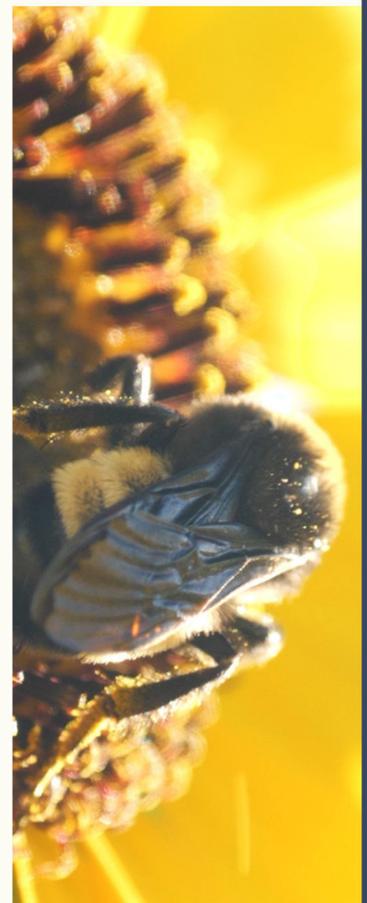




U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of Inspector General

U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General Strategic Plan— Fiscal Years 2025-2029



September 2024



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Message from the Inspector General

I am pleased to present the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) *Strategic Plan—Fiscal Years 2025–2029*. This plan serves as a roadmap for our future as we continue our mission to promote economy, efficiency, and integrity in USDA programs and operations. Our dedicated workforce provides oversight for the billions of dollars invested in USDA programs, serves as stewards for taxpayer dollars, and helps maintain public safety and trust. As we continually seek improvement in USDA activities ranging from food safety inspections and wildfire fighting to land and resource management—and across many other crucial areas that impact the Nation and its people daily—we will be diligent in our efforts to advance the value, safety and security, and integrity of USDA programs.

This *USDA OIG Strategic Plan—Fiscal Years 2025–2029* communicates changes in OIG strategy and operations. This updated plan reorganizes our principles and commitments into four strategic goals. While our fundamental mission is to improve and protect USDA programs, we also recognize the importance of establishing external partnerships and relationships and embracing continuous improvement. We believe this more holistic, intentional strategy will benefit USDA, its stakeholders, and OIG's workforce.

The support, participation, and commitment of everyone in OIG, including senior leadership, employees, managers, and supervisors, is critical to this holistic strategy's success. Together, we can ensure that OIG sustains an environment in which we continue to meet our mission while communicating transparently and honestly. Furthermore, we can

ensure that the setting in which this work occurs is high-performing, and innovative.

As we drafted this plan, we reassessed our goals, our strategies for achieving those goals, and the performance measures that will gauge our success. Additionally, we reached out to Department officials, members of Congress, and other key stakeholders to enhance our assessment of OIG's strengths and challenges. We also listened to the feedback from our valued workforce. With all this information in hand, the OIG senior leadership team worked together to develop this plan. I want to express my appreciation to everyone who contributed, either directly or indirectly, to *USDA OIG Strategic Plan—Fiscal Years 2025–2029*. We look forward to putting this plan into action over the next 5 years.

Phyllis K. Fong
Inspector General



STRATEGIC PLAN



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Who We Are and What We Do

Our strategic plan shares our organizational priorities for the next 5 years. It provides a vision and a path forward for OIG based on extensive discussions among senior staff and across the entire organization. It helps us focus on the most critical oversight work, guides our team of over 400 employees, and sets expectations for our stakeholders and the American public. And, of course, it provides us with a dynamic roadmap to review, refine, and reassess as we adapt to changes in our environment.

We have four strategic goals that guide our office as we carry out our mission. Within those strategic goals, we identified specific objectives, along with performance goals to clearly articulate what success will look like if we achieve those objectives. We will use annual performance plans and reports to track those goals over the next 5 years.

Our Mission

Our mission is to promote the economy, efficiency, and integrity of USDA programs and operations through audits, investigations, inspections, data analytics, and reviews. We accomplish our mission by way of an organizational culture that values our employees and encourages innovation, trust, and positive change.

Our Vision

Our work advances the value, safety and security, and integrity of USDA programs and operations. We are committed to this shared vision and continually strive for excellence by empowering employees for success.

Our Values

The principles of respect, integrity, collaboration, and innovation guide our decision-making.



RESPECT

We pledge to treat others with dignity while expecting others to do the same.



INTEGRITY

We commit to honesty and maintaining strong moral principles that unify us as an undivided team.



COLLABORATION

We aspire to create a culture of multi-disciplinary partnerships to achieve greater mission and operational outcomes by working across organizational lines and leveraging a diversity of knowledge, skills, and perspectives.



INNOVATION

We aim to cultivate a mindset that celebrates and encourages new and creative approaches that challenge conventional notions of how things have been done before to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization.



Our Statutory Responsibilities

OIG was created as an independent and objective oversight office within USDA by the Inspector General Act of 1978. The Inspector General Act specifies that OIG will do the following:

- Promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the management of USDA programs and operations.
- Conduct and supervise audits, investigations, and reviews relating to the Department's programs and operations.
- Detect and prevent fraud and abuse in Departmental programs and operations.
- Review existing and proposed legislation and regulations and make appropriate recommendations.
- Maintain effective working relationships with other Federal, State, and local governmental agencies and non-governmental entities regarding the Inspector General's mandated duties.
- Keep the USDA Secretary and Congress fully and currently informed of fraud and other serious problems, abuses, and deficiencies; and recommend corrective actions with implementation measures.
- Comply with the auditing standards of the Comptroller General.
- Avoid duplication of Government Accountability Office activities and ensure effective coordination and cooperation.
- Report violations of Federal criminal law to the U.S. Attorney General.



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OIG STRATEGY MAP: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOALS



Promote effective oversight of USDA programs and operations with a focus on safety and security, integrity of benefits, and the efficient delivery of USDA programs and initiatives.

PRODUCTS

OBJECTIVES

1.1

Prioritize work in high-risk and high-impact areas.

1.2

Deliver high-quality and timely audit, inspection, investigations, and analytic products.

1.3

Leverage technology and data analytics to create and deploy advanced analytical tools utilized for potential fraud detection and performance risk assessments.



Strengthen relationships and confidence with stakeholders to enhance oversight of USDA programs.

PARTNERSHIPS

2.1

Collaborate across Federal and State oversight communities to further our mission.

2.2

Communicate and consult regularly with USDA, Congress, and other stakeholders on key areas of interest, including work plans and the status of engagements and final products.

2.3

Follow a consistent and transparent approach to the engagement process with USDA and its components.

2.4

Communicate with the public in a timely and transparent manner to maintain reputation and trust.



OIG STRATEGY MAP: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



Advance a creative, forward-thinking organization by leveraging the strength of a high-performing, and engaged workforce and sustain a people-centric culture.

EMPLOYEES

3.1

Maintain a safe and respectful workplace.

3.2

Create a culture that rewards improvement and innovation.

3.3

Utilize communications strategies to maintain transparency and strengthen internal relationships.



Advance OIG operations and efficiency by embracing continuous improvement and optimizing enterprise resources.

OPERATIONS

4.1

Implement innovative, evidence-based approaches to make data-driven policy and operational decisions.

4.2

Encourage experimentation, foster open communication, and establish a structured risk tolerance framework to guide innovative initiatives.

4.3

Consistently utilize knowledge management tools, cross-training, and multi-functional teams across the organization.

4.4

Ensure accountability and corrective action with effective quality assurance and enterprise risk management.

4.5

Ensure internal processes are standardized and implemented consistently, follow legal requirements and best practices, and optimize OIG resources across the enterprise.

4.6

Safeguard integrity and foster continuous improvements within OIG.



OUR GOALS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Goal 1

Promote effective oversight of USDA programs and operations with a focus on safety and security, integrity of benefits, and the efficient delivery of USDA programs and initiatives.



Our fundamental mission is to improve and protect USDA programs through our oversight work. The American people depend on the diverse offerings within USDA's broad portfolio—food, nutrition, and consumer services; food safety; farm production and conservation; marketing and regulatory programs; natural resources and environment; research, education, and economics; trade and foreign agriculture affairs; rural development; and many others—and it is our responsibility to help make them as successful as possible by identifying weaknesses and opportunities for improvement. Fraud, waste, and abuse in USDA programs divert critical resources and reduce their effectiveness. Through effective oversight, we identify these issues and share them with decisionmakers in USDA and Congress, and when we find criminal wrongdoing, we work with the Department of Justice or other prosecutorial entities. By providing those decisionmakers and prosecutorial entities with our findings and recommendations, we help improve USDA programs and initiatives.

We have three objectives to help us accomplish this goal:

Strategic Objective 1.1: *Prioritize work in high-risk and high-impact areas.*

Strategic Objective 1.2: *Deliver high-quality and timely audit, inspection, investigations, and analytic products.*

Strategic Objective 1.3: *Leverage technology and data analytics to create and deploy advanced analytical tools utilized for potential fraud detection and performance risk assessments.*

If we accomplish those objectives, **OIG's oversight will improve the Department's delivery of its programs, operations, and initiatives.**

By prioritizing work in high-risk and high-impact areas, we ensure that we use our limited resources as efficiently as possible. We conduct regular risk assessments, consider stakeholder priorities, monitor emerging threats, and determine where our work can make the biggest impact. Smart usage of technology and cutting-edge data analytics also help us design our work; conduct holistic, comprehensive reviews of programs; and proactively identify risks.

Our work must also be timely. Promptly identifying areas for improvement helps the Department respond and take immediate action. Our work must also be of the highest quality—our stakeholders count on our oversight being factual, reliable, and actionable. We ensure that our work is supported by evidence and in compliance with professional standards.



OUR GOALS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Goal 2

Strengthen relationships and confidence with stakeholders to enhance oversight of USDA programs.

Partnerships and open dialogue are critical for our oversight mission. Timely information to and from our stakeholders helps us focus on the most impactful work, and collaborating with our peers across the oversight community gives us access to new methods and approaches for conducting audits, investigations, inspections, data analytics, and reviews. But these relationships do more than enhance our work—they are also essential to producing positive change in USDA programs. Our role as independent fact-finders requires that we communicate transparently and plainly state areas where USDA can improve. Building trust with USDA, Congress, and the public ensures that our recommendations are taken seriously, resolved quickly, and addressed thoroughly.

We have four objectives to help us accomplish this goal:

Strategic Objective 2.1: *Collaborate across Federal and State oversight communities to further our mission.*

Strategic Objective 2.2: *Communicate and consult regularly with USDA, Congress, and other stakeholders on key areas of interest, including work plans and the status of engagements and final products.*

Strategic Objective 2.3: *Follow a consistent and transparent approach to the engagement process with USDA and its components.*

Strategic Objective 2.4: *Communicate with the public in a timely and transparent manner to maintain reputation and trust.*

If we accomplish those objectives, **OIG's strong**

partnerships will inform decision-making in executing our mission, and stakeholders will trust and support OIG.

By collaborating across Federal and State oversight communities, we can avoid siloed work on matters with broad reach, such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. OIG partners with our oversight colleagues to develop cross-cutting products and learn best practices and new techniques from other organizations. As our community innovates, we all improve.

To be effective, we must also communicate and consult regularly with USDA, Congress, and other stakeholders on key areas of interest, including work plans and the status of engagements and final products. These relationships inform our work. USDA has 29 agencies and nearly 100,000 employees; with just 0.4 percent of that workforce, our office cannot review every program and initiative within USDA. Thus, we must work with stakeholders to understand their needs and challenges and prioritize our oversight efforts where we can have the greatest positive impact.

Those partnerships are also essential to building trust. USDA components need to know what to expect when we engage with them on audits, investigations, inspections, data analytics, and reviews. Thus, we must be consistent, timely, and transparent across all our interactions with the Department, Congress, the public, and our other stakeholders.

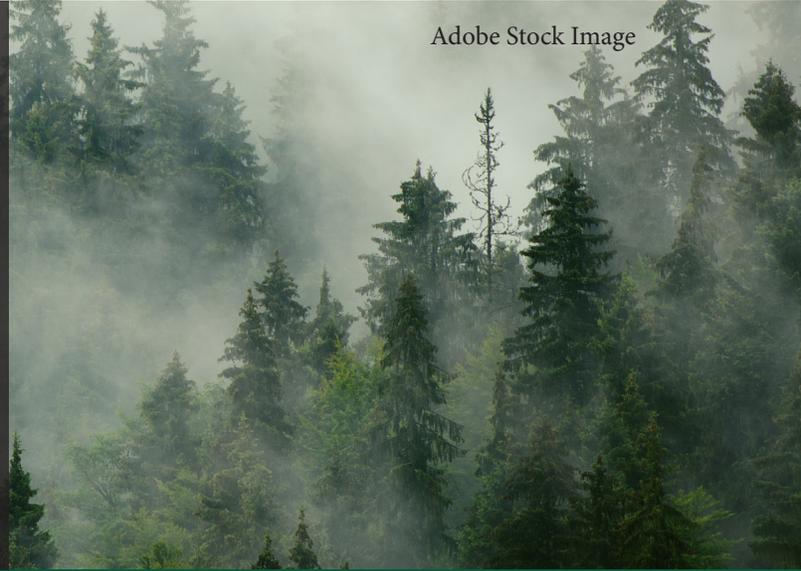
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OUR GOALS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Goal 3

Advance a creative, forward-thinking organization by leveraging the strength of a high-performing, and engaged workforce and sustain a people-centric culture.



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Organizations need great people to deliver great work. We promote a people-first culture, supporting our oversight mission by recruiting and retaining high-performing employees. We encourage our team to make OIG a great place to work by identifying opportunities for our organization to improve, communicating openly across components, and innovating. We focus on cultivating a workplace where people freely share their expertise, bring their whole selves to work, cheer for their colleagues' achievements, and strive for organizational success.

We have three objectives to help us accomplish this goal:

Strategic Objective 3.1: *Maintain a safe and respectful workplace.*

Strategic Objective 3.2: *Create a culture that rewards improvement and innovation.*

Strategic Objective 3.3: *Utilize communications strategies to maintain transparency and strengthen internal relationships.*

If we accomplish those objectives, **our engaged employees will positively impact USDA's success, and USDA OIG will be an employer of choice, not just within the OIG community, but within the Federal Government.**

Being an organization where people are excited to come to work is key to success. To accomplish that goal, our leadership team aspires to build a strong,

people-centric culture, which includes ensuring that our policies and procedures are designed to maintain a safe and respectful workplace. It is not just about leadership: we encourage employees across the organization to actively innovate, treat their colleagues with respect and dignity, and strive to improve our office culture. Our teams communicate—across components and hierarchies—to share new ideas and practices and strengthen internal relationships organization-wide.

By providing our team with a great environment to work, we will have engaged employees that make a positive impact on USDA's programs and operations. And by rewarding improvement and innovation, striving to recruit and retain talented employees, and communicating openly, we empower our teams to produce high-quality oversight.



OUR GOALS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

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Goal 4

Advance OIG operations and efficiency by embracing continuous improvement and optimizing enterprise resources.

Inspectors General make recommendations to improve the economy and efficiency of the departments they oversee. But we must also look inward to ensure that we model the best practices and standards we look for in the operations of the organizations we evaluate. Thus, our office is committed to a culture of continuous improvement. We use a robust, internal quality assurance program to help spur change, prioritize enterprise risk management, and encourage innovation across our operations. Strategic planning is a critical part of this effort, and we strive to align our people, processes, and products with our overall organizational vision.

We have six objectives to help us accomplish this goal:

Strategic Objective 4.1: *Implement innovative, evidence-based approaches to make data-driven policy and operational decisions.*

Strategic Objective 4.2: *Encourage experimentation, foster open communication, and establish a structured risk tolerance framework to guide innovative initiatives.*

Strategic Objective 4.3: *Consistently utilize knowledge management tools, cross-training, and multi-functional teams across the organization.*

Strategic Objective 4.4: *Ensure accountability and corrective action with effective quality assurance and enterprise risk management.*

Strategic Objective 4.5: *Ensure internal processes are standardized and implemented consistently, follow legal requirements and best practices, and optimize OIG resources across the enterprise.*

Strategic Objective 4.6: *Safeguard integrity and foster continuous improvements within OIG.*

If we accomplish those objectives, **OIG will be an agile, efficient, data-driven organization, and will maintain credibility because it models Federal best practices and standards organization-wide.**

Effective operations are essential to accomplish our mission. By implementing innovative, evidence-based approaches and making data-driven policy and operational decisions, we can conduct efficient, agile oversight. Similarly, we use knowledge management tools, cross-train our staff, and leverage multi-functional teams where appropriate to make sure that our employees are well positioned to tackle challenging, high-value mission work.

As we innovate, we do so within a thoughtful, considered framework. We rely on strong internal quality assurance and enterprise risk management processes to ensure accountability and ensure that we are pursuing the right innovations at the right time. Additionally, for our work to be trusted and valued, we must maintain high internal standards. Thus, we ensure that our internal processes are standardized and implemented consistently, follow legal requirements and best practices, and safeguard integrity within our office. We strive to continuously improve to make our oversight more timely, efficient, and impactful, and we leverage those internal processes and frameworks to make sure that, for any new change we make, we are still maintaining the highest professional standards.



Factors Affecting Achievement of the Strategic Goals



Pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, USDA OIG has the authority and responsibility to audit and investigate the Department’s programs and operations. USDA has approximately 300 programs that benefit diverse sectors of the public, that include but are not limited to food and nutrition recipients; farm and ranch operations, and other rural businesses; research scientists seeking solutions to agricultural problems; and responders dealing with disasters in rural areas. Given such a diversity of program coverage, OIG has identified factors that could potentially affect the achievement of OIG’s strategic goals.

Factor 1: 

Budgetary challenges that impact OIG’s ability to maintain an adequate workforce, support mission-critical activities, and keep pace with technological advancement.

Factor 2: 

Challenges recruiting, hiring, and retaining sufficient personnel to meet stakeholder demands for OIG services.

Factor 3: 

Unanticipated legislative requirements and emergency mandates that affect OIG’s allocation of resources.



Stakeholders

USDA is often referred to as the “People’s Department.” USDA programs, products, and activities affect the Nation and its people daily. Consequently, OIG has a wide variety of customers and stakeholders. OIG proactively engages its stakeholders at various stages of its work and is responsive to stakeholder input and requests.





Implementation of This Strategic Plan and Future Evaluations

This *USDA OIG Strategic Plan—Fiscal Years 2025–2029* is the first step in an ongoing strategic and operational planning process laid out in the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010 and Office of Management and Budget guidance. It also gives intentional direction to our team members so that they can feel empowered to act. OIG will track the implementation of this plan and ensure individual and office accountability for achieving its strategic goals by taking the following actions:

- OIG will publish an *Annual Plan* that: establishes specific performance measures for the coming

fiscal year; lays out the audit, investigation, data analytics, and management priorities for the fiscal year; and, where appropriate, discusses the specific projects that will be performed.

- OIG will report on its progress against the *USDA OIG Strategic Plan—Fiscal Years 2025–2029* and *Annual Plans* in its *Semiannual Reports to Congress* for the applicable fiscal years. These *Semiannual Reports to Congress* will cover OIG’s progress against the measures, priorities, and projects listed in the *Annual Plan* for the corresponding year.

Strategic Plan and Implementation Process





Areas of Responsibility

Audit The Office of Audit (OA) examines the economy and efficiency of USDA programs and operations, including program results, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and the accuracy of financial reports. While most audit work is done by in-house staff, OA also contracts with independent public accounting firms for some work and oversees the quality of work completed by auditors under contract to other USDA agencies. OIG audits are completed in accordance with Government Auditing Standards, published by the U.S. Government Accountability Office. In addition, OA performs inspections conducted in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation.

Investigations The Office of Investigations (OI) utilizes specific law enforcement activities, tools, and techniques, including use of asset forfeiture, digital forensics, financial analyses, data analytics, and other innovative approaches to conduct investigations and prevent fraud, waste, and abuse in the programs and operations of USDA. OI's investigative work may result in criminal, civil, administrative, and/or monetary outcomes in furtherance of resolving allegations and to prevent and deter future instances of illegal or fraudulent acts or employee misconduct. The OIG Hotline serves as a key operational function for reporting potential violations of laws and regulations relating to USDA programs.

Analytics and Innovation The Office of Analytics and Innovation (OAI) is modernizing the way OIG does business by using innovative techniques, providing visibility into data, delivering decision-ready information, and employing innovative communication methodologies. OAI, in collaboration with OA and OI, creates and deploys advanced analytical tools utilized for potential fraud detection and performance risk assessments. OAI develops data-driven reports, dashboards, and interactive data stories on a wide range of topics for stakeholders and the public. OAI also develops strategic engagement and communications plans for a wide range of audiences on a variety of platforms, including OIG's website, social media, and other communication channels.

Compliance and Integrity The Office of Compliance and Integrity (OCI) performs independent quality assurance and internal control reviews, inspections, and evaluations of OIG operations. OCI's reviews provide senior management with reasonable assurance that OIG operations and activities are in conformance with policy, law, and professional standards. Additionally, OCI conducts evaluations and investigations of alleged employee misconduct to safeguard public trust. OCI also assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of OIG operations to identify trends, best practices, and areas for development.

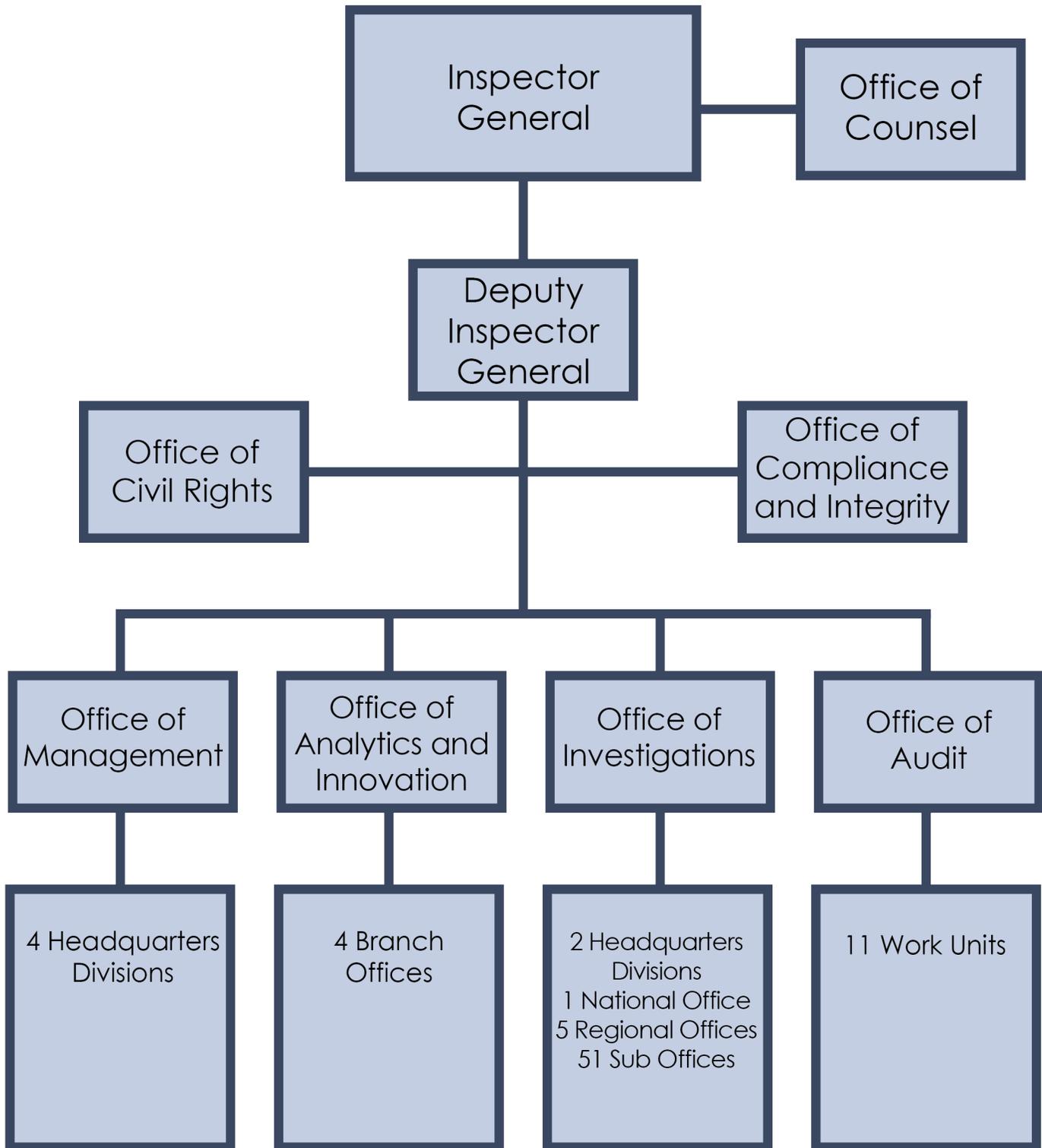
Counsel The Office of Counsel (OC) provides legal advice and representation on issues arising during OIG work, including audits, investigations, inspections, data analytics, and reviews, as well as on internal administrative and management issues. OC also manages OIG's Congressional and media relations, ethics, Freedom of Information Act, and Privacy Act programs, as well as reviews proposed legislation, regulations, policies, and procedures.

Office of Civil Rights The Office of Civil Rights leads OIG's efforts to ensure compliance with statutory requirements related to civil rights. The Office of Civil Rights also manages the OIG's Alternative Dispute Resolution and Anti-Harassment programs.

Management The Office of Management enables the effective operations of OIG mission areas and offices by providing expert business advice, infrastructure, technology, and other support to meet customers' diverse needs. Responsibilities include asset management, budget formulation and execution, contracts and acquisitions, human resources management, workforce development, workplace safety, facilities and space management, and information technology.



OIG Organizational Chart and Functional Responsibilities





STRATEGIC PLAN

Acronyms and Abbreviations

COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
OA	Office of Audit
OAI	Office of Analytics and Innovation
OC	Office of Counsel
OCI	Office of Compliance and Integrity
OI	Office of Investigations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Find us on LinkedIn: US Department of Agriculture OIG
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**Report suspected wrongdoing in USDA programs:
<https://usdaoig.oversight.gov/hotline>**

Toll-free: 800-424-9121

In Washington, DC: 202-690-1622



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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

Pursuant to the Executive Order, [Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing](#), dated January 20, 2025, and the Office of Personnel Management memorandum, [Initial Guidance Regarding DEIA Executive Orders](#), dated January 21, 2025, this plan was amended on February 14, 2025.