



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

Our objective was to ensure that all contributions reported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Awards Program to the agency's pollution prevention performance measures are adequately supported and transparent.

The Green Chemistry Awards are part of the EPA's Pollution Prevention (P2) Program. The P2 Program's mission is to prevent pollution at the source, promote the use of greener substances, and conserve natural resources.

Through the P2 Program, the EPA encourages and supports innovative changes in industrial production and use of raw materials. The Green Chemistry Awards program promotes the environmental and economic benefits of developing and using green chemistry by recognizing industry innovations.

This report addresses the following EPA goal or cross-agency strategy:

- *Ensuring the safety of chemicals and preventing pollution.*

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The full report is at: www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2015/20150915-15-P-0279.pdf

EPA's Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Awards Program Lacks Adequate Support and Transparency and Should Be Assessed for Continuation

What We Found

Contributions reported from the Green Chemistry Awards to EPA pollution prevention results are not adequately supported or transparent.

We found that all Green Chemistry Awards results are self-reported by award recipients. The EPA does not verify nor validate the results, and award recipients are not required to conduct any quality-assurance certification on results they report. Moreover, these self-reported results are included in the agency's summary of P2 Program accomplishments.

Green Chemistry Award results can be significant. For example, in fiscal year 2012 the EPA exceeded its target for metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (reduced or offset through pollution prevention) by slightly more than 200 percent. The success was attributed primarily to the results self-reported by Green Chemistry Award winners. Results achieved by award winners are from private companies and include international as well as domestic accomplishments. However, the EPA does not clearly state that the work from the Green Chemistry Awards was solely from private companies self-reported results and the agency lacks controls or procedures to separate or distinguish domestic results from international results. The inability to distinguish the results creates the risk of misrepresenting the source of the program's results and overstating results that would typically be perceived as exclusively benefiting the United States.

Some applicants are attracted to the Green Chemistry Awards Program because of the EPA support and the presidential title. Yet, we found that Green Chemistry Awards lack presidential support. According to the EPA, the awards program was endorsed by an earlier administration, but the program had not received that level of endorsement in several years. However, based on our findings, the EPA obtained renewed support from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Without data verification and transparency, the EPA risks reporting Green Chemistry Award results that are unreliable.

Recommendations and Planned Corrective Actions

We recommend that the Assistant Administrator for Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention discontinue using data from the Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Awards Program in the EPA's P2 performance metrics until data quality controls are in place. The EPA should also assess the need and value of the awards program for supporting agency goals.

This report contains three resolved recommendations with corrective actions that meet the intent of the recommendations. Six recommendations are unresolved and need further planned corrective actions and/or an estimated completion date.