent in FY 2020; and (3) centers require clients to take MEP surveys, contrary to federal directive. We also reported another matter related to centers not accurately reporting program income earned—raising concerns about compliance with award terms and conditions.

We made eight recommendations to help NIST ensure accountability and data reliability in its reporting of MEP's economic impacts.



NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

INDEPENDENT PROGRAM EVALUATION OF NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA) FISHERIES PANDEMIC RELIEF PROGRAM ([OIG-24-018-I](#))

We contracted with the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), an independent firm, to perform this evaluation. The evaluation objective was to determine whether NOAA Fisheries grantees and subrecipients accounted for and expended pandemic relief funds provided under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) and subsequent funding authorizations in accordance with federal laws and regulations. Our office oversaw the evaluation's progress to ensure that IDA performed it in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's (CIGIE's) *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* (December 2020) and contract terms. However, IDA is solely responsible for the report and the conclusions expressed in it.

IDA made findings related to NOAA's oversight of funding for Tribes; the processes and internal controls to identify potential incorrect payments; and how quickly states, Tribes, and territories distribute funds. IDA made three recommendations for tracking funds and clarifying roles and responsibilities for distribution and oversight of funds.

THE PUERTO RICO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES NEEDS TO FULLY COMPLY WITH PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS WHEN EXECUTING NOAA AWARDS ([OIG-24-028-A](#))

The Jobos Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (JBNERR) is on the southeastern coast of Puerto Rico and encompasses 2,800 acres of diverse habitats. JBNERR's mission is to practice and promote coastal and estuarine stewardship. The Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (PRDNER) owns and operates JBNERR. NOAA annually allocates and distributes congressionally appropriated funds through PRDNER for JBNERR's operations, research, monitoring, training, education, and stewardship. NOAA has also provided PRDNER with funding for construction and disaster relief projects.

Our objectives were to determine whether PRDNER (1) claimed allowable, allocable, and reasonable costs and (2) met performance requirements of the grants. We reviewed \$1,676,515.45 in 182 claimed costs across nine JBNERR awards and found that PRDNER claimed costs that were generally allowable, allocable, and reasonable. However, PRDNER did

not comply with federal and Puerto Rico regulations for 18 of the 182 claimed costs that we reviewed. Specifically, PRDNER did not notify NOAA in writing or receive written approvals from NOAA for budget deviations prior to making some procurements and did not have supporting documentation or justifications for awards, as required. We also found PRDNER continues to face challenges in consistently meeting performance requirements for five of seven JBNERR operational awards, with a total of 26 out of 57 tasks, or 46 percent, not completed.

We made five recommendations to improve documentation practices and financial oversight and to help ensure JBNERR has sufficient staffing and support to meet performance requirements.

NOAA'S OFFICE OF SPACE COMMERCE EFFORTS TO PROVIDE SPACE SITUATIONAL AWARENESS SERVICES HAVE BEEN DELAYED AND NEED A REALISTIC SCHEDULE (OIG-24-031-A)

Objects orbiting Earth such as satellites and debris continue to increase in number, making space contested and congested. Preventing collisions is crucial to protecting the safety of space activities and assets.

In June 2018, the White House issued *Space Policy Directive-3, National Space Traffic Management Policy* (SPD-3), acknowledging that the number of space objects was increasing while the activity and architecture to ensure space safety, including existing traffic management activities, was becoming inadequate.

Currently, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) is providing basic space situational awareness data and potential collision notifications to space operators. SPD-3 directs the transfer of certain responsibilities for providing data and services from DOD to the Department, specifically to NOAA's Office of Space Commerce (OSC), which is responsible for the coordination of space-related issues, programs, and initiatives within the Department.

Our audit objective was to assess OSC's progress in providing space situational awareness data and space traffic management services in accordance with SPD-3. We found that (1) OSC is behind schedule in providing basic space situational awareness data and services and (2) a new approach to space traffic management is not yet defined and remains a distant goal.

We made five recommendations to help OSC develop a realistic program timeline and meet its SPD-3 responsibilities.

A LACK OF PROGRAM MANAGEMENT CONTROLS AND ATTENTION TO IT SECURITY THREATENS THE SUCCESS OF NOAA'S EFFORT TO IMPLEMENT A CLOUD-BASED COMMON GROUND SYSTEM (OIG-24-034-A)

NOAA's National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS) provides access to global environmental data from satellites and other sources. Current NESDIS ground systems process data from NOAA and non-NOAA satellites and other observing systems. The computing architecture for many of NESDIS' ground systems is currently located "on premises" rather than in the cloud and was developed with unique designs specific to each mission.

NESDIS is transitioning some functionality from its current satellite ground systems to its cloud-based NESDIS Common Cloud Framework (NCCF). The NCCF is intended to provide greater flexibility, efficiency, cybersecurity, and cost effectiveness for the next generation of NESDIS missions.

Our audit objective was to assess NESDIS' progress implementing the NCCF. We found that (1) NESDIS' effort to implement the NCCF lacks fundamental project management practices set forth in Department policy; (2) NOAA is not reporting the NCCF's financial, project, and performance data to the federal information technology (IT) dashboard; (3) NESDIS' penetration testing of the NCCF has been inadequate; and (4) the NCCF is built on a cloud platform that cannot support its security requirements.

We made 11 recommendations to help NOAA ensure that the NCCF has appropriate management controls, complies with policy requirements, and meets security requirements.

NOAA SUB-RECIPIENT SETTLES ALLEGATIONS THAT A RESEARCH SCIENTIST FAILED TO DISCLOSE AFFILIATIONS WITH AND SUPPORT FROM A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT

On September 20, 2024, OIG closed a joint investigation with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) OIG into allegations that a principal investigator (PI) of a sub-recipient of NOAA and NASA grants and research support agreements failed to disclose his affiliations with and/or funding from the People's Republic of China (PRC) in connection with his work as PI on three federal research grants. In particular, the PI did not disclose that he was receiving funding from PRC during the period of the grants in connection with (1) his employment with Wuhan University, a public university in China; (2) his participation in a Chinese talent plan, a program established by the PRC to recruit individuals with knowledge of or access to foreign technology intellectual property; and (3) grants that funded his research efforts for projects in China from the National Natural Science Foundation of China and other Chinese funding sources. During the investigation, the NOAA sub-recipient terminated the PI's employment. In September 2024, the DOJ reached a settlement agreement to resolve the allegations. The sub-recipient agreed to repay the United States \$313,574 in grant funds, of which \$216,256 went directly to NOAA.

NOAA SUPERVISOR FIRED, DEBARRED, AND SENTENCED IN FEDERAL COURT FOR MAKING FALSE STATEMENTS DURING SECURITY CLEARANCE PROCESS

On July 19, 2024, OIG closed an investigation into allegations that a NOAA employee made false statements while applying for a security clearance. OIG substantiated allegations that the NOAA employee made false statements on his security clearance application form, when background investigators interviewed him under oath, and when he signed an affidavit regarding his security clearance application. The NOAA employee pleaded guilty in federal court to making false statements and falsifying government records and was sentenced to time served and 2 years of supervised release. Separately, NOAA removed the employee from government service, and the Department subsequently debarred the employee for 3 years.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTOR AGREES TO PAY \$400,000 TO RESOLVE FALSE CLAIMS ACT ALLEGATIONS

On September 23, 2024, OIG closed an investigation into allegations that a contractor sold counterfeit IT equipment to various government customers, including NOAA. The investigation determined that from June 2018 through August 2022, the contractor knowingly sold multiple counterfeit IT products to NOAA and other government customers. In July 2024, the DOJ reached a settlement agreement pursuant to the Civil False Claims Act that required the contractor to pay \$400,000 in restitution to the government.

NOAA SUB-GRANTEE FALSELY CERTIFIED EXPENSES

On September 5, 2024, OIG closed an investigation into allegations that a NOAA sub-grantee falsely certified that their expenses were in line with their NOAA subaward budget. OIG determined the grantee made overpayments to the sub-grantee on 24 subawards, totaling more than \$3.3 million above actual expenses. OIG referred the case to NOAA for administrative action, and NOAA subsequently disallowed more than \$3.1 million based on the investigation.



NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION

NTIA'S AWARD PROCESSES LEAVE TRIBAL BROADBAND GRANTS VULNERABLE TO FRAUD AND DUPLICATION ([OIG-24-019-A](#))

NTIA administers the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP), a \$3 billion grant program aimed at expanding broadband Internet access and adoption by Native American communities. We audited NTIA's progress in implementing the TBCP to determine whether NTIA properly disbursed the program's federal funds. For this report, we reviewed awards made as of December 2022, during the first round of TBCP funding.

Overall, we found that NTIA did not adequately design and implement the award process to ensure that TBCP funds were awarded only for eligible proposed service areas. For the awards we reviewed, we determined that NTIA did not independently verify that grant recipients needed funding for broadband infrastructure deployment, nor did it consistently document its process for reviewing TBCP applications. As a result of these issues, the TBCP's fraud risk is higher, and NTIA could not provide assurance that TBCP awards were made to Tribes that did not have access to broadband and actually needed the funds.

We issued four recommendations, including to: implement a formal policy and procedures for validating applicants' eligibility, independently validate TBCP recipients' need for funding (including past awards), implement a quality assurance process during grant application review, and improve documentation during the award process.



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

A 3-YEAR EXPOSURE OF PRIVACY ACT-PROTECTED DATA REVEALED USPTO MISMANAGEMENT IN SAFEGUARDING THE SENSITIVE PII OF TRADEMARK FILERS ([OIG-24-029-I](#))

In June 2023, we learned of the exposure of domicile addresses at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) through widespread reporting by the news media. We met with representatives from the Trademarks Organization and USPTO leadership in early August 2023 to gain a better understanding of the incident. We initiated a follow-up review of the actions USPTO took to address the data exposure. During our fieldwork, we identified additional findings that warranted an evaluation report.

Our objective was to assess USPTO's actions in response to the exposure of domicile addresses to determine whether USPTO complied with federal and Department IT security standards. We found that USPTO mishandled the required reporting and notification to the affected trademark filers after domicile addresses had been exposed for 3 years. We also found that USPTO leadership allowed domicile addresses to remain publicly accessible after they were aware of the exposure, risking unauthorized disclosures in violation of the Privacy Act. Additionally, USPTO did not report that additional sensitive personally identifiable information was exposed during the incident or notify the affected filers that the additional data had been exposed. Lastly, the Department's Chief Privacy Officer did not assist USPTO in responding to this incident because of a lapse in the Department reporting process. We made 10 recommendations to improve reporting processes and to implement controls to address IT security incidents.

On April 19, 2024, after the conclusion of our evaluation, USPTO discovered that 14,359 domicile addresses that should have been hidden from public view were inadvertently exposed during the transition to a new IT system. Also exposed during this incident were the bar information of 16,548 attorneys and the email addresses of 33,501 trademark owners. USPTO concluded that this data was exposed between August 23, 2023, and April 19, 2024. USPTO also detected a separate incident affecting patents on March 28, 2024, which exposed the patent application numbers and titles of the inventions between February 5, 2024, and March 29, 2024. Although USPTO took prompt action to report and notify affected individuals of these incidents, we have serious concerns about USPTO's recent history of repeated exposures of sensitive data. These additional exposures reinforce the importance of promptly addressing our recommendations.

WORK IN PROGRESS

The following is a list of audits and evaluations we initiated or continued work on during this reporting period but for which we have not yet issued a final report. Each engagement is listed by title, followed by its objective.

DEPARTMENT-WIDE

Audit of Grants Enterprise Management System (GEMS) Program Implementation

To assess the Department's management and implementation of the GEMS program.

Audit of the Department's Enterprise Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation (ECDM) Program

To assess the effectiveness of the Department's ECDM Program.

FY 2024 Department Consolidated Financial Statements

To determine whether the financial statements are presented fairly, in all material respects, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The audit will also consider the Department's internal controls over financial reporting and test compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements that could have a direct and material effect on the financial statements.

BUREAU OF INDUSTRY AND SECURITY

Audit of BIS' Enforcement Efforts to Combat China's Military-Civilian Fusion Strategy (audit 2)

To assess the adequacy of actions BIS has taken to enforce export controls for China.

Audit of BIS' Enforcement of Russia and Belarus Export Controls

To assess the actions taken by BIS to detect and prosecute violations of Russia and Belarus export controls.

Evaluation of BIS' Cyber Incident Detection and Response

To assess the adequacy of actions taken by BIS when detecting and responding to cyber incidents in accordance with federal and Departmental requirements.

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

Audit of the Census Bureau's 2020 Post-Enumeration Survey (PES)

To assess the validity of the 2020 PES results as they relate to overcounts and undercounts.

Evaluation of Census Bureau Workforce Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention

To evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies the Bureau uses to support its recruitment, hiring, and retention of employees in mission-critical positions.

Audit of Census Bureau American Community Survey

To determine whether the Bureau has implemented adequate data collection procedures to ensure American Community Survey estimates are reliable.

U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Audit of CARES Act Grants Recipients Through the U.S. Economic Development Administration's (EDA's) Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Program

To determine whether costs claimed by CARES Act RLF grant recipients were allowable, allocable, and reasonable.

Audit of EDA's Review Process for Selecting Technology and Innovation Hub (Tech Hub) Awardees

To determine whether EDA has an adequate review and selection award process to ensure grant recipients met the Tech Hub program requirements.

FIRST RESPONDER NETWORK AUTHORITY

Audit of the NPSBN's Services During the Maui Wildfires

To assess FirstNet Authority's NPSBN services in response to the Maui, HI, fires.

Audit of FirstNet Authority's Oversight of Service Availability for the NPSBN

To determine whether FirstNet Authority is ensuring that the NPSBN is achieving service availability requirements.

MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Audit of the MBDA Business Center Program

To determine the adequacy of MBDA's oversight of the MBDA Business Center Program to ensure requirements are met.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY

Audit of NIST Cooperative Agreements with Ohio Department of Development

To determine whether the Ohio Department of Development complied with award terms and conditions.

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Audit of Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO) Class B Ship Acquisition

To assess OMAO's management and oversight of the Class B ship acquisition.

Audit of the Space Weather Follow-On Lagrange-I (SWFO-LI) Project's Progress Preparing for Launch and Operations

To assess the SWFO-LI project's progress preparing its satellite for launch and operations.

Audit of NOAA's Geostationary Extended Observations (GeoXO) Program Implementation

To assess NOAA's progress implementing the GeoXO program.

Evaluation of the National Weather Service’s (NWS’) Protection of Operational Technology

To determine whether NWS has implemented effective security controls for its critical operational technology.

Audit of NWS Hurricane Forecasting and Warning Performance

To assess NWS progress toward improving hurricane forecasts and warnings.

Audit of the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture’s Costs Claimed through CARES Act and Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) Funds

To determine whether the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture’s costs claimed through the CARES Act and CAA funds are allowable, allocable, and reasonable in accordance with federal cost principles.

Evaluation of NOAA’s NWS Tornado Forecasting and Warning Performance

To assess NWS tornado forecasting and warning performance and identify potential opportunities for enhanced effectiveness.

Audit of OMAO Aircraft Program

To assess NOAA’s progress replacing its hurricane hunter aircraft.

Audit of PRDNER Use of Federal Emergency and Pandemic Relief Financial Assistance Funds (will result in two reports)

To determine whether federal funds received by PRDNER to support its fisheries participants in recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and damages caused by several hurricanes were properly disbursed and funds were used for their intended purposes.

NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION

Evaluation of Broadband Deployment Challenges

To identify potential challenges for deploying broadband to underserved and unserved communities.

Evaluation of NTIA’s Implementation of the Public Wireless Supply Chain Innovation Fund

To assess NTIA’s implementation of the Innovation Fund program.

Audit of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Administrative Funds

To assess NTIA’s spending of grant program administrative funds authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Audit of the NTIA’s Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program Review Process

To determine whether NTIA has an adequate review process to ensure that states’ and territories’ plans meet the BEAD Program’s planning phase requirements.

Audit of NTIA's Allocation of BEAD Funds

To determine whether NTIA properly allocated federal funds provided for the BEAD program.

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**Audit of USPTO's Management of Trademark Pendency**

To determine whether USPTO exercised effective oversight and management of trademark pendency.

Audit of USPTO's Quality Reviews of Continuing Patent Applications

To determine the effectiveness of USPTO's quality reviews of continuing patent applications.

FY 2024 USPTO Financial Statements Audit

To determine whether the financial statements are presented fairly, in all material respects, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The audit will also consider USPTO's internal controls over financial reporting and test compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements that could have a direct and material effect on the financial statements.

Audit of USPTO's Governance of Its Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

To determine whether USPTO has an effective governance structure and processes in place to manage its AI tools.

STATISTICAL DATA

Consistent with the Inspector General Act of 1978 (IG Act), as amended, OIG is providing the following statistical data:

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TABLE I. OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS FOR THIS PERIOD

Investigative activities cover investigations opened and closed by OIG; arrests by OIG agents; indictments and other criminal charges filed against individuals or entities as a result of OIG investigations; and convictions secured at trial or by guilty plea as a result of OIG investigations.

Allegations received presents the number of complaints from employees, stakeholders, and the general public that were handled by our Compliance and Ethics unit. Of these, some resulted in the opening of investigations; others were referred to bureaus for internal administrative follow-up. Others were unrelated to Departmental activities or did not provide sufficient information for any investigative follow-up and so were not accepted for investigation or referral.

The metrics used for the statistical data referenced in this table include the following: ensure data input is completed accurately; obtain data extraction via reports generated in OIG's case management system; and complete quality assurance with supporting documentation in the case files and discussions with individual investigative personnel.

Allegations Received

Total hotline contacts	546
Contacts related to Departmental programs	393
Number of hotline referrals to Departmental management	184

Reports

Total number of investigative reports issued during the reporting period ^a	12
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Prosecutive Actions

Total number of individuals or entities referred to DOJ for criminal prosecution	13
Total number of entities referred to state/local prosecuting authorities	2
Indictments/Informations/Criminal Complaints	2
Convictions	5

OIG No-Knock Entries

Number of no-knock entries that occurred pursuant to judicial authorization	0
Number of no-knock entries that occurred pursuant to exigent circumstances:	0
Law Enforcement Officers or other persons injured in the course of no-knock entries:	0

^a This figure consists of Reports of Investigation, Case Closure Memorandums to the Department/Bureaus (Investigative Summaries), and Notice of Concern Memorandums.

TABLE 2. RESOLUTION AND FOLLOW-UP

The IG Act requires us to present in this report information concerning reports issued before the beginning of the reporting period (April 1, 2024) for which no management decision had been made by the end of the period (September 30, 2024). There is one report with a recommendation that remains unresolved for more than 6 months for this reporting period.

Audit resolution is the process by which the Department reaches an effective management decision in response to audit reports. **Management decision** refers to management's evaluation of the findings and recommendations included in the report and the issuance of a final decision by management concerning its response.

Department Administrative Order 213-5, *Audit and Evaluation Resolution and Follow-up*, provides procedures for management to request a modification to an approved action plan or for a financial assistance recipient to appeal an audit resolution determination. The following table summarizes modification and appeal activity during the reporting period.

Report Category	Modifications	Appeals
Actions pending (April 1, 2024)	5	0
Submissions	17	0
Decisions	12	0
Actions pending (September 30, 2024)	10	0

TABLE 3. AUDIT AND INSPECTION STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS FOR THIS PERIOD

Audits comply with standards established by the Comptroller General of the United States for audits of federal establishments, organizations, programs, activities, and functions.

Inspections include evaluations, inquiries, and similar types of reviews that do not constitute an audit or a criminal investigation.

Questioned costs ^a	\$1,222,871,908
Value of audit recommendations that funds be put to better use ^b	\$117,042,985
Total potential monetary benefits	\$1,339,914,893
Value of audit recommendations agreed to by management ^c	\$7,339,884.88

^a **Questioned cost:** This is a cost questioned by OIG because of (1) an alleged violation of a provision of a law, regulation, contract, grant, cooperative agreement, or other agreement or document governing the expenditure of funds; (2) a finding that, at the time of the audit, such cost is not supported by adequate documentation; or (3) a finding that an expenditure of funds for the intended purpose is unnecessary or unreasonable.

^b **Value of audit recommendations that funds be put to better use:** This results from an OIG recommendation that funds could be used more efficiently if Department management took action to implement and complete the recommendation. Such actions may include (1) reductions in outlays; (2) deobligation of funds from programs or operations; (3) withdrawal of interest subsidy costs on loans or loan guarantees, insurance, or bonds; (4) costs not incurred by implementing recommended improvements related to the Department, a contractor, or a grantee; (5) avoidance of unnecessary expenditures identified in pre-award reviews of contracts or grant agreements; or (6) any other savings specifically identified.

^c **Value of audit recommendations agreed to by management:** This is the sum of (1) disallowed costs and (2) funds to be put to better use that are agreed to by management during resolution. Disallowed costs are the amount of costs that were questioned by the auditors or the agency action official and subsequently determined—during audit resolution or negotiations by a contracting officer—not to be charged to the government.

TABLE 4. REPORTS WITH QUESTIONED COSTS

See table 3 for a definition of “questioned cost.” An **unsupported cost** is a cost that is not supported by adequate documentation at the time of the review. Questioned costs include unsupported costs.

Report Category	Number	Questioned Costs	Unsupported Costs
A. Reports for which no management decision had been made by the beginning of the reporting period	1	\$2,554,506	\$0
B. Reports issued during the reporting period	3	\$1,222,871,908	\$1,222,557,908
Total reports (A+B) requiring a management decision during the period	4	\$1,225,426,414	\$1,222,557,908
C. Reports for which a management decision was made during the reporting period	3	\$390,651,947	\$387,783,441
i. Value of disallowed costs		\$0	\$0
ii. Value of costs not disallowed		\$390,651,947	\$387,783,441
D. Reports for which no management decision had been made by the end of the reporting period	1	\$834,774,467	\$834,774,467

TABLE 5. REPORTS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS THAT FUNDS BE PUT TO BETTER USE

See table 3 for a definition of “recommendations that funds be put to better use.”

Report Category	Number	Value
A. Reports for which no management decision had been made by the beginning of the reporting period	2	\$8,794,429
B. Reports issued during the reporting period	3	\$117,042,985
Total reports (A+B) requiring a management decision during the period	5	\$125,837,414
C. Reports for which a management decision was made during the reporting period	3	\$26,339,885
i. Value of recommendations agreed to by management		\$7,339,885
ii. Value of recommendations not agreed to by management		\$19,000,000
D. Reports for which no management decision had been made by the end of the reporting period	3	\$99,497,529

TABLES 6, 6-A, 6-B, 6-C, AND 6-D. REPORT TYPES FOR THIS PERIOD

Performance audits provide findings or conclusions based on an evaluation of sufficient, appropriate evidence against criteria. Performance audits provide objective analysis to assist management and those charged with governance and oversight in using the information to improve program performance and operations, reduce costs, facilitate decision making by parties with responsibility to oversee or initiate corrective action, and contribute to public accountability.

Inspections include evaluations, inquiries, and similar types of reviews that do not constitute an audit or investigation. An inspection is defined as a process that evaluates, reviews, studies, or analyzes the programs and activities of a department or agency to provide information to managers for decision making; makes recommendations for improvements to programs, policies, or procedures; and identifies where administrative action may be necessary.

Financial statement audits are primarily to provide an opinion about whether an entity's financial statements are presented fairly in all material respects in conformity with an applicable financial reporting framework. Reporting on financial statement audits performed in accordance with GAGAS also includes reports on internal control over financial reporting and on compliance with provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements that have a material effect on the financial statements.

Other public reports from this period include two management alerts and a semiannual report on the status of broadband deployment.

TABLE 6. SUMMARY OF REPORT TYPES FOR THIS PERIOD

Type	Number of Reports	Table Number
Performance Audits	11	Table 6-A
Inspections/Evaluations	6	Table 6-B
Financial Statement Audits	0	Table 6-C
Other Public Reports	2	Table 6-D
Total	19	

TABLE 6-A. PERFORMANCE AUDITS

Report Title	Report Number	Date Issued	Funds to Be Put to Better Use	Amount Questioned	Amount Unsupported
<i>NTIA's Award Processes Leave Tribal Broadband Grants Vulnerable to Fraud and Duplication</i>	OIG-24-019-A	04.08.2024	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>The Census Bureau Did Not Effectively Manage and Monitor Contractor Performance for Paid Advertising in the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Contract</i>	OIG-24-021-A	05.08.2024	\$0	\$363,083,441	\$363,083,441
<i>FirstNet Authority Did Not Ensure the Nations's First Responders' Needs Were Continuing to Be Met Timely When Modifying Key Objectives of the NPSBN Contract</i>	OIG-24-024-A	05.30.2024	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>The Department Can Improve Processes to Ensure Locality Pay Is Accurate</i>	OIG-24-025-A	06.03.2024	\$42,985	\$0	\$0
<i>FirstNet Authority's Lack of NPSBN Contract Oversight for Coverage Puts at Risk First Responders' Ability to Serve the Public Effectively</i>	OIG-24-026-A	06.05.2024	\$0	\$834,774,467	\$834,774,467
<i>FirstNet Authority's Lack of Contract Oversight for Device Connection Targets Puts the NPSBN at Risk of Impacting First Responders' Use of the Network</i>	OIG-24-027-A	06.12.2024	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>The Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources Needs to Fully Comply with Procurement Regulations When Executing NOAA Awards</i>	OIG-24-028-A	06.20.2024	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>NOAA's Office of Space Commerce Efforts to Provide Space Situational Awareness Services Have Been Delayed and Need a Realistic Schedule</i>	OIG-24-031-A	07.30.2024	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>A Lack of Program Management Controls and Attention to IT Security Threatens the Success of NOAA's Effort to Implement a Cloud-Based Common Ground System</i>	OIG-24-034-A	08.27.2024	\$98,000,000	\$0	\$0

Report Title	Report Number	Date Issued	Funds to Be Put to Better Use	Amount Questioned	Amount Unsupported
<i>Biennial Audit of the Department's Compliance with Geospatial Data Act Requirements</i>	OIG-24-035-A	09.19.2024	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>BIS' Export License Approval Process Reduces Risk of Threats from China's Military-Civilian Fusion Strategy, but BIS Should Take Additional Steps to Mitigate Risks of Unauthorized Technology Release to China's Military</i>	OIG-24-036-A	09.23.2024	\$0	\$0	\$0

TABLE 6-B. INSPECTIONS/EVALUATIONS

Report Title	Report Number	Date Issued	Funds to Be Put to Better Use	Amount Questioned	Amount Unsupported
<i>Independent Program Evaluation of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Pandemic Relief Program</i>	<u>OIG-24-018-I</u>	04.04.2024	\$19,000,000	\$25,014,000	\$24,700,000
<i>The Department Complied with Payment Integrity Information Act Requirements for Fiscal Year 2023</i>	<u>OIG-24-020-I</u>	05.08.2024	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>NIST Surpassed Hiring Goals for CHIPS But Did Not Develop a Comprehensive Workforce Plan</i>	<u>OIG-24-023-I</u>	05.20.2024	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>A 3-Year Exposure of Privacy Act-Protected Data Revealed USPTO Mismanagement in Safeguarding the Sensitive PII of Trademark Filers</i>	<u>OIG-24-029-I</u>	06.24.2024	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Final Semiannual Status Report on NTIA's Broadband Programs</i>	<u>OIG-24-033-I</u>	07.30.2024	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>NIST Overstated MEP's Economic Impacts to Congress and Other Stakeholders</i>	<u>OIG-24-037-I</u>	09.25.2024	\$0	\$0	\$0

TABLE 6-C. FINANCIAL STATEMENT AUDITS

There were no financial statement audits for this period.

TABLE 6-D. OTHER PUBLIC REPORTS

Report Title	Report Number	Date Issued
<i>Management Alert: The NPSBN Band 14 Signal Strength Does Not Consistently Provide Adequate Band 14 Service for First Responders</i>	OIG-24-022-M	05.16.2024
<i>Management Alert: February 2024 FirstNet Authority's Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network Outage Raised a Significant Risk to the Readiness of First Responders Across the Country</i>	OIG-24-030-M	07.18.2024

TABLES 7, 7-A, 7-B, AND 7-C. UNIMPLEMENTED AND UNRESOLVED RECOMMENDATIONS BY OPERATING UNIT

All tables concerning unimplemented or unresolved recommendations do not include recommendations from (a) recurring, annual audits (such as financial statement audits) or (b) single audits.

Recommendations from all performance audit, evaluation, and inspection reports issued prior to FY 2019 have been implemented.

Resolved but unimplemented recommendations are those for which (a) the operating unit(s) agreed to OIG recommendations and (b) OIG approved the action plan. Columns 2 through 5 of table 7 provide details on resolved but unimplemented recommendations.

Unresolved recommendations include those with no approved action plan as of September 30, 2024, or those for which the action plans are not due until after September 30, 2024. Columns 6 and 7 of table 7 provide details on unresolved recommendations.

Table 7-A (see appendix A) provides details on FYs 2019 – 2024 performance audit, evaluation, or inspection reports that have resolved but unimplemented recommendations. During those FYs, we issued 100 audits and evaluations (excluding financial statement audits). As of September 30, 2024,

- 43 of the 100 reports (43 percent) had resolved but unimplemented recommendations;
- 138 of 578 total recommendations (24 percent) were resolved but unimplemented; and
- 8 of these resolved but unimplemented recommendations had potential monetary benefits of \$738,985,930.

Table 7-B (see appendix B) provides details on 8 performance audits with 36 unresolved recommendations and 2 evaluations with 9 unresolved recommendations.

TABLE 7. SUMMARY OF UNIMPLEMENTED AND UNRESOLVED RECOMMENDATIONS BY OPERATING UNIT

Operating Unit	FYs 2019–2021 Unimplemented Recs (Resolved)	Potential Monetary Benefits of FYs 2019–2021 Unimplemented Recs	FYs 2022–2024 Unimplemented Recs (Resolved)	Potential Monetary Benefits of FYs 2022–2024 Unimplemented Recs	Unresolved FYs 2023– 2024 Recs	Potential Monetary Benefits of Unresolved FYs 2023– 2024 Recs
Bureau of Economic Analysis			1	\$0		
Bureau of Industry and Security	1	\$0	1	\$0	1	\$0
U.S. Census Bureau	1	\$0	29	\$363,083,441		
U.S. Economic Development Administration			1	\$0		
First Responder Network Authority						
International Trade Administration			8	\$0		
Minority Business Development Agency						
National Institute of Standards and Technology	1	\$0	8	\$7,988,768.88	9	\$1,454,544
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	2	\$11,895,000	14	\$57,814,000	16	\$98,000,000
National Technical Information Service						
National Telecommunications and Information Administration			10	\$296,299,098	14	\$834,774,467
Office of the Secretary	8	\$0	36	\$1,905,622	5	\$42,985
United States Patent and Trademark Office	4	\$0	13	\$0	0	\$0
Total	17	\$11,895,000	121	\$727,090,929.88	45	\$934,271,996

TABLE 7-A. UNIMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AUDIT, EVALUATION, AND INSPECTION REPORTS

Table 7-A, in appendix A, does not include recommendations (a) from financial statement audits or (b) addressed to specific non-federal entities in connection with audits of financial assistance awards. For the full list of reports with unimplemented recommendations, see appendix A.

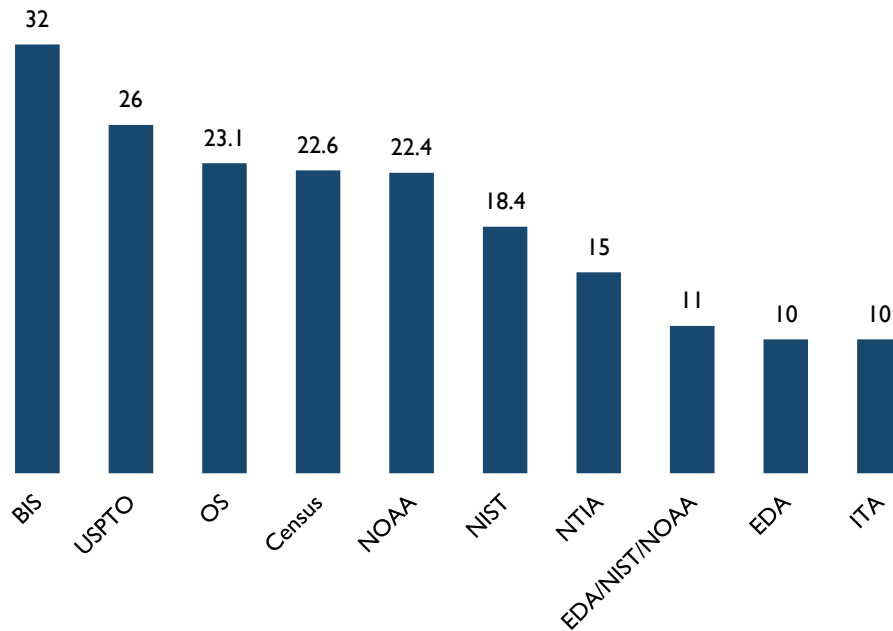
Recommendations from all performance audit, evaluation, and inspection reports issued prior to FY 2019 have been implemented. Below is a snapshot of unimplemented recommendations by year.

FIGURE I. SNAPSHOT OF UNIMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS BY YEAR

Year	Reports Issued	Total Recommendations	Total Unimplemented Recommendations	Potential Monetary Benefits
2019	12	79	2	\$0
2020	16	76	8	\$11,895,000
2021	14	72	7	\$0
2022	19	112	23	\$0
2023	15	112	30	\$334,533,361
2024	24	127	68	\$392,557,569

The average age of unimplemented recommendations across the Department is **21.9 months**. The chart below shows the average age of unimplemented recommendations by bureau as of September 30, 2024.

FIGURE 2. AVERAGE AGE BY BUREAU OF UNIMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FYs 2019 – 2024 (IN MONTHS)



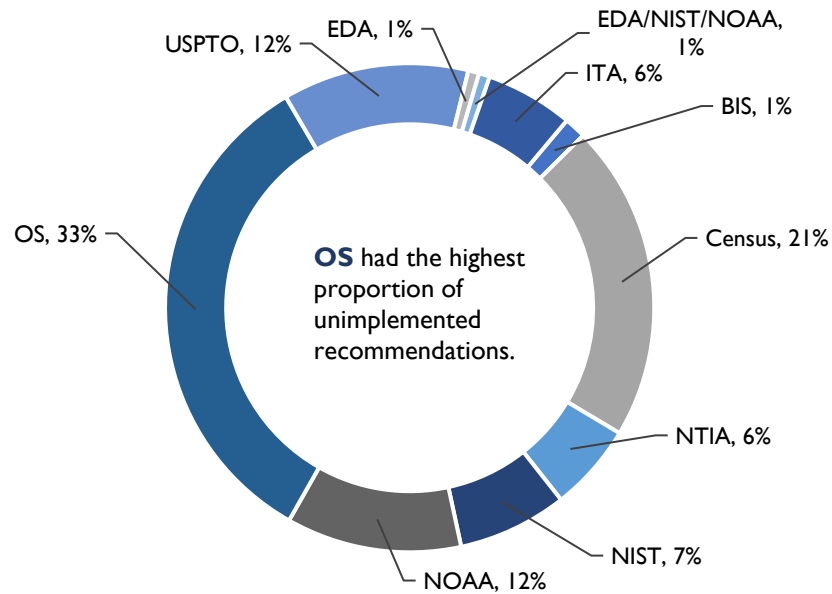
Source: OIG

Note 1: One of NIST's unimplemented recommendations was also addressed to the Department (see [OIG-22-033-A](#)).

Note 2: [OIG-24-003-I](#) had one recommendation addressed to EDA, NIST, and NOAA.

Figure 3 shows the percentage breakdown of unimplemented recommendations by bureau.

FIGURE 3. PERCENTAGE BY BUREAU OF TOTAL UNIMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FYS 2019 – 2024



Source: OIG

Note 1: One of NIST's unimplemented recommendations was also addressed to the Department (see [OIG-22-033-A](#)).

Note 2: [OIG-24-003-I](#) had one recommendation addressed to EDA, NIST, and NOAA.

For the full list of reports with unimplemented recommendations, see appendix A.

TABLE 7-B. UNRESOLVED RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AUDIT, EVALUATION, AND INSPECTION REPORTS

Table 7-B, in appendix B, includes audit, evaluation, and inspection reports with unresolved recommendations (i.e., OIG has not yet approved auditees' action plans). Either OIG is reviewing an action plan submitted or the action plan is not due until after September 30, 2024. Figure 4 shows unresolved recommendations for reports with action plans submitted.

FIGURE 4. SNAPSHOT OF UNRESOLVED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPORTS WITH ACTION PLANS SUBMITTED

Report Date	Report Number	Short Title	Unresolved Recommendations
03.13.2023	OIG-23-014-I	NIST MEP Monitoring	1
05.30.2024	OIG-24-024-A	NPSBN Contract Modifications	6
06.03.2024	OIG-24-025-A	Employee Locality Pay	4
06.05.2024	OIG-24-026-A	NPSBN Coverage	5
6.12.2024	OIG-24-027-A	NPSBN Contract Oversight	3

For the full list of reports with unresolved recommendations, see appendix B.

TABLE 8. REPORTS ON INVESTIGATIONS CONCERNING ALLEGED MISCONDUCT BY SENIOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

OIG Case No.	Narrative Description of Investigations Concerning Senior Government Employees Where Allegations of Misconduct Were Substantiated
21-1468	On July 19, 2024, OIG closed an investigation into allegations that a NOAA employee made false statements while applying for a security clearance. OIG substantiated allegations that the NOAA employee made false statements on his security clearance application form, when background investigators interviewed him under oath, and when he signed an affidavit regarding his security clearance application. The NOAA employee pleaded guilty in federal court to making false statements and falsifying government records and was sentenced to time served and 2 years of supervised release. Separately, NOAA removed the employee from government service, and the Department subsequently debarred the employee for 3 years.

TABLE 9. DESCRIPTIONS OF INSTANCES OF WHISTLEBLOWER RETALIATION

OIG Case No.	Narrative Description of Investigations Concerning Senior Government Employees Where Allegations of Whistleblower Retaliation Were Substantiated
23-0450	OIG found that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) retaliated against one of its employees when it removed the employee early from a desirable detail. The investigation revealed that the employee had questioned his leadership and NMFS and NOAA officials about whether a particular policy required the employee to share information with hundreds of other NMFS and NOAA employees, allegedly violating his privacy and risking his safety. The NMFS region ultimately changed its policy but removed the employee from the detail assignment. Though NMFS provided evidence that it would have removed the employee regardless of his disclosures, OIG concluded the evidence was not clear and convincing.

TABLE 10. DESCRIPTION OF CLOSED AND NON-PUBLIC INSPECTIONS, EVALUATIONS, AUDITS, AND CERTAIN INVESTIGATIONS

OIG is required to describe (a) any inspection, evaluation, and audit conducted that is closed and not disclosed to the public and (b) any investigation conducted involving a senior government employee that is closed and not disclosed to the public. During this semiannual period, we issued one audit that was not disclosed to the public. We closed three investigations involving senior government employees that were not disclosed to the public (see the table for non-public investigations).

OIG Report/Case No.	Narrative Description for Audit and Closed Cases of Investigations Involving Senior Government Employees Not Disclosed to Public
<i>FY 2024 Federal Information Security Modernization Act Annual Report, OIG-24-032-A (issued 07.30.24)</i>	To meet OIG obligations under the Federal Information Security Modernization Act, we assessed the effectiveness of the Department's information security program and practices against metrics developed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Office of Management and Budget. Specifically, we reviewed the operational IT systems across the Department and its bureaus recorded in the Cyber Security Assessment and Management system. We assessed each of the five functional areas (identify, protect, detect, respond, and recover) against the metrics and found that the Department's overall maturity level for FY 2024 is Defined (level 2). Therefore, the Department's information security program is not fully effective. Because the assessment discusses sensitive aspects of Department IT systems, it is not publicly released.
24-0315	On July 12, 2024, OIG closed an investigation into a complaint that a senior advisor served as the selecting official on a position offered to a close relative. The allegation in this case was unsubstantiated.
21-1413	On August 8, 2024, OIG closed an investigation into allegations that two former senior leaders approved a contract modification that provided a significant monetary benefit to the contractor. The allegations were not substantiated, and the investigation was closed without further action.
24-0404	OIG investigated a senior official for alleged conflicts of interest that, if substantiated, threatened the integrity of multimillion-dollar acquisition programs. The investigation revealed that the senior official had created a separate business but that the official had sought ethics advice. The employee's business was effectively dormant, and OIG did not identify any evidence that threatened the programs. The procurement integrity allegations were not substantiated.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

REVIEW OF LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

This section requires the inspector general of each agency to review existing and proposed legislation and regulations relating to that agency's programs and operations. Based on this review, the inspector general is required to make recommendations concerning the impact of such legislation or regulations on (1) the economy and efficiency in the administration of programs and operations administered or financed by the agency or (2) the prevention and detection of fraud and abuse in those programs and operations. Some of OIG's audits examine compliance with existing laws, regulations, and other legal requirements. OIG's reports of such audits describe findings and include recommendations on any action necessary to address such findings. OIG is also a participant in CIGIE and its regular review of legislative and regulatory items that affect the inspector general community at large and individual departments. During this reporting period, our office reviewed legislation and regulations including the Government Spending Oversight Act of 2024; the Federal AI Governance and Transparency Act; the Enhancing Improper Payment Accountability Act; and various Federal Acquisition Regulation cases.

INFORMATION REQUIRED BY THE FEDERAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT ACT

No matters to report.

RESULTS OF PEER REVIEW CONDUCTED BY ANOTHER OIG

On March 22, 2024, the Office of Audit and Evaluation (OAE) received official notification of the peer review of its audit operations by the U.S. Department of State OIG (State OIG). State OIG's System Review Report covered the 3-year period ending September 30, 2023, and concluded that the system of quality control has been suitably designed to provide us with reasonable assurance of performing and reporting in conformity with applicable professional standards and applicable legal and regulatory requirements in all material respects. State OIG's System Review Report of our audit operations is available on our [website](#). We received a *pass* rating, the highest available rating. State OIG did not issue any recommendations in its System Review Report.

On September 13, 2022, OAE received official notification of its peer review of its inspection and evaluation operations by the OIG of the Library of Congress (LOC). LOC OIG's External Peer Review Report covered the 3-year period ending March 31, 2022, and concluded that our policies and procedures were generally consistent with CIGIE's Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation (January 2012). LOC OIG's External Peer Review Report of our inspection and evaluation operations is available on our [website](#).

On September 20, 2017, OIG's OI received official notification that the system of internal safeguards and management procedures for OIG's investigative function complied with the quality standards established by CIGIE and the applicable Attorney General Guidelines. The Peace Corps OIG, with assistance by the computer forensic staff from NASA OIG, conducted the peer review.

PEER REVIEWS CONDUCTED OF ANOTHER OIG AND LIST OF OUTSTANDING OR NOT FULLY IMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ANY PEER REVIEW

On September 16, 2024, OAE submitted our official notification of the peer review results of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) OIG's audit operations. Our System Review Report covered the 3-year period ending March 31, 2024, and concluded ED OIG's policies and procedures and system of quality control have been suitably designed to provide ED OIG with reasonable assurance of performing and reporting in conformity with applicable professional standards and applicable legal and regulatory requirements in all material respects. There were no findings of noncompliance and no recommendations issued.

DESCRIPTION OF INTERFERENCE OR DELAYS

OIG did not report any interference or delays during this semiannual period.

APPENDIX A. TABLE 7-A, REPORTS WITH UNIMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS

Date Report Issued	OIG Report No. and Title	Total Recommendations Made	Unimplemented Recommendation(s)	Potential Monetary Benefits of Unimplemented Recommendations
02.06.2019	OIG-19-008-A , 2020 Census: Issues Observed During the 2018 End-to-End Census Test's Address Canvassing Operation Indicate Risk to Address List Quality	6	Recommendation 1	0
06.13.2019	OIG-19-014-A , Inadequate Management of Active Directory Puts USPTO's Mission at Significant Cyber Risk	8	Recommendation 4	0
11.12.2019	OIG-20-006-A , NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations Needs to Improve the Planning and Governing of Its Ship Fleet Recapitalization Effort	7	Recommendation 1	\$11,895,000 Funds to Be Put to Better Use
02.11.2020	OIG-20-018-A , Failures in the Department's Security Program Resulted in Exposure of Sensitive Trade Information to Unvetted Foreign Nationals	12	Recommendations 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9	0
07.20.2020	OIG-20-037-A , Fleet Program Is Not Managed in Accordance with Fleet Management Requirements	7	Recommendations 2 and 4	0
10.01.2020	OIG-21-001-A , The Department Has Made Progress Meeting Its Responsibilities Under the Geospatial Data Act But Must Improve Controls to Ensure Full Compliance	6	Recommendation 3	0
01.25.2021	OIG-21-020-A , Decisions on Exclusions from Section 232 Tariffs Were Not Transparent and Based on Incomplete and Inaccurate Information	2	Recommendation 1	0
05.03.2021	OIG-21-024-A , Audit of National Institute of Standards and Technology Working Capital Fund for Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 2019	5	Recommendation 5	0
05.25.2021	OIG-21-027-I , OMAO Must Define and Implement a Disciplined Requirements Management Process to Ensure Future Acquisitions Meet User Needs	7	Recommendation 1	0

Date Report Issued	OIG Report No. and Title	Total Recommendations Made	Unimplemented Recommendation(s)	Potential Monetary Benefits of Unimplemented Recommendations
08.11.2021	OIG-21-033-A , <i>USPTO Should Improve Controls over Examination of Trademark Filings to Enhance the Integrity of the Trademark Register</i>	7	Recommendations 3, 5, and 7	0
11.08.2021	OIG-22-003-A , <i>Audit of the Department's Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 Submission for the First Quarter of Fiscal Year 2021</i>	9	Recommendations 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8	0
12.02.2021	OIG-22-010-I , <i>USPTO Has Opportunities to Improve its Patent Examination Process and to Advance Patent Decision-Making</i>	7	Recommendation 5	0
12.16.2021	OIG-22-014-I , <i>The Department Must Improve Processes for Addressing and Managing H Referrals</i>	2	Recommendations 1 and 2	0
06.08.2022	OIG-22-022-A , <i>The Success of NOAA's Next-Generation Satellite System Architecture Depends on Sound Requirements Management Practices</i>	7	Recommendations 1, 4, 5, and 6	0
06.15.2022	OIG-22-023-I , <i>The Department Mismanaged, Neglected, and Wasted Money on the Implementation of IT Security Requirements for Its National Security Systems</i>	5	Recommendations 2 and 5	0
07.07.2022	OIG-22-025-A , <i>The BAS Program Needs to Increase Attention to Business Process Reengineering and Improve Program Management Practices</i>	6	Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6	0
07.20.2022	OIG-22-026-A , <i>USPTO Needs to Improve Its Cost Estimating, Scheduling, and Agile Practices to Timely Retire Legacy Systems</i>	6	Recommendation 1	0
09.22.2022	OIG-22-033-A , <i>Performance Audit of the U.S. Department of Commerce's Working Capital Funds</i>	5	Recommendation 2	0
11.22.2022	OIG-23-004-I , <i>Simulated Internal Cyber Attack Gained Control of Critical Census Bureau Systems</i>	10	Recommendations 1, 2, 5, and 7	0

Date Report Issued	OIG Report No. and Title	Total Recommendations Made	Unimplemented Recommendation(s)	Potential Monetary Benefits of Unimplemented Recommendations
11.28.2022	OIG-23-005-A , <i>FirstNet Authority Could Not Demonstrate Investment Decisions Were the Best Use of Reinvestment Funds or Maximized the Benefits to Public Safety</i>	9	Recommendation 4	\$296,299,098
01.09.2023	OIG-23-008-I , <i>Bureau of Industry and Security's Law Enforcement Oversight Policies and Procedures Need Improvement</i>	7	Recommendation 5	0
03.01.2023	OIG-23-012-A , <i>FirstNet Authority Failed to Provide Adequate Contract Oversight for Its Initial Two Reinvestment Task Orders</i>	6	Recommendations 1, 2, and 4	0
03.13.2023	OIG-23-014-I , <i>NIST Must Improve Monitoring of MEP to Prevent Waste of Financial Resources</i>	5	Recommendations 1, 2, 4, and 5	\$5,434,262.88
08.30.2023	OIG-23-025-A , <i>The Census Bureau Needs to Improve Its Performance Management Processes and Quality Control Program for the Reimbursable Surveys Program</i>	15	Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, and 15	0
08.30.2023	OIG-23-026-A , <i>USPTO Needs to Improve Oversight and Implementation of Patent Classification and Routing Processes</i>	7	Recommendation 5	0
09.05.2023	OIG-23-027-A , <i>Satellite Integration and Test Phase Improvements Are Needed to Ensure the Success of Future Polar Weather Satellite Missions</i>	5	Recommendations 3 and 4	0
09.20.2023	OIG-23-028-A , <i>The GeoXO Program: Cost and Schedule Baselines are Established, But NOAA Should Evaluate Plans for the Central Satellite Mission and Revise Its Approach to Performance Gains to Provide the Best Overall Value</i>	4	Recommendations 1 and 2	\$32,800,000
09.28.2023	OIG-23-030-A , <i>Security Weaknesses in the Department's Mission-Critical High Value IT Assets Leave the Assets Vulnerable to Cyberattacks</i>	4	Recommendations 1 and 3	0
10.23.2023	OIG-24-003-I , <i>The Bureaus are Resolving Single Audit Findings, but the Department and Bureaus Need to Update Their Single Audit Resolution Policies</i>	2	Recommendations 1 and 2	0

Date Report Issued	OIG Report No. and Title	Total Recommendations Made	Unimplemented Recommendation(s)	Potential Monetary Benefits of Unimplemented Recommendations
11.01.2023	OIG-24-004-A , <i>ITA Did Not Effectively Resolve Foreign Trade Barriers</i>	8	Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8	0
11.06.2023	OIG-24-005-A , <i>EDA Generally Monitored Grants Awarded Under the FY 2019 EDA Disaster Supplemental Notice of Funding Opportunity</i>	1	Recommendation 1	0
01.22.2024	OIG-24-009-A , <i>The Department Needs to Fully Implement Strong Multifactor Authentication for Its High Value Assets to Protect Them from Cyberattacks</i>	8	Recommendations 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7	0
02.05.2024	OIG-24-011-I , <i>Independent Evaluation of the 2020 Decennial Census Evaluations and Experiments (EAE) Operation</i>	10	Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10	0
02.14.2024	OIG-24-013-I , <i>The Department Needs to Strengthen Its Ethics Oversight for USPTO Patent Examiners</i>	8	Recommendations 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8	0
02.22.2024	OIG-24-014-A , <i>The Department Needs to Improve Oversight to Ensure the Success of Its Financial System Modernization</i>	6	Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6	\$1,905,622
03.27.2024	OIG-24-017-I , <i>Independent Program Evaluation of National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Pandemic Relief Program</i>	2	Recommendations 1 and 2	\$2,554,506
04.04.2024	OIG-24-018-I , <i>Independent Program Evaluation of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Pandemic Relief Program</i>	3	Recommendation 2	\$25,014,000
04.08.2024	OIG-24-019-A , <i>NTIA's Award Processes Leave Tribal Broadband Grants Vulnerable to Fraud and Duplication</i>	4	Recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 4	0
05.08.2024	OIG-24-021-A , <i>The Census Bureau Did Not Effectively Manage and Monitor Contractor Performance for Paid Advertising in the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Contract</i>	6	Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6	\$363,083,441
05.20.2024	OIG-24-023-I , <i>NIST Surpassed Hiring Goals for CHIPS But Did Not Develop a Comprehensive Workforce Plan</i>	2	Recommendations 1 and 2	0

Date Report Issued	OIG Report No. and Title	Total Recommendations Made	Unimplemented Recommendation(s)	Potential Monetary Benefits of Unimplemented Recommendations
05.30.2024	OIG-24-024-A , <i>FirstNet Authority Did Not Ensure the Nations's First Responders' Needs Were Continuing to Be Met Timely When Modifying Key Objectives of the NPSBN Contract</i>	9	Recommendations 1, 2, and 3	0
06.20.2024	OIG-24-028-A , <i>The Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources Needs to Fully Comply with Procurement Regulations When Executing NOAA Awards</i>	5	Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5	0
06.24.2024	OIG-24-029-I , <i>A 3-Year Exposure of Privacy Act-Protected Data Revealed USPTO Mismanagement in Safeguarding the Sensitive PII of Trademark Filers</i>	10	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10	0

APPENDIX B. TABLE 7-B, REPORTS WITH UNRESOLVED RECOMMENDATIONS

Date Report Issued	OIG Report No. and Title	Total Recommendations Made	Reason	Potential Monetary Benefits of Unresolved Recommendations
03.13.2023	OIG-23-014-I , <i>NIST Must Improve Monitoring of MEP to Prevent Waste of Financial Resources</i>	5	Recommendation 3 for NIST to establish policy limits on executive compensation for MEP, including restrictions on Center and subrecipient salaries, remains unresolved. However, based on recent correspondence, OIG expects NIST to submit a revised action plan addressing this recommendation soon.	\$1,454,544
05.30.2024	OIG-24-024-A , <i>FirstNet Authority Did Not Ensure the Nations's First Responders' Needs Were Continuing to Be Met Timely When Modifying Key Objectives of the NPSBN Contract</i>	9	Recommendations 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 remain unresolved. NTIA submitted an action plan to OIG on 8/12/2024. OIG and NTIA met to discuss the action plan on 9/23/2024, and NTIA is expected to submit a revised action plan.	0
06.03.2024	OIG-24-025-A , <i>The Department Can Improve Processes to Ensure Locality Pay Is Accurate</i>	4	OS submitted an action plan to OIG on 8/23/2024. OIG sent comments on the action plan to OS on 9/17/2024, and OS is expected to submit a revised action plan.	\$42,985
06.05.2024	OIG-24-026-A , <i>FirstNet Authority's Lack of NPSBN Contract Oversight for Coverage Puts at Risk First Responders' Ability to Serve the Public Effectively</i>	5	NTIA submitted an action plan to OIG on 8/12/2024. OIG and NTIA met to discuss the action plan on 9/23/2024, and NTIA is expected to submit a revised action plan.	\$834,774,467

Date Report Issued	OIG Report No. and Title	Total Recommendations Made	Reason	Potential Monetary Benefits of Unresolved Recommendations
06.12.2024	OIG-24-027-A , <i>FirstNet Authority's Lack of Contract Oversight for Device Connection Targets Puts the NPSBN at Risk of Impacting First Responders' Use of the Network</i>	3	NTIA submitted an action plan to OIG on 8/12/2024. OIG and NTIA met to discuss the action plan on 9/23/2024, and NTIA is expected to submit a revised action plan.	0
07.30.2024	OIG-24-031-A , <i>NOAA's Office of Space Commerce Efforts to Provide Space Situational Awareness Services Have Been Delayed and Need a Realistic Schedule</i>	5	Action Plan Due 10.14.2024	0
08.27.2024	OIG-24-034-A , <i>A Lack of Program Management Controls and Attention to IT Security Threatens the Success of NOAA's Effort to Implement a Cloud-Based Common Ground System</i>	11	Action Plan Due 10.28.2024	\$98,000,000
09.19.2024	OIG-24-035-A , <i>Biennial Audit of the Department's Compliance with Geospatial Data Act Requirements</i>	1	Action Plan Due 11.18.2024	0
09.23.2024	OIG-24-036-A , <i>BIS' Export License Approval Process Reduces Risk of Threats from China's Military-Civilian Fusion Strategy, but BIS Should Take Additional Steps to Mitigate Risks of Unauthorized Technology Release to China's Military</i>	1	Action Plan Due 11.22.2024	0
09.25.2024	OIG-24-037-I , <i>NIST Overstated MEP's Economic Impacts to Congress and Other Stakeholders</i>	8	Action Plan Due 11.25.2024	0

APPENDIX C. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The IG Act specifies reporting requirements for semiannual reports. The requirements are listed below and indexed to the applicable pages of this report.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence	FY	Fiscal Year
BAS	Business Applications Solution	GAGAS	Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards
BEAD	Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment	GDA	Geospatial Data Act
BIS	Bureau of Industry and Security	GEMS	Grants Enterprise Management System
CAA	Consolidated Appropriations Act	GeoXO	Geostationary Extended Observations
CARES Act	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act	ICC	Integrated Communications Contract
Census Bureau	U.S. Census Bureau	IDA	Institute for Defense Analyses
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations	IG Act	Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended
CHIPS	Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors	IT	Information Technology
CHIPS Act	CHIPS Act of 2022	JBNERR	Jobs Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
CIGIE	Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency	KPMG	KPMG LLC
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019	LOC	Library of Congress
CPO	CHIPS Program Office	MBDA	Minority Business Development Agency
CRDO	CHIPS Research and Development Office	MEP	Manufacturing Extension Partnership
Department	U.S. Department of Commerce	NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
DOD	U.S. Department of Defense	NCCF	NESDIS Common Cloud Framework
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice	NESDIS	National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service
EAE	Evaluations and Experiments	NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology
ECDM	Enterprise Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation	NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
ED	U.S. Department of Education	NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
EDA	U.S. Economic Development Administration	NPSBN	Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network
EIDL	Economic Injury Disaster Loan		
FirstNet Authority	First Responder Network Authority		

NTIA	National Telecommunications and Information Administration	SBA	U.S. Small Business Administration
NWS	National Weather Service	SPD-3	Space Policy Directive-3
OAE	Office of Audit and Evaluation	State OIG	U.S. Department of State OIG
OI	Office of Investigations	STM	Space Traffic Management
OIG	Office of Inspector General	SWFO-LI	Space Weather Follow-On Lagrange-1
OMAO	Office of Marine and Aviation Operations	TBCP	Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program
OSC	Office of Space Commerce	Tech Hub	Technology and Innovation Hub
PES	Post-Enumeration Survey	Uniform Guidance	<i>Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards</i>
PI	Principal Investigator	U.S.	United States
PIIA	Payment Integrity Information Act of 2019	U.S.C.	United States Code
PRC	People's Republic of China	USPTO	United States Patent and Trademark Office
PRDNER	Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources		
QASP	Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan		
RLF	Revolving Loan Fund		

REPORT

FRAUD & WASTE ABUSE



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