



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

We initiated this review to evaluate how the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) National Environmental Performance Track program (Performance Track) achieves EPA goals. We specifically sought to determine how Performance Track contributes to achieving environmental goals, how well it recognizes and encourages environmental leadership, and how the program tracks member performance.

Background

Performance Track is a public-private partnership that encourages member facilities to improve the environment through using environmental management systems, local public outreach, and public reporting for results. EPA designed Performance Track to recognize and encourage facilities that demonstrate strong environmental performance beyond current requirements.

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

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2007/20070329-2007-P-00013.pdf

Performance Track Could Improve Program Design and Management to Ensure Value

What We Found

We found that Performance Track did not have clear plans that connected activities with its goals, and did not have performance measures that show if it achieves anticipated results. The program tied an EPA goal to member commitments, and did not meet the goal because members did not make sufficient progress toward their commitments. These implementation challenges detracted from EPA's anticipated results (only 2 of 30 sampled Performance Track members met all of their environmental improvement commitments). In addition, members did not have access to some program benefits.

In assessing members' leadership using independent criteria, we found that most Performance Track members' compliance and toxic release records were better than average, but some were not. Although most members showed leadership and environmental progress, the presence of underperforming facilities in this leadership program reduces the integrity and value of the brand.

What We Recommend

We recommend that EPA design a comprehensive strategic plan to connect activities with goals and to encourage staff and management to focus on program goals and member commitments. We recommend that the program measure and report on performance related to activities and goals. EPA should also maintain centralized databases for compliance screening and program member information so that it can readily demonstrate that members meet program criteria. We recommend that EPA encourage member facilities to set and achieve commitments so that the public has a clear idea of what results members will actually produce. We also recommend that EPA include assessing member leadership in compliance and toxic releases in the program criteria. EPA can use these data to track members' progress, define top performance, and establish and modify criteria and performance measures.

In its response, EPA disagreed with how the program should be evaluated and the extent to which it has succeeded, to date. However, EPA agreed with all of our recommendations for improvement. They also suggested technical corrections. We made changes as appropriate. Appendix A provides EPA's response to the draft report and our comments.