

PROJECT SUMMARY

OECA is working through E-Enterprise to partner with states and tribes to help shape the future of national enforcement and compliance by:

- Developing a Compliance Learning Agenda
- Establishing a community of practice to continue to support ongoing projects and plan for future projects, and
- Encouraging stakeholders to collaborate on research projects.

PROJECT LEADS

Michele McKeever

U.S. EPA Office of Compliance

Genevieve Soule

U.S. EPA Office of Compliance,
OECA_CLA@epa.gov

OECA COMPLIANCE LEARNING AGENDA PROJECT

Evidence-based compliance assurance

EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA) is building a foundation for a national evidence-based enforcement and compliance assurance program designed to strengthen compliance and benefits from EPA's regulations and enforcement authorities. One of the main components of this initiative is to develop a Compliance Learning Agenda to identify the most pressing programmatic questions and establish an evaluation plan with a series of evidence-building research projects designed to answer those questions.

CHALLENGE

For years the enforcement community has debated which approaches are most effective in improving regulatory compliance. This project seeks to use an evidence-based approach to test how innovative enforcement remedies and solutions impact compliance, and to obtain data to assess when to use compliance assistance versus enforcement.

BENEFITS

An evidence-based compliance assurance program, formalized through a learning agenda, will:

- Strategically identify the most pressing programmatic questions
- Establish an evaluation plan with a series of evidence-building research projects intended to answer those questions
- Test new and existing innovative technologies and policies to ensure limited resources have the greatest impact on environmental compliance
- Create an established venue for partners to collaborate on evidence-based studies, and
- Identify effective enforcement and compliance tools through empirical data vs. anecdotes.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

OECA began working with states, tribes, and other partners in May 2021 to improve the effectiveness of enforcement and compliance programs by prioritizing the most pressing programmatic questions, planning evidence-based studies to address these questions, and identifying effective and innovative approaches for improving compliance. This evidence-based approach entails OECA leadership of the enterprise-wide effort, EELC support of the EPA/state/tribal partnership to establish a Compliance Learning Agenda, and a community of practice to carry it out. Through this process, OECA has identified the following priority areas for initial research focus: Offsite Compliance Monitoring, Root Causes of Municipal Noncompliance, and Effectiveness of Injunctive Relief.

In November 2022 and January 2023, OECA and its partners hosted interest meetings on Offsite Compliance Monitoring work and Root Causes of Municipal Noncompliance. Members of the academic community from around the country, along with state and tribal partners, were invited to learn more about the project and ask questions. Proposals were solicited following the meetings.

WHAT'S NEXT?

OECA is currently reviewing proposals from interested partners and will be taking initial steps to launch research projects.